

World History and Culture
Kailua High School
Social Studies Requirement
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EARLY HUMAN CULTURE IN TWO MOVIES:
2001: A Space Odyssey. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 1968
and
Quest for Fire. 20th Century Fox. 1981

Human culture has come a long way: Just compare the early cultures with the present. You will find astonishing differences that make you wonder how the magnificent changes came to be. The very fact that humans have the ability to change makes us the superior species in the animal kingdom. The history of humans in terms of the way we communicate, cooperate and create technology today have advanced a great deal. We have long been fascinated with our past, but none more than Hollywood movie producers in the movies 2001: A Space Odyssey: Dawn of Man and Quest for Fire, dating back to the Paleolithic era from 2 million to 80,000 B.C.E.

Communication of the early humans as suggested by the movies are bizarre. Clicks, grunts, shouts, jumping... What do they all mean? How could a single grunt translate to getting food? Nonetheless, it is the way of body language and oral communication between these early humans. It is the beginning of the development and transformation of social structures, the start

of building relations with one another. It is bonding with each other, however different it is from the present, where we have over thousands of languages. Early humans were able to communicate through what we think are senseless sounds and actions. The hominids jump up and down to tell the other group of hominids they are not welcome in the Dawn of Man. In Quest for Fire, through some sort of communication, Ika and Naoh were able to have a relationship and become parents. Communication leads to cooperation, which leads me to the next topic, the way early humans cooperated.

Cooperation between one another is an important part of survival and protection. Without it, one would have to fend off predators alone, one on one. One way the early humans in "Quest for Fire" cooperated was when they were assigned jobs to do. For example, one would be given the job of keeping the fire alive while another would stand guard. It was their own creation of labor systems, a good way of developing relations and social structures. Another obvious way of cooperation in both movies is that both the Ulams and hominids are in groups, they protect each other in order to survive. Early humans cooperated to protect each other from others, using tools or technologies, which leads us to the next topic of tools and technologies used by early humans.

Tools, as suggested by the movies, are vital to the advancements of technologies today. In the "Dawn of Man", for defense, the hominids used a

bone. However, not only is the bone used as a tool, it is also a source of food as one can suck out the marrow out of the bone. In "Quest for Fire", the tool introduced is fire, a valuable tool to cook food, light up the night and defense against animals. Fires, derived from wild fires, were the source of a group's superiority. Whoever captures the tool of fire is superior. It is taken from nature, the interaction between humans and the environment. The atlatl is also another example of a tool, used for defense. Today, we still use tools created by these early humans, however advanced they are. People still use fire to roast marshmallows, guns which are similar to the atlatl in the way that it can shoot. Tools are still here today, all thanks to these early humans.

The ways of early human cultures are still here today. Communication, from the grunts and jumping to set languages and body language. Cooperation, still here today even if war is in existence. By communicating, we are also cooperating. Tools, from fire, atlatls, sticks and bones to the present, where we have long-range guns and nuclear bombs. The communications, cooperation and the creation of tools derived from the early humans are still here today; culture never went away, it is just much more complex. Ways to help us cooperate, like cellphones, to communicate with someone halfway across the world. Human culture has greatly accelerated since the paleolithic era, the age of hominids.