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Scientists find oldest human ancestor

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

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4th October, 2009

THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

Scientists may at last have found the 'missing link' in our evolution. For centuries, experts have discussed whether or not we came from apes, without any real proof. The story of evolution has found a new chapter after the discovery of the world's oldest skeleton of our ancestors. The remains of 100 bones were found in an Ethiopian village. They belong to a species called *Ardipithecus ramidus*. The skeleton has been given the nickname Ardi. Scientists say the fossilized bones are 4.4 million years old. This is a million years older than a skeleton found in the 1970s called Lucy. Ardi is important because she shows an unknown stage of our evolution that happened six million years ago.

Ardi was a 50kg female. She had a brain smaller than ours and had long arms and short legs. Her teeth are more like ours than those of chimpanzees. Scientists are excited because she walked upright, on two legs, not on all fours. She did not have an arched foot, which means she could not walk for long distances or run too far. Her long fingers and big toes meant she could easily climb through trees. Experts say the discovery is one of the most important finds ever. Professor Owen Lovejoy of the USA's Kent State University was very excited at seeing Ardi. He said: "This was like discovering a time capsule from a period and a place that we knew nothing about." Ardi is sure to unlock a few secrets to how we evolved.

WARM-UPS

1. EVOLUTION: Walk around the class and talk to other students about evolution. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

scientists / evolution / apes / proof / skeletons / nicknames / six million years ago / females / chimpanzees / long distances / trees / discoveries / time capsules / secrets

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. SCIENCE QUESTIONS: Do you know the answers to these questions? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you heard.

Questions	Yes/No/How sure?	Why do you think so?
Do we come from apes?		
Is there life on Mars?		
What was before the Big Bang?		
Can robots be intelligent?		
Will we live forever?		
Do ghosts exist?		

4. APES: Students A **strongly** believe we came from apes; Students B **strongly** believe we didn't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. TIME CAPSULE: Would you like to be in a time capsule? Rank these – the ones you would most like to visit at the top. Share your rankings with your partner. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- 6 million years ago
- 1973
- 22 AD
- the beginning of time
- this time last year
- the year 2100
- next Tuesday at 3.30 pm
- 1872

6. CHIMPANZEE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'chimpanzee'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Scientists found a 138-year-old woman in the jungle. | T / F |
| b. The woman wrote a chapter in a book about evolution. | T / F |
| c. A really old skeleton was found in a village in Ethiopia. | T / F |
| d. Scientists have always known what happened to us 6 million years ago. | T / F |
| e. The skeleton scientists found had a brain larger than a human brain. | T / F |
| f. Scientists say the owner of the skeleton once walked on two feet. | T / F |
| g. An American professor said the skeleton was not so important. | T / F |
| h. The professor said he believed we would travel in time one day. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. link | a. finding |
| 2. proof | b. discover |
| 3. discovery | c. limbs |
| 4. remains | d. time |
| 5. evolution | e. standing straight |
| 6. arms | f. connection |
| 7. upright | g. development |
| 8. experts | h. evidence |
| 9. period | i. specialists |
| 10. unlock | j. dead body |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. the 'missing link' | a. a new chapter |
| 2. whether or not we came | b. important finds ever |
| 3. The story of evolution has found | c. smaller than ours |
| 4. The skeleton has been given the | d. on all fours |
| 5. an unknown stage of | e. in our evolution |
| 6. She had a brain | f. our evolution |
| 7. on two legs, not | g. a few secrets |
| 8. she could easily climb | h. from apes |
| 9. the discovery is one of the most | i. nickname Ardi |
| 10. Ardi is sure to unlock | j. through trees |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Scientists may at last have found the '_____ link' in our evolution. For centuries, experts have discussed _____ or not we came from apes, without any real _____. The story of evolution has found a new chapter after the discovery of the world's oldest skeleton of our ancestors. The _____ of 100 bones were found in an Ethiopian village. They _____ to a species called *Ardipithecus ramidus*. The skeleton has been given the _____ Ardi. Scientists say the _____ bones are 4.4 million years old. This is a million years older than a skeleton found in the 1970s called Lucy. Ardi is important because she shows an unknown _____ of our evolution that happened six million years ago.

remains
fossilized
whether
stage
missing
belong
nickname
proof

Ardi was a 50kg female. She had a _____ smaller than ours and had long arms and short legs. Her teeth are more like ours than those of chimpanzees. Scientists are _____ because she walked _____, on two legs, not on all fours. She did not have an arched foot, which means she could not walk for long _____ or run too far. Her long fingers and big toes _____ she could easily climb through trees. Experts say the discovery is one of the most important _____ ever. Professor Owen Lovejoy of the USA's Kent State University was very excited at seeing Ardi. He said: "This was like discovering a time capsule from a _____ and a place that we knew nothing about." Ardi is sure to _____ a few secrets to how we evolved.

period
excited
meant
unlock
upright
brain
finds
distances

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

Scientists _____ found the 'missing link' in our evolution. For centuries, experts have discussed _____ came from apes, without any real proof. The story of evolution has _____ after the discovery of the world's oldest skeleton of our ancestors. The remains of 100 bones were found in an Ethiopian village. They _____ called *Ardipithecus ramidus*. The skeleton has been given the nickname *Ardi*. Scientists _____ are 4.4 million years old. This is a million years older than a skeleton found in the 1970s called *Lucy*. *Ardi* is important because she shows _____ our evolution that happened six million years ago.

Ardi was a 50kg female. She had a brain _____ had long arms and short legs. Her teeth are more like ours than those of chimpanzees. Scientists are excited because _____, on two legs, not on all fours. She did not have an arched foot, which means she could not walk _____ run too far. Her long fingers and big toes meant she could easily climb through trees. Experts say the discovery is _____ important finds ever. Professor Owen Lovejoy of the USA's Kent State University was very excited at seeing *Ardi*. He said: "This was like discovering _____ a period and a place that we knew nothing about." *Ardi* is sure to unlock a few secrets _____.

Scientists find oldest human ancestor – 4th October, 2009

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'missing' and 'link'.

missing	link
----------------	-------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• link• proof• oldest• species• bones• stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• brain• upright• run• trees• capsule• unlock
---	--

STUDENT EVOLUTION SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

Write five GOOD questions about evolution in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

EVOLUTION DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'evolution'?
- c) What is your theory of how we got on Earth?
- d) Do you believe we descended from apes?
- e) What is the missing link scientists keep talking about?
- f) What do you think of this new discovery in Ethiopia?
- g) Are you interested in this kind of news? Why?
- h) Do you think scientists will ever be able to trace our evolution?
- i) What do you think life was like six million years ago?
- j) What other unknown things about the human race would you like to know?

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EVOLUTION DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Why are scientists so excited at finding Ardi?
- c) Would you like to have a job looking for old bones?
- d) What are the similarities and differences between Ardi and us?
- e) What will we look like six million years from now?
- f) What have you heard in the news about Ardi?
- g) What place in time would you like to visit?
- h) What would surprise Ardi most about life on Earth today?
- i) What other secrets are there for scientists to unlock?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Professor Owen Lovejoy?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0910/091004-evolution.html>

Scientists may at last have (1) _____ the 'missing link' in our evolution. For centuries, experts have discussed whether or not we (2) _____ from apes, without any real proof. The story of evolution has found a new chapter after the discovery of the world's oldest skeleton of our ancestors. The remains (3) _____ 100 bones were found in an Ethiopian village. They belong to a species called *Ardipithecus ramidus*. The skeleton has been given the (4) _____ Ardi. Scientists say the (5) _____ bones are 4.4 million years old. This is a million years older than a skeleton found in the 1970s called Lucy. Ardi is important because she shows an unknown (6) _____ of our evolution that happened six million years ago.

Ardi was a 50kg female. She had a brain smaller than ours and had long arms and short legs. Her teeth are more like (7) _____ than those of chimpanzees. Scientists are excited because she walked upright, on two legs, not on all (8) _____. She did not have an arched foot, which means she could not walk for long distances or run too far. Her long fingers and big toes (9) _____ she could easily climb through trees. Experts say the discovery is one of the most important (10) _____ ever. Professor Owen Lovejoy of the USA's Kent State University was very excited at (11) _____ Ardi. He said: "This was like discovering a time capsule from a period and a place that we knew nothing about." Ardi is sure to (12) _____ a few secrets to how we evolved.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. | (a) find | (b) fund | (c) finding | (d) found |
| 2. | (a) came | (b) became | (c) comes | (d) coming |
| 3. | (a) for | (b) of | (c) by | (d) at |
| 4. | (a) naming | (b) nicknames | (c) nickname | (d) nick |
| 5. | (a) fossil | (b) fossils | (c) fossilized | (d) fossilization |
| 6. | (a) stag | (b) stage | (c) staging | (d) stagger |
| 7. | (a) our | (b) them | (c) human | (d) ours |
| 8. | (a) fours | (b) four | (c) fourth | (d) fourths |
| 9. | (a) meaning | (b) meant | (c) means | (d) mean |
| 10. | (a) found | (b) finders | (c) funds | (d) finds |
| 11. | (a) seen | (b) sees | (c) seeing | (d) saw |
| 12. | (a) unlock | (b) padlock | (c) lock | (d) locked |

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HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about evolution. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. EVOLUTION: Make a poster about evolution and the different stages. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. HOW WE GOT HERE: Write a magazine article about how humans became humans. Include imaginary interviews with two people with very different views.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to an evolution expert. Ask him/her three questions about evolution. Give him/her three of your own opinions about evolution. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. link | a. connection |
| 2. proof | b. evidence |
| 3. discovery | c. finding |
| 4. remains | d. dead body |
| 5. evolution | e. development |
| 6. arms | f. limbs |
| 7. upright | g. standing straight |
| 8. experts | h. specialists |
| 9. period | i. time |
| 10. unlock | j. discover |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. the 'missing link' | a. in our evolution |
| 2. whether or not we came | b. from apes |
| 3. The story of evolution has found | c. a new chapter |
| 4. The skeleton has been given the | d. nickname Ardi |
| 5. an unknown stage of | e. our evolution |
| 6. She had a brain | f. smaller than ours |
| 7. on two legs, not | g. on all fours |
| 8. she could easily climb | h. through trees |
| 9. the discovery is one of the most | i. important finds ever |
| 10. Ardi is sure to unlock | j. a few secrets |

GAP FILL:

Scientists find oldest human ancestor

Scientists may at last have found the 'missing link' in our evolution. For centuries, experts have discussed **whether** or not we came from apes, without any real **proof**. The story of evolution has found a new chapter after the discovery of the world's oldest skeleton of our ancestors. The **remains** of 100 bones were found in an Ethiopian village. They **belong** to a species called *Ardipithecus ramidus*. The skeleton has been given the **nickname** Ardi. Scientists say the **fossilized** bones are 4.4 million years old. This is a million years older than a skeleton found in the 1970s called Lucy. Ardi is important because she shows an unknown **stage** of our evolution that happened six million years ago.

Ardi was a 50kg female. She had a **brain** smaller than ours and had long arms and short legs. Her teeth are more like ours than those of chimpanzees. Scientists are **excited** because she walked **upright**, on two legs, not on all fours. She did not have an arched foot, which means she could not walk for long **distances** or run too far. Her long fingers and big toes **meant** she could easily climb through trees. Experts say the discovery is one of the most important **finds** ever. Professor Owen Lovejoy of the USA's Kent State University was very excited at seeing Ardi. He said: "This was like discovering a time capsule from a **period** and a place that we knew nothing about." Ardi is sure to **unlock** a few secrets to how we evolved.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - a 3 - b 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - d 8 - a 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a