Middle Paleolithic

The **Middle Paleolithic** period, spanning from **300,000 BCE to 30,000 BCE**, represents a significant evolutionary leap in human history. During this phase, early humans, particularly **Homo sapiens** and **Neanderthals**, saw remarkable advancements not only in **tool-making** but also in **social organization** and **cultural practices**. This era marks the emergence of more specialized and refined tools, the evolution of social structures, and the beginning of behaviors that would define modern human societies.

The Levallois Technique: A Revolutionary Advance in Prehistoric Tool Technology

1. Introduction: Moving Beyond Basic Stone Tools

The journey of human evolution is not just biological but also deeply technological. From the earliest core-flake tools of the Oldowan period to the symmetrical handaxes of the Acheulean, each technological stage reflects a leap in human cognition and adaptability. The **Levallois technique**, which emerged during the **Middle Paleolithic period (roughly 300,000 to 50,000 years ago)**, marked a turning point in this trajectory.

It was first identified at the **Levallois-Perret site in France**, but later discoveries revealed its global significance, with similar tools unearthed in Africa, Europe, West Asia, and even parts of India. This wide distribution highlights its importance in understanding the evolution of **early Homo sapiens, Neanderthals, and other archaic humans**. The Levallois method did not simply add new tools to the prehistoric toolkit—it **reflected a fundamentally new way of thinking and producing**.

2. What Is the Levallois Technique?

The **Levallois technique** is often called a **prepared core technology**. It involves preparing a stone (the core) in a very specific manner so that when it is struck, it produces a flake of predetermined size and shape. Unlike earlier traditions where flakes were often accidental by-products, the **flake itself was now the final tool**.

The process required several steps:

- **Shaping the core** to have a domed surface

- **Creating a striking platform** at one end of the core
- **Strategically removing flakes** from the sides to refine the shape
- **Delivering a final strike** that removed a pre-shaped flake with sharp edges

The Levallois flakes were **thin, uniform, and razor-sharp**, suitable for direct use as tools. This method is a sign of **mental planning, sequential thought, and manual precision**. The predictability of the outcome represents **conceptual intelligence**—the ability to visualize a product before its creation.

3. Types and Functions of Levallois Tools

The Levallois technique allowed early humans to produce a **diverse range of standardized tools** suited to specialized functions. Some of the most common types included:

- **Scrapers**: Used for cleaning animal hides and preparing leather
- **Points**: Likely used as spear tips, indicating advancements in hunting strategies
- **Blades and knives**: For cutting meat, plants, or even crafting wooden tools
- **Burins and awls** (in later adaptations): For perforating materials and engraving

These tools show clear **functional efficiency**. For example, thinner flakes made cutting easier and faster. Such toolkits also enabled early humans to **butcher animals, scrape hides for clothing, dig roots, and perhaps build shelters**. The **multipurpose nature** of Levallois tools gave humans a critical edge in survival and resource exploitation.

4. Cognitive and Cultural Implications

The Levallois technique is not just evidence of mechanical skill—it reflects a **major leap in brain development and social behavior**. Tool-making had evolved from random striking to a process requiring **abstract reasoning**, **planning depth**, and **hand-eye coordination**.

Key cognitive skills demonstrated by Levallois toolmakers include:

- **Mental templates**: The toolmaker could "see" the final tool in the core
- **Step-by-step processing**: A sequential understanding of how to shape and strike
- **Anticipation of outcome**: Understanding the cause-and-effect of force and angle

Furthermore, the complexity of the technique implies that knowledge was **transmitted through teaching**, either by demonstration or verbal instruction. This suggests the presence of **early learning systems**, **proto-language**, and **social cooperation**—hallmarks of culture. It also indicates the formation of **early group identity**, where techniques and knowledge were **shared within communities** and perhaps even passed down through generations.

5. Survival and Ecological Adaptation

The Middle Paleolithic was a period of **climatic instability**, including glacial and interglacial phases. Populations had to adapt to changing resources, shifting landscapes, and increased mobility. In this context, the **Levallois tools became essential for survival**.

These tools allowed humans to:

- **Butcher large animals** with more precision
- **Process plant materials and roots** effectively
- **Prepare animal hides** for clothing in colder climates
- **Defend against predators** using spear points and cutting implements
- **Construct shelters** or manipulate the environment using sharp implements

Levallois technology thus supported **broad-spectrum adaptation**, enabling humans to survive in **diverse ecological zones**—from grasslands to forested areas to semi-arid deserts. This technological versatility helped early humans **migrate farther and survive longer**, making it a key factor in their **expansion across continents**.

6. A Departure from Earlier Traditions

Compared to earlier tool-making methods, the Levallois technique reflects a **qualitative transformation**, not just a quantitative improvement.

Feature	**Oldowan/Acheulean**	**Levallois Technique**
Core Preparation	Minimal or none	Systematic, multi-step shaping

Predictability of Flakes	Low	High
Cognitive Requirement	Basic manual skills	Advanced planning and visualization
Tool Shape	Irregular, variable	Symmetrical, standardized
Efficiency	Moderate	High

This shift marks the beginning of **behavioral modernity**—a trait associated with Homo sapiens. The Levallois method also laid the groundwork for **Upper Paleolithic innovations**, including microliths and composite tools.

1. The Middle Paleolithic: A Time of Transition and Innovation

The **Middle Paleolithic period (approximately 300,000 to 40,000 years ago)** was a critical phase in human prehistory. It acted as a **bridge between the earlier Lower Paleolithic culture**, dominated by generalized stone tools like Acheulean handaxes, and the **more culturally complex Upper Paleolithic**, which saw the emergence of art, rituals, and microlithic technologies.

What makes the Middle Paleolithic so significant is the **simultaneous presence and parallel evolution** of **two advanced hominin species**:

- **Neanderthals** (Homo neanderthalensis), who lived in **Europe and western Asia**, and
- **Early Homo sapiens**, the anatomically modern humans, who evolved in **Africa**.

During this time, we observe:

- An increase in **technological diversity**, particularly with the widespread use of **prepared-core techniques** like the **Levallois method**.

- Evidence of **expanding social structures**, possibly including **group cooperation**, **division of labor**, and **ritualistic behaviors**.
- The first signs of **symbolic thinking**, which paved the way for art, religion, and language.

In essence, the Middle Paleolithic was not just a phase of tool-making improvement—it was a **cognitive and cultural revolution in the making**, setting the evolutionary groundwork for modern human behavior.

2. Neanderthal Life: Skilled Survivors of Harsh Environments

Neanderthals, who lived primarily in Ice Age Europe and parts of Central and Western Asia, were **well-adapted to cold, rugged environments**. Their **stocky bodies, strong limbs, and robust skeletons** helped them conserve heat and survive in sub-arctic climates.

But Neanderthals were not just physically strong—they were also **technologically skilled and socially complex**:

- They mastered the **Levallois technique**, allowing them to produce **efficient and standardized flake tools**.
- Their toolkit included **scrapers** (for preparing animal hides), **points** (for thrusting spears), and **burins** (for engraving or woodworking).
- Archaeological findings suggest they were **capable hunters** who likely coordinated group efforts to take down large prey like mammoths or bison.

Socially, there's evidence of:

- **Caring for the sick and elderly**, such as healed injuries found on fossils.
- **Burial practices**, such as those seen at Shanidar Cave in Iraq, hinting at possible ritual behaviors or a concept of death.
- **Control of fire**, enabling cooking, warmth, and protection.

Contrary to older stereotypes of them as brutish and unintelligent, Neanderthals were in many ways **innovative, emotionally aware, and socially structured**.

3. Homo Sapiens: Refinement and Symbolism in Technology

While Neanderthals flourished in Europe, **Homo sapiens were evolving in Africa**, where a different evolutionary path was unfolding. Around 300,000 years ago,

anatomically modern humans began showing signs of **greater behavioral and cultural flexibility**.

Key distinctions in Homo sapiens:

- Their toolkits, although similar to those of Neanderthals in terms of function, became increasingly **refined, symmetrical, and multifunctional**.
- Homo sapiens used a **greater variety of materials**, such as **bone, antler, ivory**, and not just stone.
- There is clear evidence of **symbolic activity**, such as **engraved ochre, personal ornaments (like beads), and abstract carvings**—all suggesting **symbolic thought, identity expression, and possibly early spirituality**.

These cultural expressions are crucial indicators of **higher-order cognitive functions**, such as:

- **Abstract thinking**
- **Conceptual communication**
- **Artistic creativity**

Homo sapiens also likely had **more complex language capabilities**, aiding in the transmission of knowledge, group coordination, and social bonding.

4. Contact and Interaction: Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens Meet

Around 60,000–50,000 years ago, **early Homo sapiens began migrating out of Africa**, eventually reaching the regions inhabited by Neanderthals. This resulted in a period of **contact and interaction** between the two species, especially in Europe and the Near East.

Modern genetics has confirmed:

- There was **interbreeding between Neanderthals and Homo sapiens**.
- As a result, **non-African populations today carry approximately 1–2% Neanderthal DNA**, indicating that this interaction had a **lasting biological impact** on human evolution.

Apart from genetic mixing, it is possible that there was **technological and cultural exchange**:

- Some archaeological sites show **blended tool traditions**, suggesting influence or imitation.

- Innovations in symbolic expression or hunting strategies may have **diffused across groups**.

However, interactions may also have involved **competition for resources**, especially during periods of environmental stress. The dynamic between these two species was likely complex—ranging from **peaceful coexistence** to **conflict and competition**.

This period of contact is significant not just for genetic exchange, but also for **what it tells us about social behavior, learning, and cultural transmission** among ancient humans.

5. Extinction and Emergence: The Rise of Homo Sapiens

By approximately **30,000 BCE**, **Neanderthals disappeared** from the fossil record. While the exact reasons are still debated, scholars propose several contributing factors:

Possible Causes of Neanderthal Extinction:

- **Environmental Stress**: Fluctuating Ice Age climates could have led to habitat loss and food scarcity.
- **Demographic Disadvantages**: Small, isolated Neanderthal groups may have had low reproductive rates.
- **Competition with Homo sapiens**: Sapiens may have outcompeted Neanderthals due to more **flexible behavior, larger social networks, and better communication**.
- **Assimilation**: Some Neanderthals may have been absorbed into Homo sapiens populations through interbreeding.

Meanwhile, **Homo sapiens thrived and expanded**, reaching all parts of the world—from Europe to Asia, Australia, and eventually the Americas. Their success is attributed to their:

- **Superior cultural adaptability**
- **Use of language and symbolic systems**
- **Capacity for innovation**, such as developing tailored clothing, art, and planned dwellings

Thus, the extinction of Neanderthals and the **global spread of Homo sapiens** marks the beginning of the **Upper Paleolithic cultural explosion** and the eventual **rise of civilization**.

Social and Cultural Advancements: Group Living and Cooperation

1. Introduction: Moving Beyond Individual Survival

The **Middle Paleolithic period** was not only significant for its technological innovations but also marked a major turning point in the **social and cultural development of early humans and Neanderthals**. While earlier hominins may have lived and moved in loose associations, it is during this period that we see clearer signs of **structured group living, coordinated behavior, and cooperative strategies** for survival.

Human evolution, from this point forward, was shaped not just by the **ability to make tools**, but by the **capacity to live, work, and think together as a community**. This shift laid the foundation for all future social complexity—from extended families and clans to tribes and civilizations.

2. The Rise of Cooperative Living: From Survival to Sociality

Archaeological and paleoanthropological evidence suggests that **Middle Paleolithic hominin groups—both Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens—lived in small, mobile bands**, often composed of **20 to 50 individuals**. These bands likely:

- **Shared food and resources**
- **Protected each other from predators**
- **Worked together during hunting expeditions**
- **Traveled collectively** in search of water, shelter, or prey

Group living helped mitigate the **risks of harsh climates, dangerous animals, and resource scarcity**. It also promoted **learning from one another**, such as how to make tools, track animals, or identify edible plants. Children could learn by watching adults, and individuals with experience or skill could become natural leaders or mentors.

This represents a crucial evolutionary development—**dependence on social bonds for survival**, rather than just individual strength or instinct.

3. Social Roles and the Emergence of Division of Labor

As cooperative behaviors became more complex, **basic social roles** may have started to emerge. Although full-blown social hierarchies likely came later, there is growing evidence to suggest that **division of labor** was already taking shape in Middle Paleolithic communities.

Different individuals may have had:

- **Designated tasks**, such as **hunting, gathering, tool-making**, or caring for the young
- **Elder members** possibly served as **knowledge keepers or decision-makers**
- **Specialized toolmakers** or skilled hunters may have held **elevated status** within the group

This emerging **task specialization** made group life more efficient. It also required **communication, coordination, and trust**—all signs of a maturing social structure. As tasks became more specific and knowledge more refined, cultural transmission (learning through teaching and imitation) became more formalized.

In essence, early humans were beginning to develop a **proto-social system**, where each member played a role and the success of the group depended on **collective effort**.

4. Cooperative Hunting and Shared Success

One of the most important reasons for the success of group living was the need for **cooperative hunting**, especially when targeting **large and dangerous animals** such as mammoths, bison, and wild horses.

Such hunts were **high-risk, high-reward** activities that required:

- **Strategic planning** and possibly **communication cues** (gestures, sounds, or proto-language)
- **Roles for different individuals**, such as **drivers, ambushers, or finishers**
- **Post-hunt coordination** to **butcher, process, and share the kill**

This kind of organized group activity provided **massive caloric rewards**, making survival more sustainable, especially in colder climates. It also **strengthened social bonds**, as food and responsibility were shared.

Some archaeological sites, such as those at **Torralba and Ambrona in Spain**, show evidence of **organized group hunting of megafauna**, indicating a high level of **planning, cooperation, and possibly leadership**.

5. Social Bonds, Care, and Emotional Complexity

Another significant social development in this period is the evidence of **care for the injured, sick, and elderly**. Fossil remains of both Neanderthals and Homo sapiens show individuals who:

- Survived **serious injuries or diseases**
- Had **limited mobility** but lived for years
- Would not have survived without **group assistance and compassion**

Such findings suggest the beginnings of **altruism**, **empathy**, and **emotional depth** within social groups. It implies that early humans were not only concerned with personal survival, but also with the **well-being of others**—a fundamental feature of all human societies.

These social traits helped to foster **group cohesion**, long-term cooperation, and possibly even **early spiritual or ritual behaviors**, such as **burying the dead**, offering **symbolic objects**, or engaging in **group ceremonies**.

Middle Paleolithic Archaeological Evidence: A Global and Indian Perspective

1. Introduction: Mapping the Middle Paleolithic World

The **Middle Paleolithic period** (c. **300,000–40,000 years ago**) marks a critical stage in human evolution, bridging the transition from the **Lower Paleolithic's generalized tools** to the **complex culture of the Upper Paleolithic**. It is during this period that we witness the emergence of:

- **Prepared-core technologies** like the **Levallois technique**
- **Advanced cognitive abilities**, including **planning and abstract thought**
- **More complex social structures**, such as **group cooperation, care for the injured**, and possibly **symbolic behavior**

Globally, this phase is associated with **Homo neanderthalensis (Neanderthals)** in Europe and western Asia, and **early Homo sapiens** in Africa and parts of South and Southeast Asia. The **archaeological record from India** also reveals that the subcontinent played a **vital role in this global evolutionary narrative**, offering regional evidence of both technological innovation and human dispersal.

2. Middle Paleolithic in India: Regional Cultures and Technologies

a. Sanganakallu (Karnataka)

Located in **Karnataka**, Sanganakallu is one of India's most prominent Middle Paleolithic sites. Excavations have revealed:

- **Levallois flakes**, **scrapers**, **choppers**, and **points**, showcasing advanced core preparation techniques

- **Stone hearths and ash layers**, indicating **controlled use of fire**
- **Animal bones with cut marks**, suggesting **butchery and meat processing**

The presence of both tool-making debris and habitation indicators suggests that Sanganakallu was **not a temporary camp**, but possibly a **seasonally used site**, favored for its **resources and strategic location**.

b. Attirampakkam (Tamil Nadu)

Situated in the **Kortallayar River Basin**, **Attirampakkam** is one of the **oldest and most significant Middle Paleolithic sites in India**.

- Researchers have uncovered a long cultural sequence from **Acheulean to Middle Paleolithic industries**
- The tools—mainly **flake-based implements** using the **Levallois technique**—demonstrate a **planned and efficient approach to tool-making**
- The site's geographical context, including **riverine and forested zones**, suggests **ecological adaptability** by early humans

Dating evidence (cosmogenic nuclide dating) places Middle Paleolithic layers here as early as **385,000 years ago**, **older than similar layers in Europe**, challenging Eurocentric timelines of technological development.

c. Other Sites Across India

- **Nevasa (Maharashtra)**: Shows transition from Acheulean to Middle Paleolithic; tools made from basalt
- **Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh)**: Rock shelters with both habitation levels and Middle Paleolithic tools
- **Didwana (Rajasthan)**: Stratified evidence of Levallois cores and flakes
- **Narmada and Son Valleys**: Reflect river-based settlement patterns with persistent tool-making activities

Together, these sites show that **Middle Paleolithic culture in India** was **technologically competent**, **regionally diverse**, and **well adapted to environmental conditions** ranging from forests to semi-arid zones.

3. Global Middle Paleolithic Sites: Africa, Europe, and Asia

a. Africa: The Homeland of Homo sapiens

Jebel Irhoud (Morocco):

- Earliest known fossils of **anatomically modern humans**, dated to **~300,000 years ago**
- Associated with **Levallois flake tools** and evidence of **planned behavior**

Kapthurin Formation (Kenya):

- Provides evidence for the transition from Acheulean handaxes to **Middle Stone Age blade tools**
- Reflects increasing **cognitive complexity** and **tool diversity**

These African sites demonstrate that **modern Homo sapiens** were developing sophisticated cultural behavior long before they left the continent.

b. Europe: Neanderthal Stronghold

Le Moustier & La Ferrassie (France):

- Key Mousterian sites associated with **Neanderthals**
- Tools include **Levallois scrapers, points, and burins**
- La Ferrassie also shows **burials**, including that of children, hinting at **social care and ritual practices**

Shanidar Cave (Iraq):

- Located in western Asia, but tied to **Neanderthal behavior**
- Remains of individuals with **disabilities**, who were likely cared for by the group
- **Floral pollen** found in some burials, suggesting **symbolic practices**

These sites support the idea that **Neanderthals were not only skilled hunters**, but also **socially sophisticated and capable of empathy and ritual behavior**.

c. Middle East and Central Asia: Hominin Crossroads

Qafzeh and Tabun Caves (Israel):

- Evidence of **early Homo sapiens and Neanderthal cohabitation**
- Presence of **burials with grave goods** and **Levallois tools**
- Suggest cultural exchange or interaction zones between species

Teshik-Tash (Uzbekistan):

- Neanderthal child burial surrounded by **ibex horns**, possibly ritualistic
- Important evidence of **Neanderthal presence in Central Asia**

Denisova Cave (Siberia):

- Fossil remains of **Denisovans**, a now-extinct hominin group
- Tools suggest interaction between **Neanderthals, Denisovans, and Homo sapiens**
- DNA analysis shows **interbreeding**, enriching our understanding of human ancestry

These regions act as **crossroads**, reflecting both **migration** and **cultural blending**.

4. Technological and Cultural Commonalities

Despite geographic distance, Middle Paleolithic cultures across the world share key similarities:

- Widespread use of the **Levallois technique**
- Toolkits featuring **scrapers, points, and blades**
- **Site planning**: hearths, living spaces, and possible structures
- Signs of **cooperative hunting** and **division of labor**
- Emerging evidence of **symbolism and ritual**

These commonalities suggest either **parallel cultural evolution** or **diffusion through migration and contact**, supporting the idea that early humans were **thinking and acting in socially complex ways**, regardless of location.

The Role of Symbolism and Cognitive Development in the Middle Paleolithic

1. Introduction: A Cognitive Leap in Human Evolution

The **Middle Paleolithic period** (c. 300,000–40,000 years ago) marks more than just a technological shift—it represents a **cognitive transformation**. While earlier periods focused on basic survival and crude tool use, the Middle Paleolithic saw the emergence of **symbolic behavior, abstract thought, and emotional complexity**. These developments are crucial because they reflect **the beginning of modern human consciousness**—the capacity to assign meaning, engage in ritual, and express identity.

The ability to **think symbolically**—to allow objects, gestures, or actions to represent ideas or beliefs—is one of the defining traits of *Homo sapiens*. Although still in its early stages, this period planted the seeds of **language, religion, art, and social identity**.

2. Symbolic Expression in Material Culture

One of the clearest indicators of symbolic thinking is found in **material artifacts** that serve no immediate functional purpose, but instead appear to convey meaning or identity.

a. Body Adornment and Ornaments

At several Middle Paleolithic sites—particularly in **Europe and Africa**—archaeologists have discovered:

- **Perforated shells** used as **beads or pendants**
- **Animal teeth and bones** shaped or polished for **decorative purposes**
- Possible use of **ochre pigments**, perhaps for **body painting or ceremonial marking**

Examples include:

- **Blombos Cave (South Africa)** – engraved ochre pieces and shell beads, dated to ~75,000 years ago
- **Grotte du Renne (France)** – ornaments associated with Neanderthals, showing **symbolic behavior** previously thought exclusive to Homo sapiens

These artifacts are not tools for survival—they are **expressions of self, group belonging, or social status**. They may also represent **early forms of communication**, possibly related to **rituals, identity, or mating displays**.

b. Early Abstract Art and Engraving

Though rare, some sites show **geometric engravings** on bone, stone, or ochre, which may have been:

- **Personal symbols or clan marks**
- **Mnemonic devices** or storytelling tools
- **Early artistic expression**, even if abstract

These suggest that early humans could **visualize ideas and externalize them**, a major leap in mental capacity.

3. Burial Practices and the Beginnings of Ritual

Another major sign of cognitive development in the Middle Paleolithic is the **emergence of burial practices**, particularly among **Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens**.

a. Neanderthal Burials

Sites like **Shanidar Cave (Iraq)** and **La Ferrassie (France)** contain:

- **Deliberate burials** of individuals, sometimes with objects or pollen remains (possible floral offerings)
- Evidence of **care for the dead**, suggesting an **emotional and symbolic understanding of death**
- The concept of a **"burial space"**, separate from living areas

This indicates that Neanderthals may have had **ritual behavior**, emotional bonds, and possibly even **proto-religious thought**—challenging older ideas that they were incapable of symbolic cognition.

b. Homo sapiens Burials

Early **modern human burials** from the Middle Paleolithic (e.g., **Qafzeh Cave in Israel**) include:

- **Grave goods** (like animal bones, pigments, or tools)
- Carefully positioned bodies, sometimes in **fetal positions**
- Evidence of **intentional and meaningful funerary acts**

These burials reveal a growing awareness of **life, death, and continuity**, possibly laying the foundation for **ancestral worship**, **afterlife beliefs**, or **group memory**.

4. Symbolism in the Indian Subcontinent: An Emerging Field

In India, **explicit symbolic artifacts from the Middle Paleolithic are currently limited**, especially when compared to African and European sites. This may be due to:

- **Preservation biases**, where organic materials like beads or pigments have not survived
- **Lack of systematic excavation** in potential symbolic activity zones
- **Regional variation in the pace and expression of cognitive evolution**

However, Indian sites like **Attirampakkam** and **Bhimbetka**—though primarily known for tools—also show:

- **Advanced planning and standardization in tool-making**, which indirectly reflects cognitive ability
- **Spatial organization** within habitation sites, possibly indicating **activity areas** and **social roles**

By the time of the **Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic**, clear symbolic evidence like **rock art, microlithic burials, and ornament use** becomes more visible in Indian archaeology, suggesting that the **Middle Paleolithic laid the foundational groundwork**.

5. Cognitive Implications: The Rise of Modern Human Behavior

The presence of symbolic artifacts and burials during the Middle Paleolithic implies major cognitive milestones:

- **Abstract thinking**: The ability to understand that one thing can represent another
- **Future planning**: Making tools, ornaments, or burial goods for symbolic or delayed use
- **Social cohesion**: Group identity strengthened through shared rituals, symbols, and beliefs
- **Proto-language development**: Symbolic objects may have supported or paralleled the rise of early communication systems

Anthropological theories such as:

- **Robin Dunbar's Social Brain Hypothesis**
- **Terrence Deacon's theory of symbolic cognition**
- **Leslie White's cultural evolution framework**

—all support the view that **symbolic behavior is tightly linked with brain development, social complexity, and cultural transmission**.

Conclusion

The Middle Paleolithic period was a time of big changes for early humans. During this period, people started using better tools, like the Levallois technique, showing smarter thinking. Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens lived during this time. Humans began to work together in groups for hunting and took care of injured members. There is evidence of early cultural practices like burials and symbolic art. People became more adaptable to different environments, helping them survive. Neanderthals eventually disappeared, but Homo sapiens thrived. This period helped shape the development of human thinking and culture. New tools and social behaviors set the stage for future progress. It was a crucial time in human evolution.

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UPI: dineshbhatia1991@oksbi

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