

Teaching News Is Elementary

Date: **Friday, June 9, 2017**

Article: **Fossils of oldest Homo sapiens found in Morocco**

Print Replica: **Thursday, June 8, 2017**

Section: **MAIN, A6**

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times print replica, computer or smart board, pencils or pens, paper

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

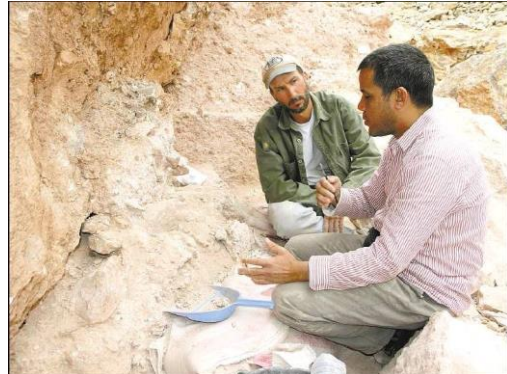
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will read an article, and search for personal connections they see in their own lives.

Pre- Reading Discussion:



- What do you see in the pictures?

- What are the expressions on their faces? What do you think their mood is? What emotions are they feeling?
- What clues did you find in the pictures, to try to figure out what the story will be about?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A *context clue* is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

Write your guess and then look up the definition and write it below your guess. How close did you come to the correct definition?

“Hublin and his colleagues used a method called ***thermoluminescence*** to calculate how much time had passed since the blades were burned. They estimated that the blades were roughly 300,000 years old. The skulls, which were discovered in the same rock layer, must have been the same age.”

***Thermoluminescence* Guess:**

***Thermoluminescence* Definition:**

Reading Comprehension:

1. Fossils discovered in Morocco are the oldest known remains of Homo sapiens, scientists reported Wednesday. The bones date back roughly how many years?
2. The fossils also show that early H. sapiens had faces much like our own, although what was different?
3. Until now, the oldest fossils of our species, found in Ethiopia, dated back _____ years.
4. What does the new fossils suggest?
5. Today, the closest living relatives to H. sapiens are what types of animals?
6. Until now, the oldest fossils that clearly belonged to H. sapiens were discovered in Ethiopia. In 2003, researchers working at a site called Herto discovered a skull estimated at how many years old?
7. A pair of partial skulls from another site, Omo-Kibish, dated to about _____ years of age, making these the oldest fossils of our species.
8. Findings such as these suggest what?
9. Yet paleoanthropologists were aware of mysterious hominin fossils discovered in other parts of Africa that didn't seem to fit the narrative.

10. In 1961, miners in Morocco dug up a few pieces of a skull at a site called _____. Later digs revealed a few more bones, along with flint blades.
11. Hublin and his colleagues used a method called thermoluminescence to calculate how much time had passed since the blades were burned. They estimated that the blades were roughly _____ years old. The skulls, which were discovered in the same rock layer, must have been the same age.
12. The individuals at Jebel Irhoud shared a general resemblance to one another — and to living humans. What were their facial features?
13. The flattened faces of early H. sapiens may have something to do with the advent of what?
14. The brains of the inhabitants of Jebel Irhoud, on the other hand, were less like our own. How were they different?
15. The inhabitants of Jebel Irhoud were sophisticated. How do they know this?

Group Discussion Questions/Journal Prompts:

- What do you think it would've been like to live during this time period, 300,000 years ago?
- Would you have enjoyed living at this time? Why or why not?
- How will earth look like 300,000 years from now? Will human's facial features, brain and bodies change in that time? Why or why not?
- How do you think speech could change human facial features over time, as speculated in the article?
- What are your opinions regarding the scientific findings in Morocco?

Resetting the clock on humankind's debut would be achievement enough. But the new research is also notable for the discovery of several early humans rather than just one, as so often happens, said Marta Mirazon Lahr, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Cambridge who was not involved in the new study.

"We have no other place like it, so it's a fabulous finding," she said.

- Why is this such an important finding?