

Western Morocco is a hot and dry region of Africa. On the side of a dusty rock face, just outside Jebel Irhoud, Jean-Jacques Hublin, Abdelouahed Ben-Ncer and their team were searching for clues to humanity's origins.



At first glance it would seem like a pointless task. Most of the major finds in human evolution came from eastern and southern Africa, not all the way in the northwest. What they were about to find would change our understanding of human evolution forever.



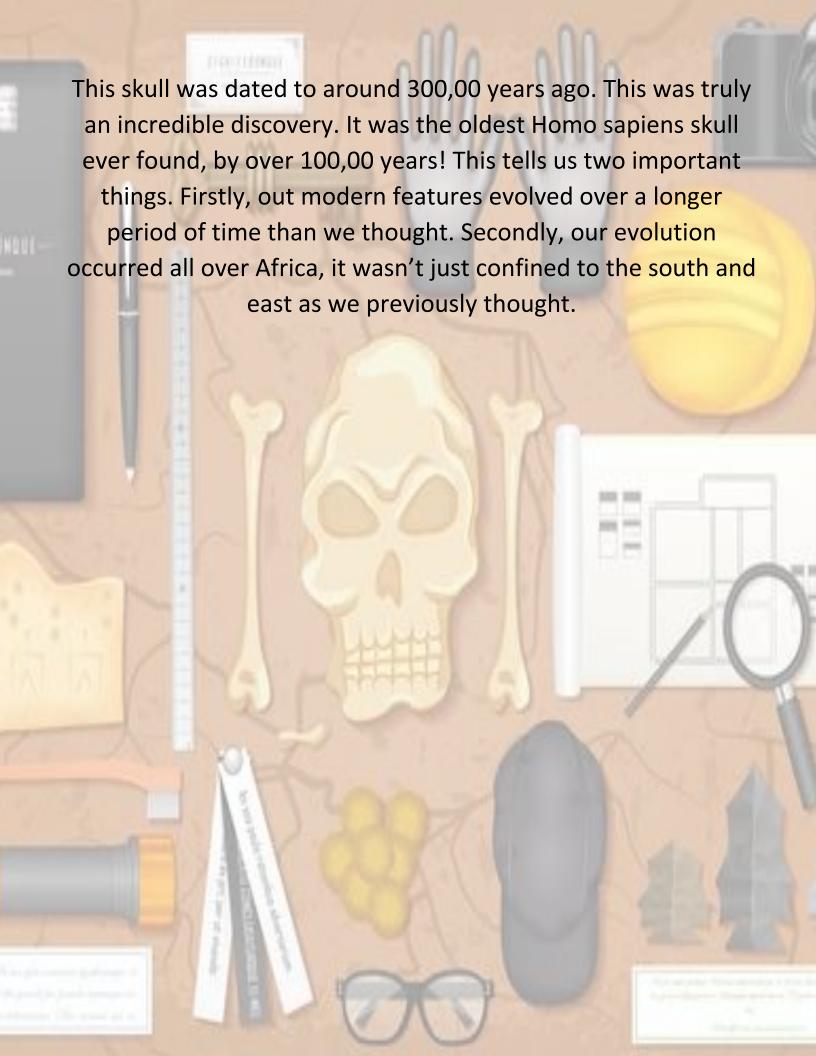
As they dug down, they found the most important artefact any human can ever leave behind, their skull. As our big brains are the most defining feature of Homo sapiens, we can tell so much form finding human skulls.



One big debate in prehistory is when our modern brains emerged. Did they evolve quickly, or very slowly over hundreds of thousands of years? This skull from Jebel Irhoud is a key piece of the puzzle, maybe the most important piece found so far.

Even though the skull is not quite as round as a modern human's, it is very, very similar. Much more like ours than any of our evolutionary cousins, like Neanderthals. A Neanderthal skull was shaped like a rugby ball and very thick boned. The skull iron Jebel Irhoud was rounder and had delicate cheeks, just like you.

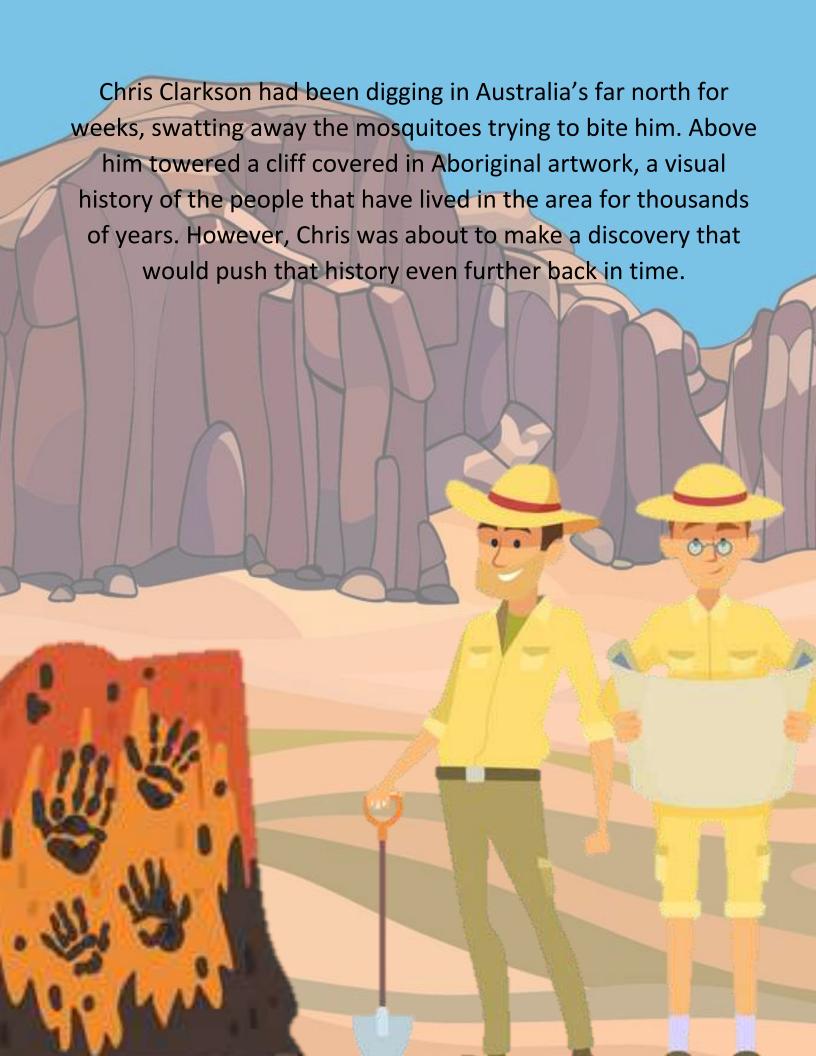


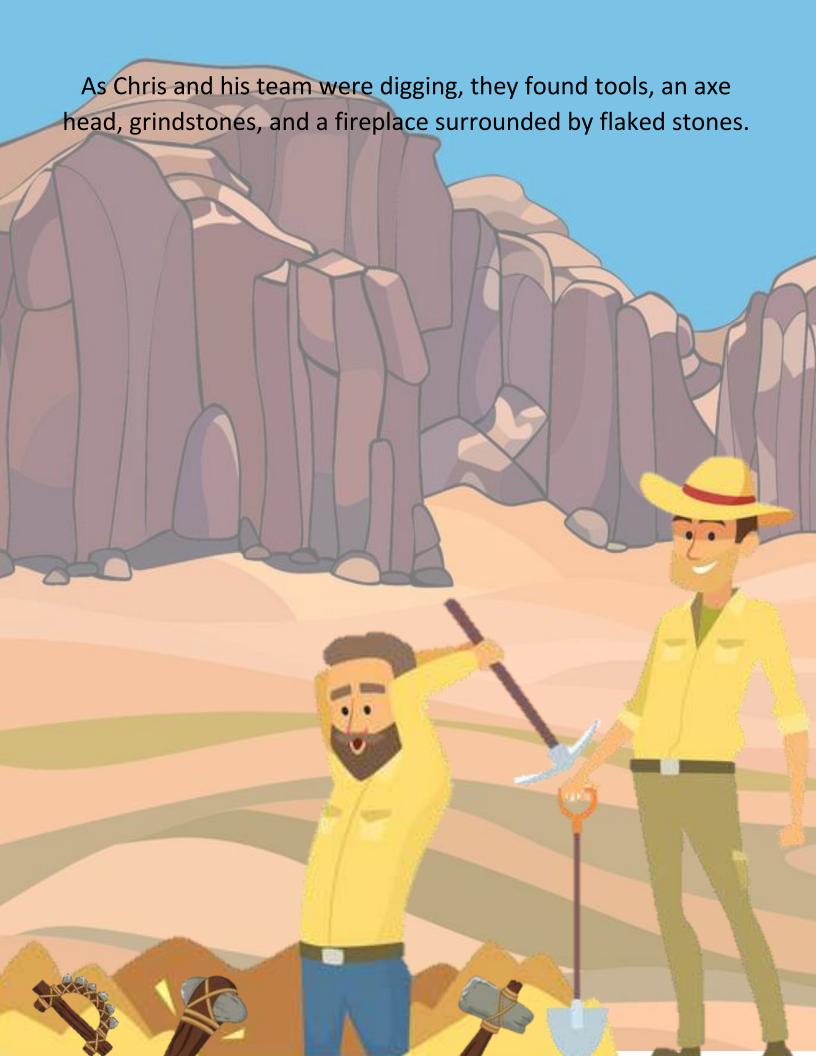


It seems it took us quite a while to leave Africa and spread around the world. Jebel Irhoud is 120,000 years older than the earliest Homo sapiens found outside Africa, which was in Israel. Although who knows what future archaeologists might find!

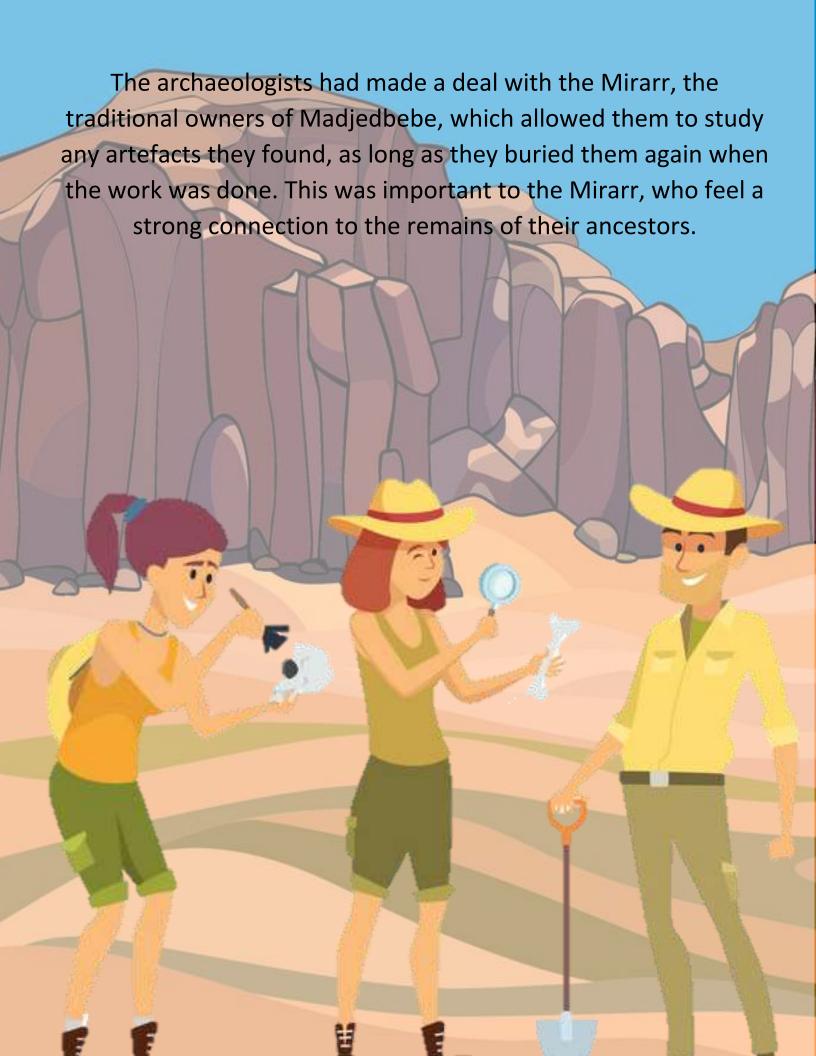






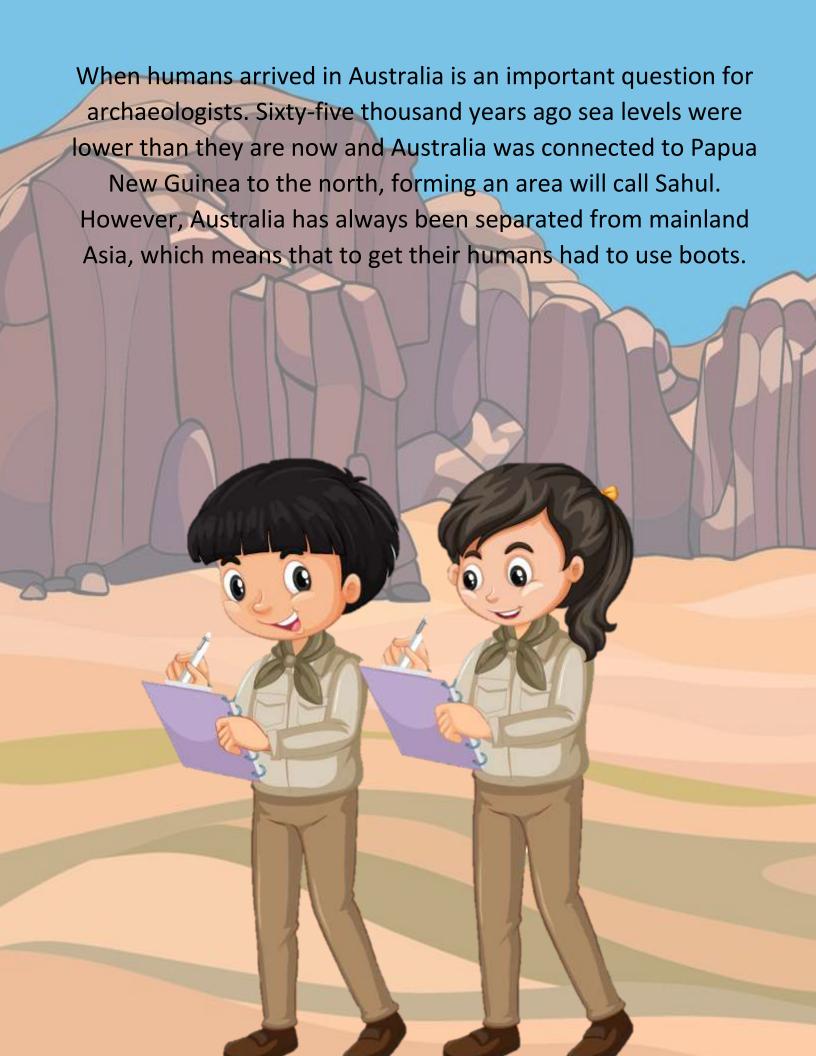


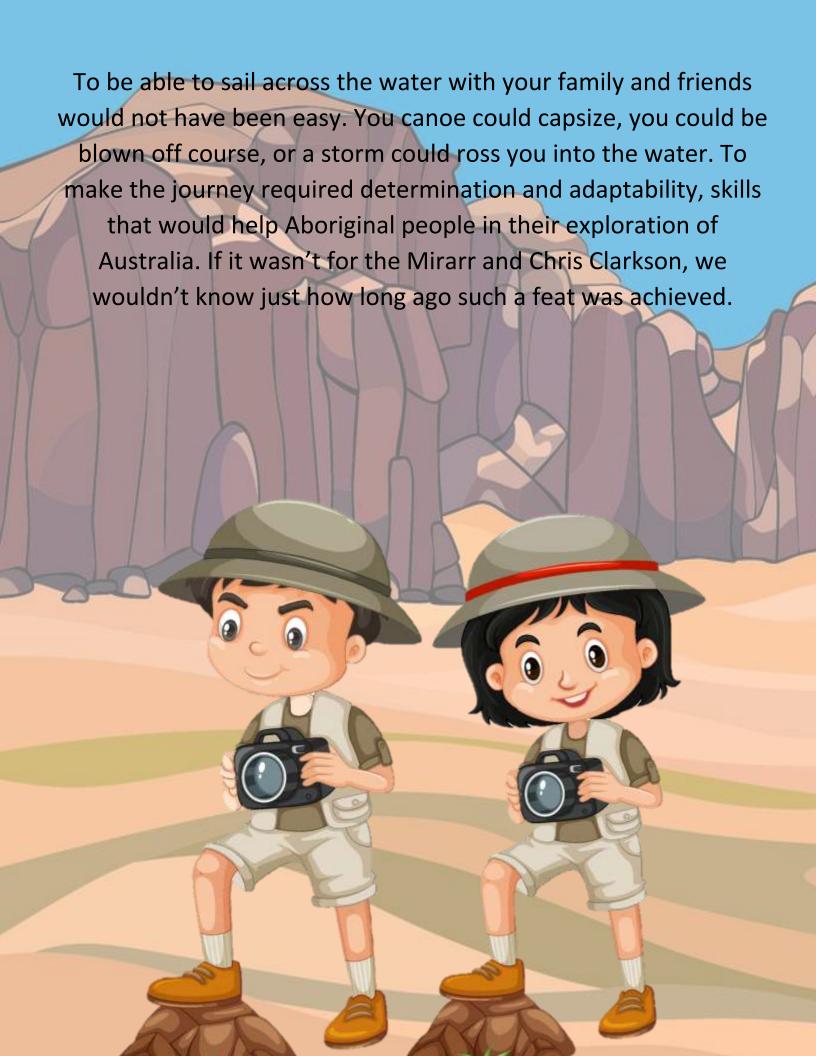






The results astonished everyone. People had been making these tools, grinding vegetables and sitting around the fires 65,000 years ago! This was the earliest ever evidence of humans in Australia.

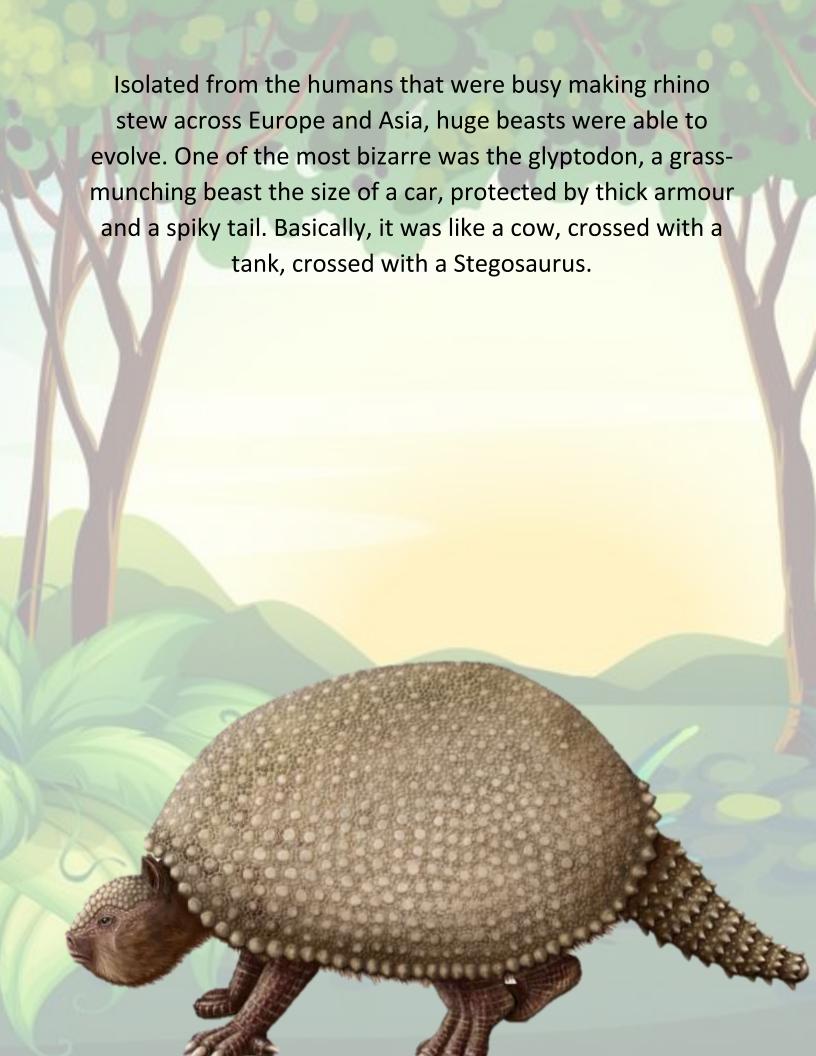






Twenty-five thousand years ago, virtually all of Canada and Alaska was frozen, cutting the Americans off from the rest of the world.





However, even the glyptodons' mighty armour couldn't protect them from what was to come. At some point, humans crossed into North America using a land bridge that connected it to Asia. As there was so much ice, they probably moved along the coast, going from beach to beach in small canoes.



The Pacific coast of the Americas is lined with kelp forests.

These huge fields of giant seaweed support lots of wildlife and could have provided the early travellers with plenty of fish on their way south.



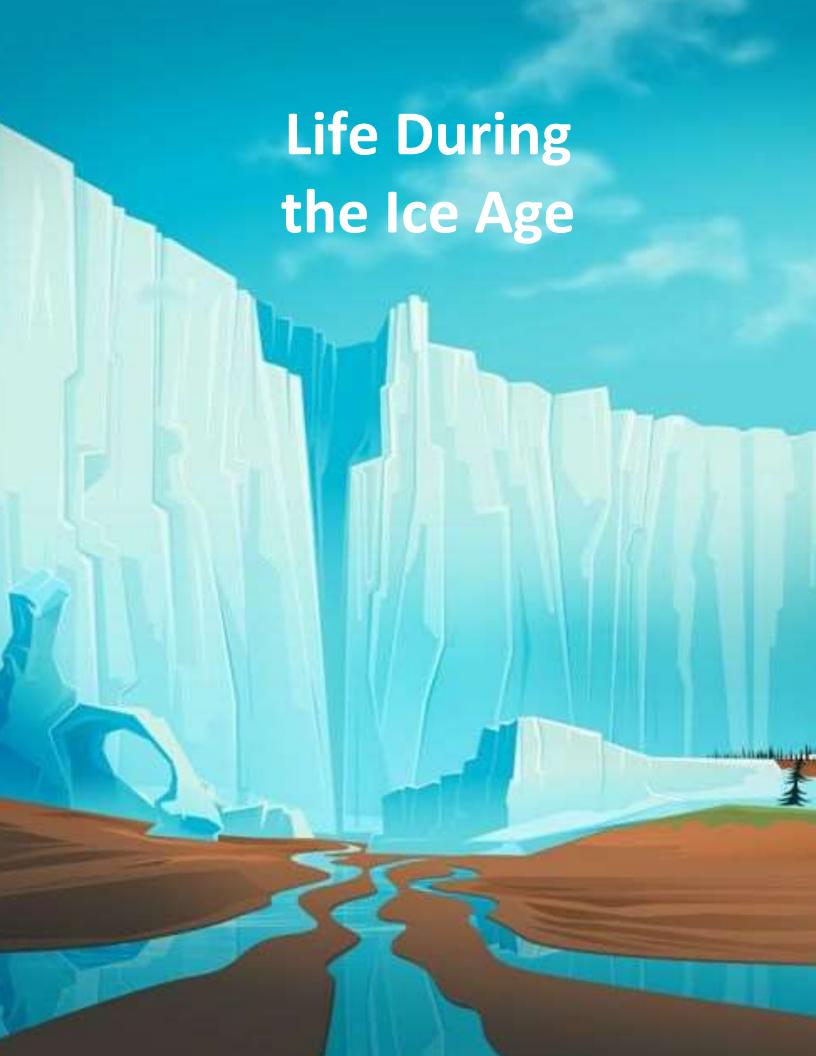
A few thousand years later, Dr Karina Chichkoyan and her colleagues were analysing glyptodon remains from different museums (sadly no glyptodons are alive today). The team found clear scratch marks on the glyptodon bones – evidence that humans had hunted them and then carved the meat.



So, when did human arrive in the Americas? It's hard to say for sure and it is one of the most debated topics in archaeology. We know humans reached Monte Verde in the south of Chile at least 14,600 years ago.

So, they must have entered across Alaska at least a couple of thousand years before that, maybe even 10,00 years before. More evidence is needed before we can solve the puzzle.











Life in the Ice Age was not all snowball fights and mammoth burgers. Just like people today, prehistoric people were fantastic artists. Beautiful paintings of lions hunting have been found on cave walls in France. Cave people also played music.

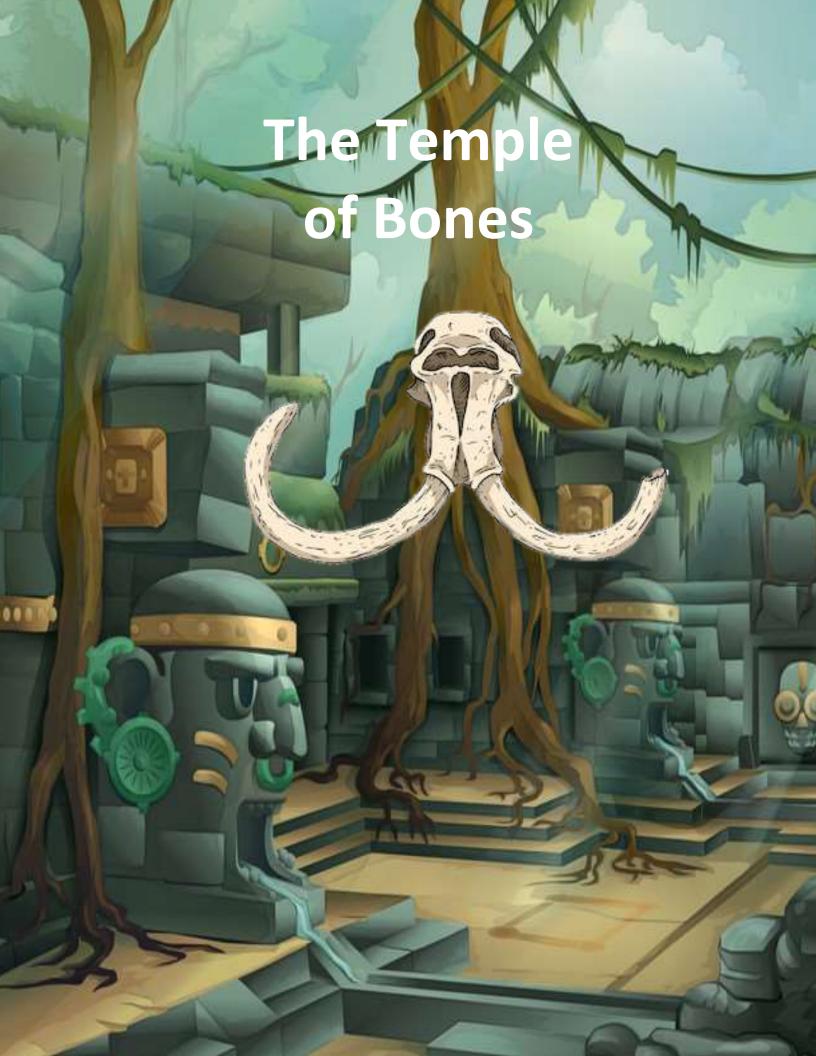
Archaeologists have found ancient flutes made from birds' bones!

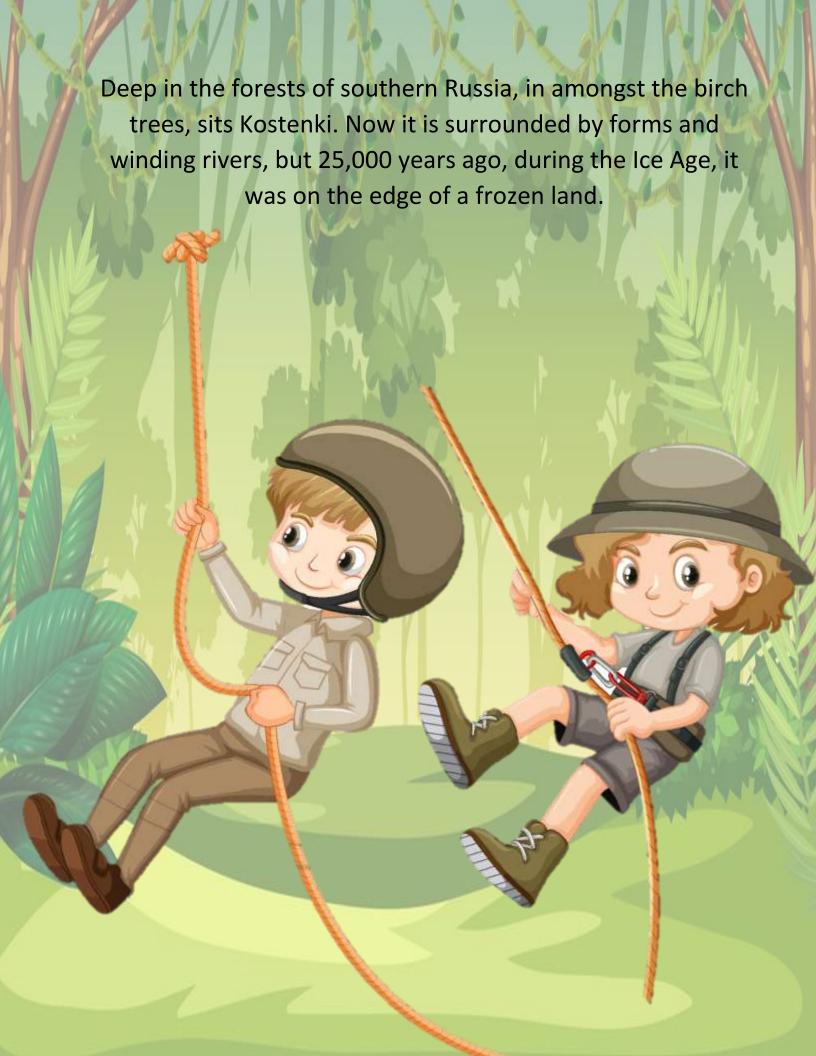


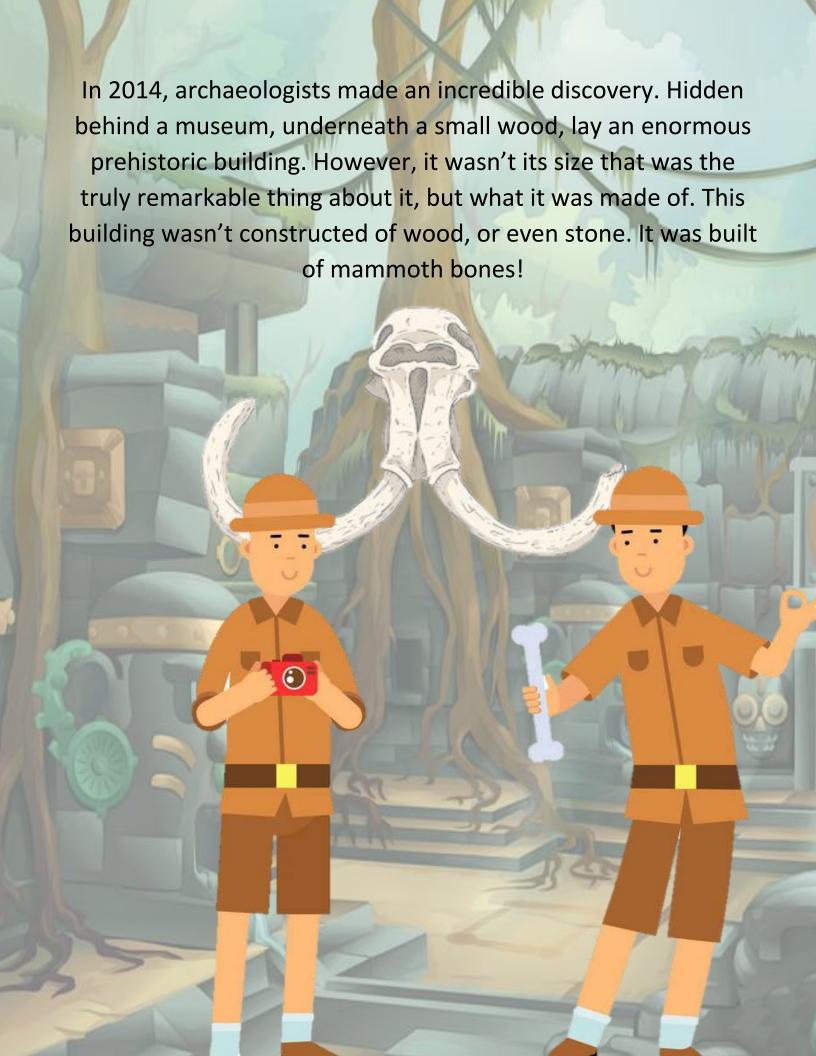


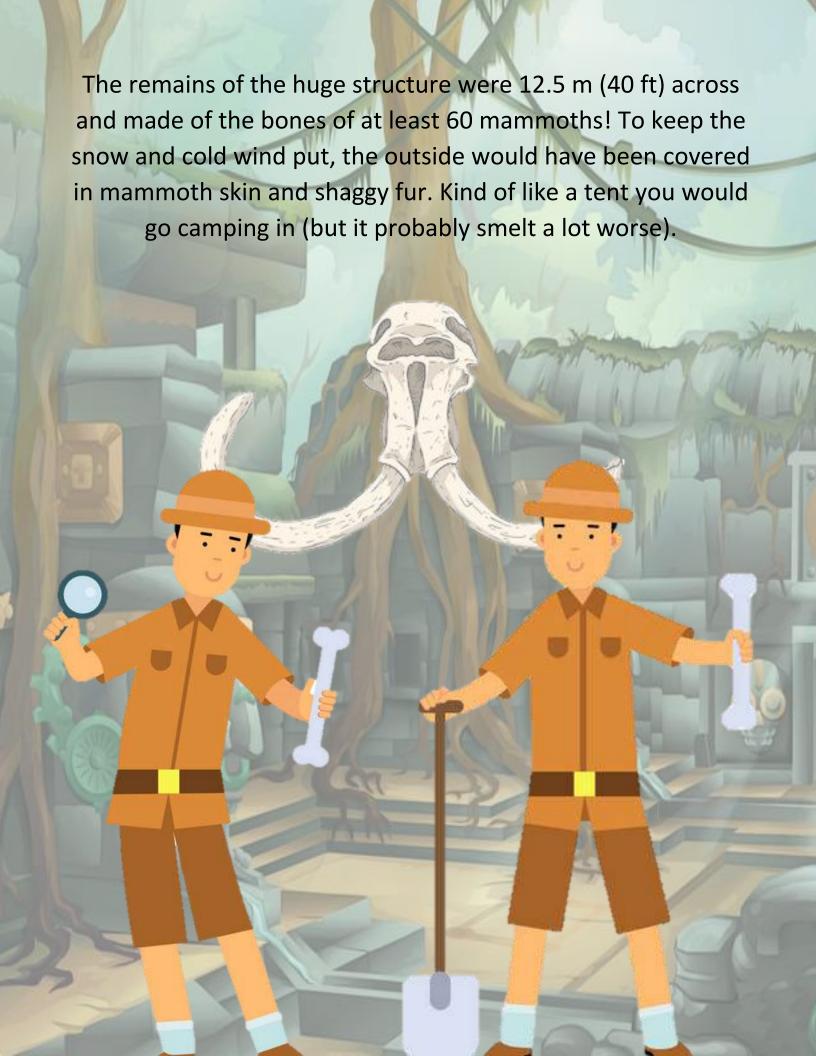
In the chilly Ice Age world our of ancestors, hunting weapons were essential for survival. No spears = no food. Prehistoric people created weapons out of antlers and flint, polishing the, into razor-sharp, lethal tools.











To build this mammoth tent the prehistoric builders first needed to hunt a mammoth. This was a difficult and perilous job. These animals weighed as much as three cars each and could easily hurt you with their tusks or trunks.



