

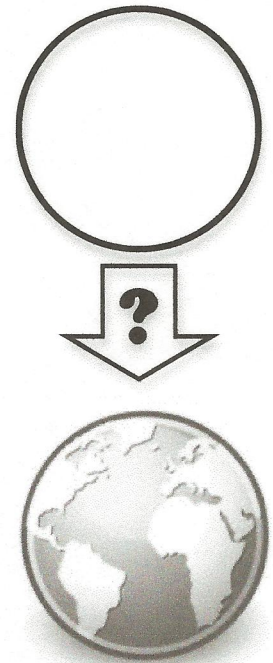
World History Unit 1

Era 1: The Beginnings of Human Society

Part One: Beginnings

A. World History starts somewhere, sometime with someone. History requires evidence; knowledge about earliest times lacks that evidence. What many believe happened cannot be scientifically proven. Here is an excellent example in exercising one of the fundamental skills necessary to be a successful historian: distinguishing fact from opinion. What do we know for certain? First of all, the FACT that we are here. Secondly, many BELIEFS on how we got here. Consider how many times the word "believe" shows up in the first section of your text (pp 4 & 5): 5. What other word choices that indicate a difference between *absolute* fact and *assumed* fact? (estimate, suggest). So, how did "it" begin?

1. Origin based on a natural explanation: the "big bang" started a chemical reaction of gases leading to the formation of solids and eventually highly organized cells which brought life. These living organisms developed over time and through stages into the structured life now on the earth. Man acts the way he does because of the physical/chemical nature of his existence.
2. Origin based on a supernatural explanation: a deity authored the world and the life on it. Many refer to this perspective as one of various creation myths. In this belief system, man acts the way he does because of an understanding of and devotion to the deity.¹



(Activity: Creation Myths)

B. Pre-History deals with time before written record. Because it lacks evidence and relies on theory, pre-history is best studied by archaeologists, anthropologists, philosophers and theologians —not historians !! Scholars divide pre-historic times into periods based on the tools man used: for example, the Stone Age, Ice Age (for glacial activity), Iron Age and the Bronze Age.

1. The use of tools refers to implements, not time; it is a technological reference, not a chronological reference. Primitive does not necessarily mean older, just simpler.