But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes.

—from the dialogue of Plato’s Republic
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That humanity has a shared history is the guiding argument of *The World History Workbook*. In the first volume in particular, *The Ancient World to 1500* asks students to examine aspects of the human experience that are “universal,” including language and the unified heritage of languages; genealogy; myth and myth types; literature and particular motifs and themes of literature; archetype, which is by definition universal; and features of religion. As each of these topics is very large and worthy of extensive attention, rather than attempt an exhaustive coverage, the workbook provides historical examples as models from which instructor and student can open discussion suitable to the time and circumstance of the particular class. The instructor may use the workbook to guide students to recognize universals in their own lives and societies. The approach allows instructor and student to pursue historical themes in an open dialogue and should be applicable to students representing a wide range of educational and social backgrounds.

The student needs to understand that world history is the student’s own. World history is not an abstract philosophy about other people; it is the heritage of the student’s own family, culture, language, and values. Students share universals with other students and with the instructor, as well as people around the world past, present, and future. Through examinations of primary readings and the critical use of historical projects, the student might become more aware of the close connection he or she holds to the rest of humanity. The Socratic method might serve best to draw out these historical themes, as that method of questioning and cross-questioning encourages students to look to themselves for answers and not to simply depend on the opinions of others. The Socratic method is open, inclusive, and trusts the student to think critically, the most important skill of historical interpretation.
HISTORY MEANS two things: the events of the past and the study of the events of the past. Neither aspect of history can be understood without an appreciation for the other. When studying the past, one must have knowledge of events, but one must also understand something about the way to study, the way historians work. This text will give you the opportunity to evaluate past events and to use some of the methods historians use when analyzing history.

Historians look at the past by studying sources. There are two types of sources, primary and secondary. While these terms have somewhat different meanings for different disciplines, to historians primary sources are produced by the culture under examination. Secondary sources are the published interpretations of primary sources. You will encounter both types of sources in this world history course, with most of the primary sources printed in the appendix at the back of this book. The text you are reading now is a secondary source.

Primary sources can include anything produced, built, written, painted, carved, narrated, or even left behind as refuse. In the modern world, written sources are very common and of probably the greatest use for historians. Written sources are rich and varied and can include books, poems, prayers, inscriptions, census or other reports, speeches, diaries, or newspapers. People produce other types of sources also useful to historians: art, graves, clothing, oral traditions, architecture, tools, or other technology. To a historian, any and all of these products are potential primary sources that help understand and interpret societies from the past.
Think of your own world. If you were to list artifacts that describe or define your own society, you might include an issue of a local newspaper, an office building, a census report, a car, a high school yearbook, a television show, some CDs, and a prayer book. Collectively, such a set would constitute a nice collection of sources that, when interpreted in context, could provide a reasonable description of your world. A local newspaper could show the types of news people in your world find important. It could show what movies were showing, the value of real estate, what types of crimes and punishments were committed. An office building could show how people work, what types of building materials were used, and other things about architecture and public or private spaces. A census report might show population numbers, the average age of marriage, the attention your society pays to ethnic background. By piecing together information from all these sources, a scholar might reconstruct a picture of modern American society. But there would be many questions left unanswered.

No source provides the complete truth about the past. In fact, historians rarely discuss “truth” or “facts” at all, preferring instead to talk of “interpretations” of history. Any article, report, artifact, or technology can potentially be understood in many different ways. A newspaper article contains bias; it might exclude information; it might have an angle that, if not interpreted in proper context, misleads the reader. For this reason, historians study as many sources as possible on a given subject. It is bad historical practice to ignore or discount a source simply because it is selective or misleading. A biased account is an excellent source on bias.

During the First World War, a war fought in Europe from 1914 until 1918 with Germany and Austria on one side and Great Britain, France, and the United States on the other (and Italy and Russia coming and going in between), daily and weekly newspapers reported on the war’s progress. A regular feature of such reports described incredible atrocities committed by soldiers from enemy countries. French, British, and American papers ran articles describing atrocities of German and Austrian soldiers, while German papers ran articles describing atrocities of the Americans, the French, and the British. “News” articles described soldiers hacking nuns to death with pitchforks or throwing babies into the air, then catching them on the tips of swords, and other horrific things. One suspicious feature of these stories was how similar they were from country to country, regardless of the nationality of soldiers involved. A second suspicious feature was that such stories invariably concluded with declarations that the troops from the other side were “barbarians” who wished to crush the “civilized world.” Such accounts avoided corroborating evidence and rarely mentioned independent sources. The fact is, the great majority of these accounts were simply false or were based on wildly exagger-
ated rumors. In all countries, newspapers ran the stories as propaganda to
demonize an enemy and thus justify a war that was itself an atrocity and
became increasingly awkward for leaders to explain. But historians do not dis-
miss outrageous newspaper sources simply because articles do not provide
accurate accounts. On the contrary, such stories are valuable in showing men-
talities of the day, the language of “barbarian” and “civilized” used on all
sides, and the popular images of national groups. Historians know that every
source has a story to tell but must be considered in light of a range of sources
and evidence.
List three primary sources to leave for future historians. The project has two parts; first, to identify specific sources you think are in some way representative of your own culture and society. These would be primary sources to the historian who would eventually examine them. Second, provide an explanation of the sources you list, to advise the scholar of the future how to understand the sources you selected. Your explanation is an interpretation, a secondary source. In the spaces provided below, list three specific primary sources by name, date the source was produced, and, where appropriate, page number. For example, “the Student Union building on the campus of [a specific university in a specific city] in use at least during 2005–2006”; the movie *Iron Man* released in 2008; and the June 17, 2008, edition of a local newspaper (identifying it by name and the particular page). The items you list should be real, traceable documents or artifacts. After each of the three items, write a short interpretation of that source. What information does that source show about the society that produced it? The more interpretive your answer, the better. For example, it would be a stronger statement to write that “the Student Union building” shows the value our society assigns to higher education than to say we know how to make buildings. It is a stronger argument to interpret the use of a building in terms of its social importance, the resources allocated, the way people looked at the building in contrast to other buildings, and so forth. The first source you identify should be a written source such as an article, a story, the lyrics to a song, or something similar.
PROJECT 1
Primary Sources and Interpretations

1. Written primary source (title):

   Citation (author, date of publication, publisher, page number if applicable):

   Interpretation:

2. Primary source:

   Date, location, use:

   Interpretation:

3. Primary source:

   Date, location, use:

   Interpretation:
The most common type of source historians examine is probably written texts. Written texts provide evidence historians use to form historical arguments. It is not always obvious what interpretations a text might support. For example, look at the Code of Hammurabi (in the appendix, pages 102–3), one of the world’s oldest surviving written texts. The code outlines laws for ancient Mesopotamia and is interpreted as a legal text. But the code provides insight beyond the legal sphere, into many aspects of life, family, and society in the ancient world.

Historians interpret texts by examining them critically, the same as saying historians use critical thinking. This means historians try to interpret sources without prejudice or judging. A historical source can only be understood if the bias of the present is set aside and the historian works objectively. Conventionally this means to consider a text in context and comparison. Context means to place the text in its own environment, circumstances, standards, and values. To compare means to consider a source in contrast to other sources or texts, to other people, or to other circumstances, similar or dissimilar.

Historians try to set aside personal biases toward sources. Like, dislike, boring, good, bad, and similar terms are not useful categories of analysis and can interfere with reasonable interpretations of significance, consequences, causes, and so on. Of course historians prefer to work with texts they enjoy or find interesting or beautiful, but personal feelings should not influence interpretations of texts any more than a botanist’s love of butterflies should influence a study of a butterfly’s nervous system.

The Code of Hammurabi is significant in part because it was one of the earliest written (codified) laws. A written law is more accountable than an oral law or the personal ruler who governs on whim or inspiration. A written law can be discussed objectively; it has a record and a wording that is constant. This is not to say that written laws are applied uniformly or consistently; they are not. But a codified law has the opportunity for greater accountability. The Code of Hammurabi was engraved in stone and placed in public for all citizens to see.
Read the Code of Hammurabi on pages 102–3 of the appendix. Answer each of the following questions, then identify the verse that gave you the information. Your answer need not identify every reference, but the verses you cite must be correct.

(Example: “Mesopotamian society had both kings and slaves.”)

Answer: “Yes, Mesopotamian society had both kings and slaves. Passage 16 of the Code of Hammurabi mentions slaves while Passage 129 refers to both kings and slaves.”

1. Women and men were treated equally under the law of Hammurabi.

2. In ancient Mesopotamia a woman could own a business.

3. A husband could legally divorce his wife under the Code of Hammurabi.

4. People of different classes were treated equally under the law of Hammurabi.

5. Hammurabi appears to have been a religious man.
In project 2, you provided evidence to support historical arguments. The arguments are interpretations of the Code of Hammurabi.

An **argument** is an opinion one is prepared to defend, using evidence. Without evidence, an argument becomes bare opinion, or **assertion**. Historians use many types of evidence in forming and defending arguments, and no evidence should be dismissed without some consideration. Any time evidence is deliberately ignored, hidden, or refused without due consideration, historical accuracy suffers. Historians need to be accountable to their sources. This means that historians must honestly consider all the available evidence in the same way a court of law needs to consider all evidence relevant to a particular case. The misuse of evidence makes bad historical research as in a court of law it brings a mistrial.

An example of overtly bad history is the work of so-called **Holocaust deniers**. While revisionist historians (revisionism) are those who write revised interpretations of history on the basis of new evidence or new interpretations, Holocaust deniers claim to refuse to accept evidence for the mass extermination of Jews in Europe under Nazi rule. Since the whole body of evidence overwhelmingly opposes their position, deniers dismiss large bodies of source material they claim must be biased. Jewish sources, or sources that come from Jewish victims, deniers claim, are unreliable and cannot be considered. But as we have already shown, even in a case where sources show bias or inaccuracies, responsible historians do not exclude evidence by group. This would be similar to dismissing all Native American sources from the history of the United States on the premise that Native sources must be biased automatically in favor of Native perspectives. There is no evidence to show that either Native Americans or Jews are any less capable of, or are less likely to provide, objective testimony than are people from other groups. In any case, even when historians encounter bias in a particular text, they do not dismiss the source; they use it for what it offers. Most sources have something to contribute to a reconstruction of the past, though not perhaps always in keeping with the intentions of the witness. Responsible historians interpret texts; they do not dispose of them.

When white Europeans began to explore the African interior in the eighteenth century, they discovered ruins and remains they did not expect to find. Europeans of the time were educated to believe not only that European societies were superior to all other societies but also that there was no civilization in most of the world until Europeans arrived. European scholars and explorers refused to believe that any culture that did not look like European culture could possibly be defined as “civilized.” Therefore, when Europeans went in search of new worlds they looked for features familiar to them as evidence for “civilization.” For Europeans these features included permanent buildings,
institutions, and scientific mentalities. When they found people living in huts, yurts, migrant circumstances, and without technologies as fast and as powerful as those of European industry, Europeans claimed the cultures they encountered did not “yet” have civilization. They also presumed that since all people “naturally” prefer civilization, native people must be incapable of producing such things or they would have already produced them. Eventually this thinking became part of a racial interpretation of the world. In other words, the cultural arrogance of European societies merged with contemporary racial theories to produce a general perception that the determining feature of civilization was “race” (defined by skin color).

So when European explorers arrived to a place in Africa called Zimbabwe, they were baffled. There they found the ruins of a great city, built of stone, with permanence and a technology capable of heavy construction. Ideally scholars would have examined the ruins with objectivity, treating artifacts and remains carefully, examining them critically. But because of their racial preconceptions, Europeans almost universally declared it impossible that the cities of Zimbabwe could have been built by native people of the region. Zimbabwe, Europeans argued, must therefore have been built by non-African people, perhaps Europeans, perhaps some biblical people. General agreement settled on the theory that the Queen of Sheba had built Great Zimbabwe. There was no solid evidence for this theory, but intellectual prejudice obscured the evidence. For more than a century this theory held fast, during which time most of the local archeological sites were devastated by adventurers and gold-seekers. People destroyed or looted evidence to such an extent that by the end of the nineteenth century, very little remained visible of ancient Zimbabwe but architectural remains. Eventually two twentieth-century archeologists were able, through investigations of neighboring, less disturbed sites, to determine that Zimbabwe was built by Shona people, native to the region, whose descendants still live in the area today. But for many years historians, archeologists, and anthropologists taught and believed completely false histories of the central regions of Africa. If researchers and scholars had paid closer and more honest attention to the evidence and had remained true to their sources, there would have been no need for this error.

In general it is possible to classify evidence by quality into two groupings, historical and unhistorical. For the most part, historical refers to objective evidence while unhistorical refers to subjective evidence. Historical in this sense describes something verifiable, something observable or testable, using reason. Unhistorical, on the other hand, does not mean necessarily untrue; rather, it signifies something mythical, something accepted on faith (trust), but that cannot be tested or verified. Unhistorical things are accepted on belief, not on evidence. So, while historians might not commonly speak about the “facts of history,” they might refer to an argument or a source as historical or unhistorical. Consider an account of a personal vision by the medieval mys-
Hildegard of Bingen, a nun from southern Germany. Hildegard recorded numerous visions she believed to have come from God or from a “messenger of God.” She wrote in the twelfth century in a letter to her friend Abbot Phillip,

A wind blew from a high mountain and, as it passed over ornamented castles and towers, it put into motion a small feather which had no ability of its own to fly but received its movement entirely from the wind. Surely the almighty God arranged this to show what the Divine could achieve through a creature that had no hope of achieving anything by itself.¹

The source includes historical information, including the fact that Hildegard wrote the letter to her friend, she described visions, she connected those visions to God, and she was aware of castles and towers. Her descriptions of visions might be interpreted psychologically, medically, or spiritually. Historians interpret in all these ways; responsible historians interpret in context and by using all objective evidence available. It would be unhistorical, however, to argue that Hildegard actually received her visions from God, or that she in fact flew around the countryside in the form of a feather. Her visions may or may not have come from God, but in either case it would be unhistorical to say so. It is not within the scope of historical analysis to maintain that Hildegard’s vision came from God one way or the other. This is a subjective judgment, a statement of belief. Historians should not make subjective judgments. Neither should scholars of any discipline mock or deny the historical figure or culture the beliefs they held. An argument is not a moral judgment. Hildegard’s descriptions are important and valuable as historical sources; it is not within the scope of the historian’s work to argue if they were real or false.

It sometimes might appear that a person who “was there” to experience firsthand a historical event has more authority than “circumstantial” evidence. For historians, however, this is rarely the case; objective evidence is typically more reliable than isolated firsthand accounts. Firsthand testimonies are notoriously unreliable and must match the objective evidence before being accepted. Think of a person’s own account of a car accident. Should the courts accept all eyewitness testimony simply because a person “was there”? Since people commonly provide false testimony for many reasons, including bad memories, courts, like historians, will override personal testimonies that contradict disinterested evidence. Just because a friend insists he was abducted by aliens does not make it true. Most of us would require physical evidence to support a personal account. So it is with history. First-person evidence is not always historically reliable.

¹ Hildegard of Bingen and Matthew Fox, Book of Divine Works (Santa Fe: Bear and Co., 1987), 320.
Next to each short event or account, write either *historical* or *unhistorical*. There is a correct answer to each one.


2. Hildegard of Bingen had visions from God.

3. Hildegard of Bingen wrote about visions from God.

4. Native African people are not capable of constructing with stone.

5. Romans built roads.

6. Romans loved the true God.

7. Romans built temples to their gods.

8. John Kennedy was the best president.

9. Bill Clinton ran as the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party.
Secondary sources are arguments (interpretations) of history, usually based on primary sources. While all historians should be accountable to sources, some historians also find patterns of causality in history. **Causality** means the relationship between cause and effect, or what caused an event, a transition, or a development to occur. For example, what caused people to settle into farming communities in one area but not in another? Why did one society explore the oceans and the other society not? How did religions develop, and why, in the patterns they did? When historians study such questions, they sometimes look for patterns to causes, and not only to causes, for individual events. Patterns of causality regular enough to be predictable are known as **determinism**. Determinism suggests an inevitability of events; that is, things had to happen the way they did. In other words, given the determining factors in place at a particular time, the outcome that did occur must have occurred. For example, given the historical conditions (determinants) in place prior to the First World War (nationalism, industrialism, capitalism, and so on), the First World War was unavoidable. Not all historians use determinism; some find determinism restricting, but all historians examine cause and effect.

Probably the most familiar form of determinism is known as **economic determinism**. Economic determinism is an interpretation that looks for economic conditions to trigger behavior or change in history. The argument that a presidential election will be determined by the state of the economy is an argument an economic determinist might make. There are some well-known examples of arguments based on economic determinism. Two examples are that society is usually formed into economic classes and that revolutions are motivated by economic circumstances. These two arguments come from **Karl Marx**, the founder of economic determinism. Marx described the whole scope of history in terms of the economy, with ruling classes controlling wealth and property and working classes producing wealth for the ruling classes. Marx wrote his famous works on **capital and labor** (ruling classes and producing classes, respectively) during the industrial revolutions of the mid- and late eighteen hundreds, a time when tensions between workers and industry was great and greed and violence seemed unchecked. Some of Marx’s views have become outdated in the twenty-first century, but Marx’s determinism survives as an influential interpretation of history.

A second determinism has survived almost exclusively in the sphere of popular history; that is, in places like history on television, or so-called **historical fiction**. This second determinism is called **Great Men and Battles**. Like Karl Marx’s economic determinism, this method was developed during the nineteenth century; only in this case, by nationalist writers from Europe to create grand myths about the heritage of a country. No serious scholar today uses this outdated determinism. One reason it continues to capture the imagination
of the popular audience is its compelling use of glory and drama. Consider the inspiring opening passage from an essay by the nineteenth-century historian Sir Edward Creasy. Creasy included his account of the Battle of Marathon in his famous 1857 work titled Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World. Marathon was one of the most complete victories of the ancient Greeks over the Persians.

Two thousand three hundred and forty years ago a council of Athenian officers was summoned on the slope of one of the mountains that look over the plain of Marathon, on the eastern coast of Attica. The immediate subject of their meeting was to consider whether they should give battle to an enemy that lay encamped on the shore beneath them; but on the result of their deliberations depended, not merely the fate of two armies, but the whole future progress of human civilization.

Creasy further explains,

The day of Marathon . . . broke forever the spell of Persian invincibility, which had paralyzed men’s minds. . . . It secured for mankind the intellectual treasures of Athens, the growth of free institutions, the liberal enlightenment of the western world and the gradual ascendancy for many ages of the great principles of European civilization.2

Creasy was a wonderful writer, but his historical interpretations are no longer taken seriously. Historians today look at many more factors to describe the rise and fall of empires or the establishment of democratic institutions in England. Creasy’s argument suggests that the victory of the Greeks over the Persians at Marathon caused the survival of democratic traditions in ancient Athens, which in turn led to a European “Western tradition,” which in turn led to the rise of Great Britain as a world power fifteen centuries later. If Creasy’s analysis is correct, however, every contingency that led to the Battle of Marathon must also have led to the rise of democratic institutions in Great Britain. Every other detail that provided for an Athenian victory must also have led to English greatness: the use of hoplites, the institution of slavery in Greece, the diet and culture of the Greeks that produced such excellent soldiers, including the prevalent homosexual lifestyle of the ancient soldiers. Obviously such obscure connections are tenuous, and the argument breaks down when it is examined more closely. But Creasy’s point was really to glorify his nation’s own history by associating it with a romantic past.

Perhaps more recent historical methods are somewhat more boring than Great Men and Battles, but recent methods are more honest, inclusive, and

accurate. Until the middle of the twentieth century, modern historical research was dominated by national or topical history. In the past fifty years or so, however, historians have begun to broaden the narrative to include groups, people, and institutions that had been previously marginalized. Historians of the 1950s and 1960s began to recognize the importance to history of everyday life and people, including those who do not command positions of power and public authority. Historians began to write history to reflect the social reality that all elements of society contribute to the makeup and development of human civilization. It has now become conventional to integrate into the historical analysis families, minor institutions, popular mentalities, and statistics, as well as people of power. This way of describing the past is more democratic and more realistic than previous, elitist methods. The new inclusive histories are called social history.

Thus we see that history changes with society; as the world democratized, so did history become more inclusive (democratic). As the world globalized, so did the study of history. Many historians felt that to be intellectually honest and to keep pace with current developments in historical research, university curricula must integrate into General Education programs at universities in the United States more of the world than had been previously considered. During the 1990s, many history departments changed Western Civilization or “Great Texts” to World History requirements. This trend followed a twentieth-century pattern of globalization, accelerated by innovations in computers, space exploration, and the Internet. This text and this approach to world history are reflections of the changing world. By participating in this course, you are involved in both the changing world and the changing ways history is evaluated and written.
PROJECT 4
Methods Historians Use

Identify each statement below with one of three methods: economic determinism, Great Men and Battles, or social history. Write in the space below each statement the historical method that might be associated with the argument.

1. The Soviet Union succumbed to the rule of Stalin because of the ruler’s charismatic appeal. Stalin single-handedly turned the country into a first-rate power.

2. The whole history of European dominance over Africa can be explained by the rise of industry and capitalism.

3. The overthrow of the old regime in 1789 came about through an intersection of intellectual, economic, and social developments. The relations between the crown and the peasantry was complex, with some peasants supporting the king but more urban peasants, influenced by the middle classes, tending to support the revolution.

4. Provide a historical argument that might be based on economic determinants. (For example, provide an economic determinant for the election of a particular U.S. president, or to explain patterns of migration.) Were there other types of determinants as well?
Historians study within particular genres or areas. Areas of study are sometimes national, such as American history or Russian history. National studies can help define a nation or people, correct misconceptions, or generate discussion about national experience. But historians are not mythmakers; they are interpreters of the past and formulate arguments on the basis of sound reasoning. It is not the work of scholars to praise a national history simply out of a sense of nationalism. Historians do not best engage in preaching, whitewashing, or sugarcoating. If a state or people have positive and negative aspects in their past, historians should be free to address both rationally and in proper context. Japanese historians have recently come under strong criticism, for example, for ignoring in school textbooks the violent behavior of the Japanese occupation of China in the middle of the last century. The Chinese government wants Japanese students to be honest about the Japanese past, perhaps in order to prevent future atrocities. It is partly the work of historians to be sure accurate accounts are available.

Larger geographic regions than “country” might also define historical category. A geography in all its aspects—climate, wildlife, landscape, natural resources—influences the way people eat, travel, and communicate; the materials they use; the art they make; and the size of families they raise. Some historians therefore study history within this important framework. One such focus of study and teaching is the Atlantic World. This huge area supersedes national boundaries and includes the eastern regions of the Americas and the western regions of Africa and Europe. The Atlantic World saw enormous population shifts during the centuries following 1492. Through the massive importation of slaves from Africa, settlers’ arrival from Europe, and the violent reduction of native populations, the ethnic and cultural makeup of both the northern and the southern Americas changed forever. Patterns of change in North America differed in some respects from those in Central and South America, but overall patterns of slavery, settlement, and nation building spanned the western side of the Atlantic. The history of every nation of Latin America rests on the experiences of those first centuries of contact. Arguments historians might make regarding the Atlantic World address the degree and type of African influence on the culture of Brazil, for example, or might ask to what degree South American native cultures influenced West Africa. Certainly massive economic changes resulted from the slave trade, not to mention the violent loss of populations to Atlantic slavery. The Atlantic World is only one of several such supranational geographic regions historians recognize as fields of study. Others include the Mediterranean and the Silk Road.
Other genres of history help define interaction between historical groups. *Women’s history* examines how societies have defined women and family, citizenship, and culture in the context of gender. *Big history* studies the whole of human history in the context of the universe, the natural world, the ecology of the planet, and the impact humans have had on the environment. There are also specialized fields of history such as economic history or the history of slavery, technology, science, and so on. In short, historians research and teach almost any aspect of the human experience.
ARCHAEOLOGISTS generally agree that a couple million years ago an anatomically modern human emerged from previous primates and roamed the planet hunting, gathering, and fishing. This creature was physically identical to people of today but does not appear to have been behaviorally exactly like us. The anatomically modern human did not build permanent settlements and neither farmed nor domesticated animals. Its religious practice is uncertain, and in archeological remains there is little direct evidence of a creative person; these early humans did not create art, neither did they establish deliberate political organization or religious traditions.

Sometime around 300,000 to 100,000 years ago, however, emerged the behaviorally modern human. This was not a new species, but the same creature as its anatomical predecessor except in behavior. What caused a change in the primate is not known, but there is widespread scholarly agreement that what was new was the appearance of abstract thought. Most archeologists and anthropologists maintain that the first behaviorally modern people lived in eastern Africa and were the direct ancestors to all people alive today. When behaviorally modern people appeared can probably not be reduced to a single year or even a single century, but should probably be thought of as a gradual development. New discoveries have pushed the dating of our abstract-thinking ancestors further and further back. Currently the oldest archeological site showing strong evidence of abstract thought has been dated at around 70,000 years ago. This site, at Blombos Cave in southern Africa, contains tools for fishing and other items that could be found at earlier sites. But the people of the coastal caves left behind something else: a small stone, engraved with an abstract pattern.
The markings on this small piece of ochre might look crude, but they are clearly deliberate. Someone made these etchings to represent something, to communicate something. To us the precise meaning is lost, but the artist’s handiwork carries to us a new meaning from 70,000 years past: the people of Blombos Cave thought abstractly and expressed themselves abstractly. As you can read in the two articles in the appendix that deal with the discoveries at Blombos Cave (page 99), **abstract thinking** is, to most modern scientists, what distinguishes humans from animals and behaviorally modern humans from their ancestors, anatomical humans. This explanation, by the way, is not universally accepted. Some would argue that modern humans have free will, and that is what distinguishes them. Still others would say “toolmaking” or “complex language” defines modern humans. Furthermore, there is evidence that some animals also have abilities to think abstractly, in toolmaking and language abilities, for example. But for the purposes of this narrative we will adopt the convention.

The reason Karl Marx wrote history as an economic narrative is that Marx understood humans as economic creatures. For Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, the history of humanity is a psychological struggle, because Freud understood humans as psychological creatures. For the nineteenth-century Europeans in Africa, described in the previous chapter, humans were racial creatures (among other things), making history a racial or national narrative. Whatever the nature of humanity, history will be written accordingly. Human nature guides human history, and how one understands human nature informs how one understands history. But defining a human nature is difficult.
The people of Blombos Cave in Africa were early creators of culture, and this has been ever since the deliberate work of all human societies. Culture includes all those things Marx, Freud, and the archeologists identified and more. First, humans create material culture, which provides food, shelter, and clothing. Beyond that, culture extends to social, political, and religious needs. Every human group since Blombos Cave (and perhaps earlier) has devised ways to provide for material, social, and religious needs. No human society can be said to have “more” culture than any other, though each fashions culture uniquely. One society uses a bagpipe, the other a lute, the other a drum. But all create music. One paints while another sculpts, but all have art. In this way, the work of being human is different throughout time and around the world, but it is also very similar from people to people.

Where features are common to every society, we call this a universal. While societies frequently boast and even go to war over differences, many aspects of culture are universal. Language and literature represent elements that are distinct and at the same time universal. For, while all people have language and literature, each culture creates its own version of language and literature, including oral traditions. By identifying commonalities we can see that culture is as potentially unifying as it is dividing.

THE PARADOX OF GENEALOGY

An examination of genealogy shows that humans are universally related by family. Genealogists trace a family’s ancestry, usually following direct lines (parents to grandparents, to great-grandparents, etc.). This method shows the uniqueness of each family line. But a slightly broader perspective reveals that no person—let alone people—possesses a discrete family, segregated from other families. Every family on earth is in fact related to every other family. Using the chart below, consider the mathematical implications of the proposition that each person possesses an isolated genealogy. The chart is based on a simple formula: one generation averages twenty-five years and every person has two parents, who in turn have two parents each, and so on. Fill in the numbers in each column.

Column 1, Generations Back, numbers the generation beginning with 1, a set of parents, then 2, the grandparents, and so on. The second column dates that generation using a formula of one generation equals 25 years. This is an approximation but will average out over time. The third column, named Number of Direct Line Ancestors, counts the number of direct line ancestors who would have lived in each of those generations following the count of one person, two parents. Therefore, there are two (parents) in the first generation, four (grandparents) in the second generation back, and so on.
## Fill in the blank lines with correct figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations Back</th>
<th>Years Ago (# of generations) / Date</th>
<th># of Direct Line Ancestors</th>
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<tbody>
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*(continued)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations Back</th>
<th>Years Ago (# of generations × 25 yrs) / Date</th>
<th># of Direct Line Ancestors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
It should be plain to see that the chart cannot be correct. Not only does the number in Column 3 increase to impossible proportions, but according to this formula, the farther we go into the past on the chart, the larger the population. Yet we know that at some point in the past, the population of the world was much smaller than it is today, perhaps no larger than a few thousand people.

The solution to this paradox is that we are all descended from the same people and that we are descended many times over (that is, through multiple lines) from the same ancestors. Families intermarry, cousins marry cousins, second cousins marry and have children, and so on. Children of a pair of first cousins, for example, have six great-grandparents each, rather than the eight the chart would indicate. The same would be true of second cousins, regarding great-great grandparents. So, while it is correct to say that all people are descended 1,024 times ten generations back, it does not follow that individuals have 1,024 direct-line, distinct ancestors in the tenth generation.

Extrapolate this solution to larger numbers of people and a remarkable picture emerges: all people are genealogically cousins. One need not go very far into the past to identify ancestors common to large groups of people, even nations, continents, and eventually the entire population of the world. Mathematicians working on these problems conclude that every person alive with even a single European, North African, or Middle Eastern ancestor, for example, is directly descended from Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, and from Charlemagne, the king of the Franks. Muhammad lived in the eighth century, Charlemagne in the ninth. Go back a few centuries and you will find people who are ancestors to every person on earth. We are likely all the descendants of Queen Nefertiti of ancient Egypt, for example, and Confucius is our genealogical grandparent as well.
PROJECT 6
In Your Own Words

Summarize the Paradox of Genealogy, its solution, and the implications of the paradox for modern concepts of race.
Discovering the links and naming the ancestors is exciting and honorable work. But even those without a documented genealogy can rest assured, they share ancestry with every group of people on earth. We are cousins not only in “spirit” or culture but also in DNA and family.

LANGUAGE

Language is at the heart of every culture and helps define the identity of any “people.” The three concepts of language, culture, and people are so intimately related they are used synonymously. German can indicate German people, German language, or German culture. The same is true of Japanese, Thai, and many others as well; one word names all three things.

Traditions of language and culture are conventionally discussed in “national” terms, such as German literature, Japanese literature, and so on. National lines define literature not exactly by nation, however, but more often by language, which transcends state boundaries. In German literary traditions, for example, one will find Franz Kafka, who wrote in German but was from the Czech city of Prague. German Jews such as Heinrich Heine, who wrote in German, are also conventionally included in the German literary tradition, whereas German émigrés who wrote in English or in the language of an adopted country might be found in traditions of both Germany and the United States. Thus, not all writers of German are Germans, and not all those who are Germans write in the German language. The same is true of “national literature” of the United States. “American literature” does not ordinarily include English language literature of the British Isles or of Canada but might include Native American literature not in English. There is American literature in many languages: Spanish, Chinese, Eskimo, and so on. In short, efforts to segregate culture “nationally” are contrived and open to flaw even in the most “national” of all characteristics, language.

To people from a society with writing, it might seem that given the opportunity, any society would naturally elect to have writing. But at least one civilization provides a different picture. The people who built ancient Teotihuacan of central America constructed cities and enormous temples, traded over great distances, and celebrated elaborate rituals. They performed these feats of engineering and organization without the use of a written language. Yet the Teotihuacan traded regularly with people who used writing and presumably could have adopted writing for themselves. Historians have different theories about why the Teotihuacanos chose to not implement writing, but as yet no one knows for certain.

Language is obviously universal. All people have language equally. Literature is also universal, in the absence of writing as much as through writing.
And within literature there are also universals, recurrent themes that might appear in myths, rituals, stories, songs, prayers, and poems. One could find many particular themes in literature worldwide, some very specific, others more general. For example, the theme of “the pain of separation” appears in the literature of every human tradition. Pain and grief over separation from someone or something loved is expressed worldwide and throughout history in poems, songs, hymns, plays, rituals, and so forth. Separation from departed loved ones is perhaps the most common form this sentiment assumes, but humans can grieve separation from many things. For example, this medieval Hebrew poet wrote from Spain about the pain of being separated from his homeland. In so doing, he described a universal sentiment and theme.

Jerusalem
Beautiful heights, city of a great King,
From the western coast my desire burns towards thee.
Pity and tenderness burst in me, remembering
Thy former glories, thy temple now broken stones.
I wish I could fly to thee on the wings of an eagle
And mingle my tears with thy dust.
I have sought thee, love, though the King is not there
And instead of Gilead’s balm, snakes and scorpions.
Let me fall on thy broken stones and tenderly kiss them—
The taste of thy dust will be sweeter than honey to me.

—Judah Halevi (trans., Robert Mezey)¹

Below are poems from five different cultural and literary traditions, distant from one another in space and time. Yet they share common themes, including the pain of separation.

Using an ink highlighter, mark phrases in each poem that show this universal theme and indicate in the margin the separation the author describes.

To the Distant One
And have I lost thee evermore,
Hast thou, oh, fair one, from me flown?
Still in mine ear sounds, as of yore,
Thine every word, thine every tone.

As when at morn the wanderer’s eye
Attempts to pierce the air in vain,
When, hidden in the azure sky,
The lark high o’er him chants his strain:

So do I cast my troubled gaze
Through bush, through forest, o’er the lea;
Thou art invoked by all my lays;
Oh, come then, loved one, back to me!

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German, 1749–1832)²

Mountain Spirit
The deer, when they fall to death,
Return to love of their wives.
The fields and hills, when they wither away,
Return to Spring a thousand years old.

—Toson Shimazaki (Japan, 1880s)³

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Li Fu-jen
The sound of her silk skirt has stopped.
On the marble pavement dust grows.
Her empty room is cold and still.
Fallen leaves are piled against the doors.
Longing for that lovely lady
How can I bring my aching heart to rest?

—Wu-ti (China, 157–87 B.C.)

(Untitled)
Violently falls the snow,
In the mist that precedes the lightning;
It bends the branches to the earth,
And splits the tallest trees in twain.
Among the shepherds none can pasture his flock;
It closes to traffic all the roads to market.
Lovers must then trust the birds,
With messages to their loves—
Messages to express their passion.

—Moorish (North Africa)

Carrickfergus (stanzas 3 and 4)
My childhood days bring back sad reflections
of happy days so long ago.
My boyhood friends and my own relations,
have all passed on like the melting snow.
So I’ll spend my days in endless roving,
soft is the grass and my bed is free.
Oh to be home now in Carrickfergus,
on the long road down to the salty sea.

—traditional (Ireland)

Separation from one’s homeland, loved ones, or family might seem like an obvious universal, but we could choose from many other examples of universals. Every literary tradition, whether oral or written, makes use of themes, symbols, and motifs. Particular themes and motifs occur over and over throughout the cultures of the world. There has been a great deal of research into comparative themes in myth, literature, and religions for more than a century. The great Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung identified many universal motifs not only in literature but also in rituals, in dreams, and in religious traditions. For example, Jung identified the motif and symbol of wind or breeze as a universal signifier of life or soul. Jung called these universal motifs archetypes and maintained that human societies use archetypes as expressions of a unified human consciousness.

**MYTH**

Myths are stories that are neither “factual” nor “false,” but adhere instead to deeper truths. Myths can express social, political, or religious themes, or they can provide interpretations of the natural world. Joseph Campbell, a preeminent twentieth-century scholar of myth, claims mythmaking and human society emerged together. Evidence of myth found at the earliest archeological sites tells us something, furthermore, of the unity of our species; for the fundamental themes of mythological thought have remained constant and universal, not only throughout history, but also over the whole extent of mankind’s occupation of the earth.7

Every society constructs myths. Some universal types include hero myths, creation myths, morality, quest, and myths that define social identity. Hero myths typically follow patterns of “(1) separation, (2) initiation, and (3) return.” Campbell writes,

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men.8

In modern society, hero myths can be found in film, in religious stories, and in fiction. Even American “road trip” movies sometimes follow this ancient pattern, as do some parts of the Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter stories.

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Though people do not hold faith in these stories as they might a great traditional myth, the structures are similar and they are instructive in that sense. Creation myths describe origins. It seems to be an important element of any civilization to search for tribal or cultural origins and to explain human existence. Some of the world’s richest collections of myths come from the people of the Americas, North and South. The following myth and prayer originates from one ancient civilization of the Andes. The prayer was translated into Spanish verse in the sixteenth century by Bishop Luis Geronimo de Ore. It was later translated into English.

O Pachacamac!
Thou who hast existed from the beginning.
Thou who shalt exist until the end,
powerful but merciful,
Who didst create man by saying,
“Let man be,”
Who defended us from evil,
and presented our life and our health,
art Thou in the sky or upon the earth?
In the clouds or in the deeps?
Hear the voice of him who implores Thee,
and grant him his petitions.
Give us life everlasting,
preserve us, and accept this our sacrifice.\(^9\)

As they develop and evolve over long periods of time, myths often synthesize many elements and traditions into single accounts. This is the case of the Popul Vuh, the great myth of the Kiche Maya of central America. This creation myth from the Popul Vuh shows at least four different traditions that had integrated into Kiche culture. It was translated from the Maya Kiche language by Lewis Spence.

Over a universe wrapped in a gloom of a dense and primeval night passed the good Hurakan the mighty wind. He called out, “earth,” and the solid land appeared. The chief gods took counsel; they were Hurakan, Gucumatz, the serpents covered with green feathers, and Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, the mother and father gods. As the result of their deliberations animals were created. But as yet man was not. To supply the deficiency the divine beings resolved to create mannikins

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carved out of wood. But these soon incurred the displeasure of the
gods, who, irritated by their lack of reverence, resolved to destroy them.
Then, by the will of Hurakan, the Heart of Heaven, the waters were
swollen, and a great flood came across the mannikins of wood. . . . 10

The Christian influence in this creation myth is evident, but one can also see
that the account draws from other traditions as well. Myths are reflections of
the culture that produced them, deep, profound, intricate.

The intimate identification of a culture with its myths has led one scholar
to refer to some myths as national sagas, such as the *Iliad* of the Greeks or the
*Mahabharata* of India. The *Mahabharata* is several thousand years old and
contains many types of myth within its narrative. The sacred text *Bhavagad
Gita* is part of the *Mahabharata*, as are numerous national, moral, and hero
myths. The *Mahabharata* opens with a simple story about a Brahman, or
priest; turn to the appendix, page 104, and read it.

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Although the selection is brief, the story from the *Mahabharata* provided in the appendix is suggestive and seems to be promising great things.

Describe in your own words, in sentences, how the opening of the *Mahabharata* contains all three elements of the hero myth.
1. What theme or motif is common to the two selections below and what does it signify?

answer:____________________________________________

A Dance with the Breeze
Sailing downward from the trees,
Autumn leaves spin in a dance
With the sportive autumn breeze,
Whose soft music will enhance
The enjoyment which they find,
As they leave their summer home
Traveling with the wayward wind,
Over country fields, to roam. . . .

—Martha Shepard Lippincott (United States, 1928)\(^\text{11}\)

Men pass away since the time of Ra
and the youths come in their stead.
Like as Ra reappears every morning,
and Tum sets in the horizon,
men are begetting,
and women are conceiving.
Every nostril inhaleth once the breezes of dawn,
but all born of women go down to their places.

—from “The Song of the Harper” (Egypt)\(^\text{12}\)

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2. Identify specific modern texts (by title or author) that share motifs or themes with *Hymn to the Nile*.
All languages can be traced back in time as one might trace a family along a
genealogical tree, from generation to generation. And, as with people, if we
could trace any language backward in time to its origins, we would arrive
eventually in Africa, to a single ancestral language, from which all people, all
cultures, and all languages descend. The original mother language to all lan-
guages is called First Language and was probably spoken between 100,000
and 200,000 years ago.

Linguists reconstruct the relationships between languages by examining
the parts of language such as words, syntax, and so on. Where linguists find
sets of traits that are common to two languages, such as shared words, they
can establish that the languages have come into contact with one another or
share a common ancestry. For example, the English and German words for
mother are essentially the same word. English mother is German Mutter.
Although there is a slight difference in the pronunciation of these two words,
to linguists they are essentially the same word.

When similar words are found in different languages, as in the case of the
word for mother in German and English, there are three possible explanations
for the coincidence. The similarity came about either because of accident, by
borrowing, or through shared descent. These three possible explanations
represent a standard scientific method, not unique to linguistics, known as the
comparative method. The same method can be used when comparing sets of
almost anything: disease, DNA, technology, plants. If, for example, historians
learned that contemporary people of central Africa and of southern Europe
both had iron technology, they could ask the comparative question: was the
coincidence of iron technology an accident, was the technology borrowed
from one culture to the other, or did the two inherit the technology from the
same source? Linguists attempt to answer this type of question wherever they
discover similar words. The answers help us to trace the historical relationships
between people and culture.

If the words for mother in German and English are the same because of
accident, this would mean that there is no relationship between the two
words. German-speaking people and English-speaking people would have
chosen similar sounds to describe the same thing. In most cases involving sim-
ilar words, however, it is highly improbable that such an accident could occur;
it is very unlikely that two different cultures, while developing language, chose
randomly the same set of sounds to identify the same object or action. There
are millions of combinations of sounds and tens of thousands of things to
name. For these combinations to accidentally agree is a remote enough possi-
bility that the option of “accident” can ordinarily be eliminated.
If the words *mother* and *Mutter* are similar because of borrowing, this would mean that one language had the word (in this case, the word for *mother*), and when the two cultures came into contact, one people adopted the word from the other’s language. Borrowing words from one language to another is very common and usually occurs when one culture has a word that does not exist in the other culture. For example, when Vikings sailed to western Europe, they brought with them a technology that was different and in some ways superior to that of the native people of the British Isles and France. Vikings simultaneously contributed to English culture a vocabulary and a technology. Perhaps the more famous story of Vikings is violence and conflict, but the transference of culture was important and enduring. English received words from Norse Vikings, and over time, from Scandinavia, that represented aspects of northern life, such as *skipper*, *ski*, and *keel*.

When vocabularies are borrowed, they often carry with them the “face” of one people to another. Consider a set of words borrowed from Japanese. These words represent technologies, ideas, and features that English-speaking people received from Japanese. The words also represent an American impression of Japanese culture.

**English Words and Meanings Borrowed from Japanese**

sake: Japanese rice wine  
kamikaze: divine wind, suicide dive bomber from Second World War  
bonsai: a type of trimmed tree  
geisha: a dignified and formal serving woman  
karate: a style of martial art  
ninja: a member of a secret warrior society  
kimono: a Japanese dress  
hari-kari: ritual suicide  
tsunami: a tidal wave  
samurai: a member of a warrior society  
soy: a salty flavoring  
sushi: a fish dish

To a native Japanese this set of words might not show more than a stereotype of what is most Japanese, but to a person who encounters Japanese society through these words alone, Japanese culture might be represented by the sum of these “typical” features.

An understanding of borrowed words helps to construct the historical record of the relationships between people. We can tell from the above list something about when, where, and under what circumstances Japanese speakers came into contact with English speakers. Through research using all
sources, historians can reconstruct the historical relationship between Japanese people and English-speaking people.

Many thousands of new words have entered the English language in the past five hundred years, some borrowed, some created. The entire vocabularies of auto mechanics, computers, the Internet, space travel, and other fields have only entered our language since the appearance of those areas of knowledge. At the same time, other words disappear or change in meaning.

This brings us to the third explanation for coincidence in different languages: common descent. *Descent* means to descend from a common ancestor, in this case, a common ancestral language. Words can pass down through time, and as a language evolves, some words disappear, others change, and still others resist change. Words that remain in use even after languages diverge are similar because of common descent. The words descend from the same ancestor, dating to when the divergent languages were one language.

Language can change very rapidly or slowly, but it always changes. For example, we call the English language spoken by people during the time of knights and feudalism *Middle English*. Middle English was different enough from Modern English that the language of knights, lords, and peasants would hardly be recognizable to modern speakers. Even where words have remained relatively constant, pronunciations and spellings have changed. Here is the Lord’s Prayers as written in Middle English by John of Wycliffe in 1389.

Oure fadir that are in heuenes
halewid be thi name;
thi kyngdoom cumme to;
be thi wille don in erthe as in heuen:
gyue to vs this dai oure breed ouer othir substaunce
and forguye to vs oure dettis,
as we forguye to oure dettouris;
and lede vs not in to temptacioun,
but delyuere vs fro yuel. Amen.13

The Lord’s Prayer from a few centuries earlier would be even less recognizable to modern speakers and readers than this six-hundred-year-old form. This is because language changes over time even in the case of this text, which uses essentially the same vocabulary as the modern English version.

English is a language from the *Indo-European* family of languages. *Indo-European* refers to the people, language, and culture of central Asia five

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13. *The Lord’s Prayer in Five Hundred Languages Comprising the Leading Languages and Their Principal Dialects, Preface by Reinhold Rost, C.I.F, L.L.D., Ph.D. (London: Gilbert & Rivington Limited, 1905)*, 47.1
or six thousand years ago. The Indo-European people were migratory, and while they held a homeland in the area of the Black Sea for many centuries, migrations took people to places distant from central Asia. Migrants brought with them Indo-European culture and language, and as they encountered new people, new languages, and new environments, the languages they brought with them changed over time. Some Indo-European people migrated to the south and east, where they evolved into one of the great cultures of the world, that of the Sanskrit. Sanskrit language is still used today in India as a sacred language. Other Indo-European people migrated west, southwest, and northwest, and the languages and cultures of each group developed unique characteristics. Over time, Indo-European people came to dominate the European subcontinent. Today their descendants speak languages in the Germanic, Celtic, Latin, and Slavic families to name the largest.

As languages and cultures evolved, certain elements resisted change. Some religious rites, hunting habits, family organizations, and many words and phrases did not change much over hundreds and even thousands of years. Words tend to resist change when they represent fundamental, universal things such as family members, body parts, numbers, and things that are constant regardless of culture or environment. Universals such as milk, finger, one, and brother are never lost, and every culture has these things. When one culture meets another, neither needs a word for finger, as all people possess fingers and words to name them. And though words change in pronunciation, and if there is a written form, spelling, the shape of the word often remains intact. Linguists are able to trace many modern words to ancient Indo-European words and, despite the fact that the language was not written and has been extinct for thousands of years, have been able to reconstruct from modern vocabularies a large part of the Indo-European language.

German, English, Gaelic, Italian, Persian, Spanish, Swedish, Sanskrit, and all other Indo-European languages and cultures descended from an ancestral Indo-European. Because we use the terms of family lineage to describe relationships between languages, we name Indo-European the “ancestor” to all “descended” languages and cultures. The relationship between all contemporary languages in the Indo-European family is therefore cousin. In fact, since all languages descend from common ancestral languages and all modern languages exist in the same “generation,” all modern languages are cousin languages. Some are more distant than others, but all are cousins.
A word can only descend from the older to the younger. (As with a physical trait, one cannot inherit a trait from one’s own children or grandchildren!) A word also cannot descend between cousin languages. Using the simplified tree of Indo-European languages below, write in the box beneath a language the word as it appeared in that language. The example given in the chart on page 57 shows the word mead in three modern Indo-European languages and five ancestral Indo-European languages including Proto-Indo-European, shown at the bottom of the chart. Highlight each occurrence of the word for mead in the eight languages. Mead is an alcoholic drink made from fermenting honey. It was a drink produced by Indo-European people thousands of years ago and is still available today.

Using the chart for the word mead, answer the following questions:

1. Is it possible the Modern English word mead (“mead”) descended from the Modern German word (“met”) for mead?

2. Is it possible the English word mead descended from the Proto-Indo-European word (“medhu”) for mead?
3. Is it possible the English word *mead* descended from the Sanskrit word (“madhu”) for *mead*?

4. Does the Danish word *mød* share a common ancestor with the German word *met*?
   If so, name that ancestor.

5. Is it more likely the eight words identified as meaning *mead* are similar because of accident, borrowing, or common ancestry?
Indo-European Languages I

A simplified family chart of Indo-European languages, showing the descent of the Indo-European word for *mead*.

Courtesy of Paul Hertzel.
PROJECT 11
Descent of the Indo-European Word Mater

If we return to the German and English words for mother, we can reconstruct a simple genealogy of German and English by diagramming the descent of this ancient word. Show the descent of the word mother by writing the word for mother in the box beneath the appropriate language in the chart on the following page. This project provides an example of words that are similar because of shared descent. The word Mutter in German descended from the Indo-European word for mother, mater. The same is true of the word mother in English; it also descended from the Indo-European word mater.

Language: Word Meaning Mother

Proto-Indo-European: mater
Proto-Germanic: mothaer
Old English: modor
Middle English: mother
Modern English: mother
Modern German: Mutter
Latin: mater
Old Irish: mathir
Irish Gaelic: mathir
Sanskrit: matar
Greek: meter
Spanish: madre
Danish: moder
Swedish: moder
Modern Czech: matka
Modern French: mère
Indo-European Languages II
A simplified family chart of Indo-European languages. Following the list given, fill in the appropriate blocks to show the descent of the Indo-European word for mother.
Courtesy of Paul Hertzel.
PROJECT 12
Descent of the Indo-European Word Ster

Using the chart on the following page, show the descent of the word *star* by copying the word for *star* in the box of the corresponding language. You do not need to fill in boxes for any more languages than those listed here.

**Language: Word Meaning Star**

- Proto-Indo-European: ster
- Proto-Germanic: sterson
- Old English: steorra
- Middle English: sterre
- Modern English: star
- Gothic: stairno
- Old High German: sterro
- Modern German: stern
- Spanish: estrella
- Sanskrit: star
- Swedish: stjärna
- Latin: stella
- Norse: stjärna
- Danish: stjerne
Indo-European Languages III
A simplified family chart of Indo-European languages, showing the descent of the Indo-European word for star.
Courtesy of Paul Hertzel.
1. As we have seen, when one finds similarities of root words in multiple languages, this could indicate either mass borrowing or shared descent. But a word could not descend from a language that did not have the thing the word represents. Therefore, the word for computer could not have descended from Proto-Indo-European since the Indo-Europeans lived five thousand years ago and did not have computers. The words listed below are similar in many modern Indo-European languages. Could these words have descended from the Indo-European mother language of five thousand years ago? Write possible or not possible next to each word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Possible or Not Possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus (of the New Testament)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hunt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Using the comparative method, explain the coincidence of themes, archetypes, and motifs in literature and myths throughout history and around the world. For specific examples around which to frame your answer, refer to Projects 7, 8, and 9.
English grew out of the Germanic family of languages. After Indo-European people migrated to different regions, each group gradually incorporated local cultures and environments to develop cultures and languages independent of other Indo-Europeans. Those who were to become Germanic people lived in tribal communities, each with a distinct language, customs, and kinship organization. Tribes interacted and shared many features, but each tribe also established a unique character.

For several centuries beginning with the third century A.D., large kinship or tribal groups of Germanic people migrated out from central and northern Europe into other parts of Europe and the Mediterranean world. The Vandals migrated through Spain into northern Africa, where they conquered local states but were eventually assimilated into the native populations. Goths split into two major groups, Visigoths and Ostrogoths, and also migrated south, the first to establish a kingdom in Spain, the other to assimilate into the native populations of southeastern Europe. Most important to the story of the development of English were the migrations of the Saxon and Angle tribes.

People of the Saxon tribe wandered from the central European homeland in numerous waves, including a series of migrations across the English Channel to the British Isles. These resettlements took place around the fourth and fifth centuries and coincided with migrations of Angle people to the same region. When the Saxons and Angles arrived, they encountered Celtic people who had inhabited the islands for many centuries. Eventually the culture of the Saxons and the Angles replaced the Celtic languages in the southeastern regions, and thus emerged a new language, Anglo-Saxon, also known as Old English. This language and culture dominated all aspects of life in the region and evolved as its own culture, independent of the Germanic cultures on the continent, though considerable contact continued. Over the next thousand years, many great influences and changes came to the Anglo-Saxon language and culture, particularly by Danish Vikings and in 1066 from Normans, invaders from the continent.

Normans were Norsemen (Northmen) who had lived long enough in the land of the Romanized Franks (modern France) that their old language had evolved into a language with a Latin base, called French Norman. When the Normans conquered Anglo-Saxon territory, they implemented French Norman as the language of administration. The new language thus entered English first as a language of foreign rule, but eventually its influence and use migrated into everyday speech. By the fourteenth century, English had become a language that was truly an amalgamation of different Indo-European languages: Celtic, Angle, Saxon, Danish, and Norman French. Because English
was a melting pot of many different languages, it still has one of the largest vocabularies of any language in the world.

As much as people frequently define themselves by distinguishing cultural differences, it should be evident from the story of English that the formation of culture is a historical process of exchange and intersection, or borrowing and descending (and rarely accident). Exchange and intersection are perpetual in human history and occur through contact and inheritance. No people are long isolated, and no culture is wholly original. People and languages disappear, while new ones emerge, but not from thin air. Every culture is unique, but, like individuals, is also a descendant and a relative. Indo-European languages are cousins, but so are all languages cousins. For, while English, Spanish, Russian, Sanskrit, and hundreds more languages descended from Indo-European, all languages ever spoken descended from the First Language.
Identify words and features of American life that are inherited from non-English-speaking or non-American cultures.

1. Foods: Name five dishes with non-English names; for example: pizza from Italian.

2. Music: Name three songs that come from non-American groups or traditions; for example: “Danny Boy” from Irish.

3. Corporations: Name three corporations with non-American headquarters and manufacturing; for example: Olivetti, Italy, printers.

4. Places: Name five place names that have become standard American English but that come from non-English words; for example: Los Angeles from Spanish; Bismarck from German.

5. Name four common words in English that do not fit the categories listed above but that represent actions, things, or mentalities and originate from a language other than English; for example: chauffeur from French.
There are many examples of contrasting traditions in history. For example, while all societies have religion, not all societies have the same religion. And, while there are themes that appear in some form in all religious traditions, there are also great differences. Sometimes religions that are closely related can be the most contentious, as in the case of periodic European Wars of Religion that set Catholic against Protestant states. But all religious traditions share some elements and differ on others.

One religious tradition that contrasts with Christianity in interesting ways is Islam. Historically, these two religions are closely related and even descend from common traditions. Both religions are monotheistic. Both recognize the Hebrew tradition as a religious and spiritual forerunner (naming Abraham in particular as a patriarch, symbolic or ecclesiastical, and naming Moses as prophet, for example); both acknowledge concepts of equality before God among believers; both recognize a written text as sacred; both depend heavily on a historical figure; and both endorse certain methods—sometimes aggressive methods—of conversion. But there are differences as well. The precise message and the spiritual nature of the respective messenger of the two religions are different; while Islam proclaims Muhammad, the seventh-century prophet of Islam, to be a man summoned by God to be a prophet, Christians proclaim Jesus to be the Christ, the son of God, and a personal redeemer. The sacred texts are different as well. While Muslims believe the sacred text of Islam, the Qur’an (Koran, Q’ran) came to Muhammad in a series of revelations from God, Christians accept a tradition of selection, translation, and recording, and including the Hebrew sacred texts, to arrive at a collection of divine writings coming from many centuries and different languages. The Qur’an also accepts the basic truth of the Hebrew tradition but does not include the Hebrew texts as part of their own.
Islam recognizes two major texts as sacred. The first, and the text on which Islam was initially founded, is the Qur’an, which is taught to be the word of God (Allah) delivered to Muhammad, the Messenger of God, from angels. The second is the Sunnah, an account of Muhammad’s life, recorded by contemporaries to provide the life of Muhammad as a model for all Muslims to follow. The Sunnah provides details of the teaching of Muhammad, usually through the example of his life. The daily problems and special circumstances are commonly related through stories such as this account of a woman who asks Muhammad if she would be allowed to meet her father’s pilgrimage obligation in his place.

. . . The woman said, “O Allah’s Apostle! The obligation of Hajj [pilgrimage] enjoined by Allah on His devotees has become due on my father and he is old and weak, and he cannot sit firm on the Mount; may I perform Hajj on his behalf?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, you may.” That happened during the Hajj-al-Wida (of the Prophet).1

In a second passage from the Sunnah, Muhammad describes the way he receives visions.

Narrated ‘Aisha (the mother of the faithful believers): Al-Harith bin Hisham asked Allah’s Apostle “O Allah’s Messenger! How is the Divine Inspiration revealed to you?” Allah’s Apostle replied, “Sometimes it is (revealed) like the ringing of a bell, this form of Revelation is the hardest of all and then this state passes off after I have grasped what is revealed. Sometimes the Angel comes in the form of a man and talks to me and I grasp whatever he says.” ‘Aisha added: Verily I saw the Prophet being inspired (Divinely) and noticed the Sweat dropping from his forehead on a very cold day (as the Revelation was over).2

These passages show Muhammad’s humanity in the way he discusses issues with people who come to him. One of Muhammad’s messages was the equality of all people. The Sunnah also provides specific doctrine, again through the voice of the Prophet of Islam. In some passages Muhammad outlines the foundation of the religion and describes the “end days,” another theme Islam shares with Christianity.

The Qur’an is different from the Sunnah; it is taught to be the word of God, and its voice is God speaking to humanity. The images of God and the

1. The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 26, Number 589, translation by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Islamic University, 1976), 344.
2. The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 1, Number 2, translation by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Islamic University, 1997), 46.
religious teachings in the two texts are thematically consistent, but the tones are different. Here is one passage where God (Allah) explains the difference between legalistic righteousness and true righteousness.

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts—these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil).3

There is an interesting historical-religious relationship between Islam and Christianity. Search the Qur’an online or in a bound volume that has an index (use the library!) to find a passage that describes a view of Jesus. There are many available searchable texts online for you to use. Search until you find a single, understandable passage (like all sacred texts, if you are not familiar with the religion, it can be difficult to understand), then summarize the text in your own words, copy the exact wording of the text, and cite the chapter and verse of the passage you used.

1. Cite the Qur’an passage (sura or chapter name, chapter number, and verse number).

2. Quote the Qur’an passage.

3. Summarize the Qur’an passage.
To study religion historically means to avoid judgments of “correct” or “incorrect” in order to critically (objectively) evaluate the impact of religion on history. Historians define religious practice and traditions in terms of what the practices are and not what they “should be.” Discussions of the historical Christ therefore refer to the verifiable person rather than the object of faith. The same is true of historical Muhammad or historical Buddha; these refer to the person about whom events can be confirmed objectively. (As with any historical person, George Washington, Martin Luther King, or Confucius.)

Ancient Greek scholars of the Classical era sought to guide religious inquiry with objectivity and reason. In one famous dialogue, Socrates, one of the great philosophers of the ancient world, instructs Meno on the nature of good and evil from a rational perspective. When reading this Socratic excerpt (pages 86–87), consider Socrates’ method and message, both of which are based on reason. This “rational” approach also extended to matters of morality and the nature of God.

As religious traditions vary from society to society, so within a historical tradition religious interpretations change over time. Christian practice does not appear the same in one century as it does in the next. While there may be internal or spiritual constants that define spirituality, external practice adopts new forms, abandons old definitions and practices, and doctrines and teachings adapt to new environments and new learning. The modern scientific method has, for example, eliminated many older remnants of pre-Christian practice still common during the ancient and medieval eras in Europe.

Thus we see religious practice, like language and other aspects of human civilization, is fluid and adaptable. In the modernizing world, as people came to accept Galileo’s scientific description of our solar system, for example, interpretations of the Bible changed to incorporate new learning and discoveries. In fact, the religion of the premodern Christian church might be barely recognizable today. Consider a twelve-hundred-year-old blessing, performed by Anglo-Saxon Christians (page 88). The Anglo-Saxons believed in the living body of Mother Earth and an organic relationship of all things spiritual and physical. Modern Christians might not recognize this ritual; there is no precise scriptural outline, and the blessing comes from a distant time and place. It might appear “superstitious” as well, as it draws from a nonscientific understanding of fertility and agriculture. Yet to the Anglo-Saxon people who practiced it, the blessing was part of Christian agricultural life.
1. What elements show this blessing (page 88) to be prescientific?

2. What specific elements or terms appear in the blessing that identify practitioners as Christian?

3. Read the selection from the Hymns of Homer on page 106 of the appendix. The text was written in the Mediterranean world a thousand years before the Anglo-Saxon blessing. Which characteristics does the Homeric hymn share with the Anglo-Saxon blessing? (Use passages from the Hymns of Homer to support your answer.) How can you explain this coincidence? Does accident, borrowing, or common ancestry appear to make more sense?
In contrast to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, the traditional religious practice of the Zulu presents a religion without a written tradition and one that includes spiritual elements absent in the others. While there are Zulu who practice other religions, including Islam and Christianity, the traditional and most ancient practice of the Zulu can be described as animism. Animism is one of humanity’s original and most persistent religious teachings. The basic belief of animism is contained in the word which comes from the Latin anima meaning “soul,” and describes something alive, as in the word “to animate.” Animism is the belief that all things have spiritual life; trees, animals, plants, rocks, the moon, dust, all things are part of a spiritual universe that lies behind the physical world, and all things have souls.

The stories included in the appendix representing Zulu life are not necessarily religious texts (pages 89–98). Yet both Amatongo and The Healing Spirits of the Zulu describe religious thinking and practice, or both reveal the spiritual understanding of the Zulu’s universe. Both accounts deal with life and death, ancestral spirits, healing practices, spiritual guidance, and, in a sense, “worship.” Although the texts do not refer to an all-powerful, creating God, neither do they deny such a God. By most accounts, the Zulu believed in the existence of a supreme God, but their daily routine was remote from God; instead Zulu religious practice involved more immediate spiritual relationships, as shown in both stories.

The mystery of James, the sick young man in the story Amatongo, is his illness. It was his mystery as well as ours when we read this account today. The witnesses are friends of his, Christians from a village where James has lived for some time with his wife and children. But James’s sickness has destroyed apparently everything. He despises his home, his village, his religion, even his family. Initially, it might appear James is simply rejecting his adopted religion, Christianity, to return to his native Zulu beliefs. But his disease is less discriminating than that. His symptoms seem bizarre and capricious. One key to understanding James’s sickness is the fact that doctors among the Zulu use spiritual as well as physical causes to explain physical conditions. James is aware that the European-trained doctors of his village would simply have him committed to an asylum were he to ask for diagnosis.

If we summarize from the research of Mircea Eliade and Howard Spodek, we can identify several universal features of religious traditions. Sacred time includes holidays; sacred space includes cities, altars, graves, and so on; sacred languages and literature includes traditions written or oral; sacred artistic and cultural creativity includes paintings, architecture, colors, dress, music, and so on; the creation of religious organization might include any authority from the local to the heavenly; and the sanctification of predecessors includes saints, martyrs, and kinship groups including families. Such categories are useful to historians as objective criteria for identification and comparison of religious practice and can be located in the texts we have been studying.
PROJECT 17
Comparative Religions: Islam, Animism of the Zulu, Christianity of the Anglo-Saxons

Identify features from the religious texts identified below. Use quotations and explain briefly how your examples fit the categories. Use complete sentences.

1. Identify examples of sacred time (or occasions), in An Anglo-Saxon Blessing for the Fields and the Sunnah.

2. Identify sacred space in the animism of the Zulu. What makes those spaces sacred?

3. Contrast the sanctification of predecessors and ancestors in the animism of the Zulu to the Sunnah or Qur’an.

4. How and why must the Zulu diviner learn about natural features, landscapes, and animals? In what way is this belief “animist”?
MYSTIC TRADITIONS WORLDWIDE

Earlier in this chapter we identified universals in world literature. There are also universals in world religions that go beyond the categories of comparison identified in Project 17. Contrasting the literary theme of “the pain of separation” is a religious theme, “the union of all things,” what the Jewish mystic Abraham Isaak Kook describes as “all beings longing for the source of their origin.” In *On Prayer*, Rabbi Kook writes,

> All beings long for the very source of their origin. Every plant, every grain of sand, every lump of earth, small creatures and big ones, the heavens above and the angels, every substance together with its particles—all of them are longing, yearning, panting to attain the state of holy perfection. Man suffers all the time from this homesickness of the soul and it is in prayer that he cures it. When praying, man feels at one with the whole creation and he raises it to the very source of blessing and life.\(^5\)

In most religious traditions, similar themes are named *mysticism*. Evelyn Underhill describes the aim of mysticism as the “union between God and the soul.” One can find mystical thinking in every religious practice. Some traditions, such as *Buddhism* and some Native American religions, might be defined as mysticism rather than as religions. Islam has a mystic tradition called *Sufism*. Christianity has many mystic traditions throughout its history, commonly following the precedent set by Jesus’s example of prayer, fasting, and meditation, and his message of the spiritual “kingdom of God.” Judaism contains mystical traditions, texts, and prayers, including the collection known as the Kabbalah. The teaching of the Tao and its various historical additions begins with the potential of humans to find spiritual union with the universal Divine, also a mystical theme. And the animism of the Zulu includes the communion of all things living and not living, a common aspect of mysticism. Even modern science has contributed to the mystic discussion with recent research in neurology and the brain supporting an argument that humans have an innate spirituality that can be awakened by meditation and ritual, the typical practices of mysticism. Thus, while we find many interpretations of religion, we also find in mysticism a commonality of basic spiritual belief.

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5. Ibid.
6. For example, see Luke 17:21 and I Corinthians 15:50.
Mysticism shuns doctrine and it commonly describes truth as more of a mystery than a law. In the ancient Buddhist text *The Diamond Sutra*, the teacher declares, “If anyone set forth a teaching he really slanders Buddha and is unable to explain what I teach. As to any truth-declaring system, truth is undeclarable; so, ‘an enunciation of truth’ is just the name given to it.”7 This passage expresses well how mysticism defies category because mystics seek an internal person not shaped by culture and man-made systems. Because its intent is inherently universal, mysticism can be used to explore patterns of belief that underlie world religions.

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Appendix of Primary Sources

Readings are prefaced by author introductions, which are set in italics.
1. SOCRATES

A Socratic Dialogue between Meno and Socrates, recorded by Plato


Socrates was a philosopher of classical Athens and the teacher of Plato, who recorded Socrates’ teaching. Socrates taught that every individual, if properly instructed, carries a capacity to comprehend truth. One method of arriving at truth is to question a person about their own beliefs and logic. This is called the Socratic method and is a form of cross-questioning. In this dialogue between Meno and Socrates, the Master begins by asking Meno if people behave badly because they desire bad things. When Meno responds in the affirmative, Socrates proceeds to demonstrate that the student likely does not believe his own answer. Socrates does not tell Meno what to believe, neither does he tell Meno right and wrong; rather, he guides Meno to the conclusion that in the end Meno reasons for himself. This is the Socratic method and demonstrates a second Socratic principle as well: that each person has an individual conscience and should not accept any belief simply because tradition dictates.

SOCRATES: And does he who desires the honorable also desire the good?
MENO: Certainly.
SOC. Then are there some who desire the evil and others who desire the good? Do not all men, my dear sir, desire good?
MEN. I think not.
SOC. There are some who desire evil?
MEN. Yes.
SOC. Do you mean that they think the evils which they desire, to be good; or do they know that they are evil and yet desire them?
MEN. Both, I think.
SOC. And do you really imagine, Meno, that a man knows evils to be evils and desires them notwithstanding?
MEN. Certainly I do.
SOC. And desire is of possession?
MEN. Yes, of possession.
SOC. And does he think that the evils will do good to him who possesses them, or does he know that they will do him harm?
MEN. There are some who think that the evils will do them good, and others who know that they will do them harm.
SOC. And, in your opinion, do those who think that they will do them good know that they are evils?
MEN. Certainly not.
SOC. Is it not obvious that those who are ignorant of their nature do not desire them; but they desire what they suppose to be goods although they are really evils; and if they are mistaken and suppose the evils to be goods they really desire goods?
MEN. Yes, in that case.
SOC. Well, and do those who, as you say, desire evils, and think that evils are hurtful to the possessor of them, know that they will be hurt by them?
MEN. They must know it.
SOC. And must they not suppose that those who are hurt are miserable in proportion to the hurt which is inflicted upon them?
MEN. How can it be otherwise?
SOC. But are not the miserable ill-fated?
MEN. Yes, indeed.
SOC. And does any one desire to be miserable and ill-fated?
MEN. I should say not, Socrates.
SOC. But if there is no one who desires to be miserable, there is not one, Meno, who desires evil; for what is misery but the desire and possession of evil?
MEN. That appears to be truth, Socrates, and I admit that nobody desires evil.
European cultures have long expressed sanctity for the land, the earth, and the regional or local natural settings people occupy. Pagan Europeans in ancient times customarily adopted natural sites, a sacred tree, a spring, or a stone for a site of worship. Fertility, motherhood, and life are powers the land holds in ancient belief. Notions of the sacred power of the land intersect with Christian practice to produce pagan-Christian worship of the earth in rural, popular cultures in central Europe. Some of the concepts described in the following ritual are very ancient, and some still survive today. In the Anglo-Saxon charm, the earth is deemed sacred as the giver of life. One can hardly identify the charm solely as Christian or pagan, so mixed is the language of old and new belief. Holy Mother Earth transcends religious differences, pagan and Christian. Anglo-Saxon priests performed the charm as a remedy for barren fields, or for land that had been “bewitched.” To a modern observer this might sound like witchcraft, but it is in fact a prescientific way of understanding nature. God and humanity are united through labor as the earth produces life. Elements of nature symbolically cooperate in the ritual as they are all brought symbolically together. The charm requires participation by all plants, all grains, and so on, since all these elements together signify the singularity of God’s universe and no distinction is made between spiritual and physical things.

Take thou by night, before daybreak, four pieces of turf on the four sides of the land, and note how they previously stood. Take then oil and honey and barn and milk of all cattle that may be on the land, and part of every kind of tree that may grow on the land except hard trees, and part of every known herb except burdock alone, and put holy water thereon and drop thrice on the pieces of turf, and say then these words. . . . And then take the turves to the church, and let the mass-priest sing four masses over the turves and let the green part be turned towards the altar. . . . Then drive the plow and make the first furrow. Say then—

Hail to thee, Earth, all men’s mother,
be thou growing in God’s protection,
filled with food for feeding of men!

Take then meal of every kind and bake a loaf, “as big as will lie within his two hands,” and knead it with milk and with holy-water, and lay it under the first furrow. Say then—

Full field of food for folk of men,
brightly blooming, blessed be thou,
in the name of the holy one, heaven’s maker,
and earth’s also, whereon we live,
God, world-maker, grant growing gifts,
that all our corn may come to our use!
The readings describing life among the Zulu are taken from Henry Callaway’s nineteenth-century record of life among the African people. The readings are useful as, among other things, examples of animism. Animism is one of humanity’s oldest beliefs about the spiritual world, death, and God. In these readings, as in other primary readings, you will understand them in their own context only when you read them with an open mind. Try not to look for justifications or affirmations of your own perspectives but try instead to read these texts as they were understood by the cultures they describe. Do you see evidence in these texts that suggests life is present in all things (animism)? How are the living related to the dead, not only in a genealogical sense but in a present, dynamic sense?

Amatongo narrates the story of a Zulu convert to Christianity. The word Itongo is used to describe a spirit of the dead.

Amatongo

The account of the illness of James, which is not intelligible among Christians; for although a person may appear to be affected with those symptoms which precede the power of divination, yet when he goes to a mission station all that ceases through continually hearing the word of God. There are many who were so affected, but are now so no longer. But as regards him who is now so old, it is marvelous that he should begin to be so affected, as though he had only just come to a Christian village.

I and Paul reached the place where he is, going with the intention of taking him by surprise, saying to each other, “Do not let him hear or see us; let him first see us when we are already in the hut, before he puts himself to rights, that we may see what he does now when no man is looking at him.”

When we came he was lying down covered with two blankets—one black, the other grey and old. When he saw us he remained lying and was silent. I aroused him, saying, “Arouse.” He writhed himself and said, “Just have patience. I am about to arise. Make haste and tell me! Make haste and tell me! What has happened at home?” But was a long time before he arose. At length he arose and saluted us; and we saluted him. I asked him, saying, “James, how are you?” He said, “I am very ill.” I said, “What is the matter with you?” He said, “I am very ill.” I asked, “What is the matter with you?” He said, “I have a disease with which I am not acquainted.” I said, “Tell me all about it.” He began by saying: “O, truly, you are right. If it were a mere boy who asked, I would not say a single word. But since it is you who ask, I will tell you everything. At first I was afraid, and said, ‘What will men say?’ But now since this disease has separated me from you, I can make no concealment.

“Long ago this disease began, even before I quitted the house on the other side of the river to go to my new house; it began whilst I still lived in the village. And the family of Umapontshi know it. But it passed off again. It first began by creeping up from my fingers and toes; it then crept up my arms and thighs; it ran and spread itself over
the whole body, until it reached the upper part of the body, and stopped in my should-
ers, and caused a sensation of oppression, and there was a great weight here on my shoulders; it was as if I was carrying a heavy weight.

“But now it is not that only; but now there are things which I see when I lie down. When I left home I had composed three songs, without knowing whence they came; I heard the song, and then just sang it, and sang the whole of it without having ever learnt it.

“But that which troubles me most now is, that there is not a single place in the whole country which I do not know; I go over it all by night in my sleep; there is not a single place the exact situation of which I do not know. I see also elephants and hye-

“Again, I see that I am flying, no longer treading on this earth.”

I asked him, “Since it is thus with you, do you still remember your Lord?”

He said, “No. To do so is death to me. If I try, saying, ‘Let me pray,’ it is as if I summoned all kinds of death to come and kill me at once. The Lord’s tidings are plucked out of me by this disease. It alone has now the dominion over me.”

I said, “Do you remember that old dream of yours?”

He said, “Do you speak of that of the boats?”

I said, “Yes.”

He replied, “Oh! I do not forget it. I see clearly now that the boat is my faith, which has now sunk into the water. And the dogs which I saw are now devouring me.”

I said, “But if your Lord is now your enemy, who will save you?” He replied, “No. I am now dead altogether. I do not think that I am still a man who can enter into a new position, which I do not in the least understand. I do not know what I am. Attend, for I am a man who loves my children dearly. But now I do not care whether they are alive or not. The great thing is this disease alone.”

He continued, “And now I begin to go out by night, having an internal intimation about medicine; it is said, ‘The medicine is in such a place; go and dig it up.’ I go out and reach the place, but do not find the medicine; I merely walk up and down, and at length return. This is my present state.

“There are many things which I seem to see, but when I go to them I cannot see them. At length it happened one day very early in the morning, I was told to go and dig up some medicine. I went to the place, but did not see the medicine, and came back again. When I reached home, it was said, ‘Why have you left the medicine? It is that which you saw. Go and dig it up.’ At length I went to the place and dug it up. Again I threw it away, for I did not know what to do with it. I was told to go and dig up another medicine on the Isithlutankungu. I refused, and I have not been to this day.

“But the great thing is meat; it is said constantly, ‘Let a bullock be killed.’ It is as though I could eat meat daily. This disease longs for meat; but I will not kill cattle. I am harassed by the dogs; it is as if where I am the dogs must not be beaten; I am greatly afraid of the noise. And it is as though I could not look on a diviner; he may come, I am at once in a dying state, and fall down and die. It is this, then, that troubles me. And now I no longer love any one. My heart no longer loves men. It is as though I could stay where it is perfectly still—where there is not the least sound. When you tell me to return, I do not know where I could stay, for the bell of our village sounds again and
again. I do not like such a sound as that; I am much afraid. I shall not stay. I shall be driven away by the bell.”

And then we spoke of his return, I saying, “Come home, if you are ill here; your wife, not seeing you, does not suppose at all that you are under medical treatment. To her way of thinking, you have merely forsaken her; therefore when her father comes he will come and take her away with him. You know yourself that our wives talk, and although a man is not sick, they tell us that if a husband rebels and returns to a heathen life, attracted by its pleasant things, yet his wife, because she does not know any pleasant things of heathen life, will at once separate from him, and not die with the death with which another wilfully kills himself. Do you not know that our wives say thus?”

He assented and said, “Yes. Hannah came here some days ago. She told me to get rid of this disease. And if I did not get rid of it, we should separate. I answered her and asked, ‘What is meant by getting rid of it? Am I fond of it? Did I produce it? O, I do not know how the disease can be got rid of. The disease is master of the sick man.’ And so we separated. And I am now about to return home for that saying of hers, ‘If the disease does not cease we shall separate.’ I will now come back, that my wife see for herself that which can get rid of the disease. I cannot fix the day. You will see me when I come. My body is in pain, for on the night before you came I saw you coming to me, but you were white men. A white man hurt me; he came in here and struck me on the thigh which was broken and broke it again. I arose and threw ashes over him. I am ill from that then. I cannot tell you the day.

“I am not ill every day. Some days I am quite well, especially on Sunday. On Sunday, although I no longer know it is Sunday, I am very well. I now know by my body that it is Sunday. Such then is my disease.

“Go. I will accompany you; I will come back from the top of the hill.”

So then we went with him. But he now goes naked, and wears the umuntsha. I just caught sight of his umuntsha; the hinder part was black.

Further, I asked him, “Why did you leave home unknown to our Teacher, who is a doctor of all diseases, without telling him?”

He replied, “I did not tell him, for I was afraid, and said, ‘If I tell him, he will say I am mad, and seize me and send me to Pietermaritzburg, and I shall stay there a long time.’ I feared that then, and did not tell him, thinking, ‘O, since a mad man destroys people’s property, and I do no harm, but my sickness is an injury to myself only;—O, no, let me not tell him. It may be I shall get well if I find doctors for myself. Let me go.’ So I went away.”

So we left, and separated from him at a place above the village. He walked without limping; his thigh has not dried up, it is of the same length as the other. But when he is going down hill, it is evident that he is a man who has been injured. But when he goes up hill, he looks like all other men.

There are only three kinds of food that he eats—meat, and the dregs of beer mixed with boiled maize; if these cannot be had he eats wild herbs. That is the food on which he lives. He does not put amasi into his mouth by any means; he dislikes it, and it disagrees with him.

Again, once at night he was told to awake and go down to the river, and he would find an antelope caught in a Euphorbia tree; and to go and take it. “So,” said he, “I awoke.
When I had set out, my brother, Umankamane, followed me.” He threw a stone and struck an aloe. James was frightened, and ran back to him and chided him, saying, “Why did you frighten me when I was about to lay hold on my antelope.” That was the end of it, and he was not again told by anything to go and fetch the antelope. They went home, there being nothing there.

James’s people say they are of a family who are very sensitive, and become doctors. There are two of his brothers in Zululand who are doctors. James told me, saying, “Heber came to us on his arrival from Zululand; he told me that my brothers in Zululand are now doctors, So-and-so and So-and-so.” And so James said, “He then is the man who brought this disease on me. Whilst he was telling me I was seized with a fearful dread. I did not answer him, but remained silent. I am now ill because he spoke of what I myself was experiencing; but I did not speak of it, for I did not know what disease it was. He made me understand; and I understand it to this day.” It is said that James’s father, Ukokela, was the steward of the Zulu king. But he was seized with the disease which precedes the power to divine. The king was angry when he heard it. He ate up all his cattle. That was the medicine which cured Ukokela. That was the end of it.

Others are doctors here in the country of the English. His sisters have the initiatory symptoms; there are many who have James’s disease. Some have the Itongo laid. With others the disease ceases of its own accord; it is tired, and leaves them. Another, not one of James’s relatives, I heard Ujojo mention her; she was a girl of the Abambo, the daughter of Unoponya; it is said, she was affected, and did as James does. But she was treated by many doctors. They could not cure her; she still went to the mountains, and did not stay at home; she was a married woman. At length she was treated by Ujojo, the son of Umanzezulu; he cured her. He killed two goats—or, rather, a sheep and a goat; the goat was white, the sheep black. He treated her with them; the black sheep made the Itongo indistinct, and no longer bright; the white goat made the Itongo white and bright, that it might make her see clearly. So he laid the Itongo, and she went home; he caused her to live at home. And she is now a human being. It is said, for a long time she lived in the mountains. But it is now no longer apparent that she ever did so.

The diviners tell James that he too is beginning, and will soon be a doctor. But they say he must not be treated with black medicines to lay the Itongo, for he will die; he must be just left alone. His friends therefore do not know what to do, since it is said, he will die. They merely look on. The diviners’ word is their law; they can on no account go beyond it.

The Healing Spirits of the Zulu

I once went to a person with a familiar spirit to enquire respecting a boy of ours who had convulsions. My father and brother and mothers and I wondered what was the nature of the disease, since it was a new thing. We saw at first sight that it was something about which we must enquire of the diviner. We set out and went to the person with a familiar spirit. We made obeisance, saying, “Eh, friend; we come to you for good news.” We waited. The doctor said, “Good day.” We replied, saying, “Yes.” She poured out some snuff, and took it; she then yawned and stretched, and also shuddered, and said, “They who divine are not yet here.”
We remained a long time, and at length we too took some snuff; when we were no longer thinking of the reason of our coming, we heard that the spirits were come; they saluted us, saying, “Good day.” We looked about the house to see where the voice came from.

The spirits said, “Why are you looking about, for we merely salute you?”
We said, “We look about because we cannot see where you are.”
They said, “Here we are. You cannot see us. You will be helped by what we say only.”

The voice was like that of a very little child; it cannot speak aloud, for it speaks above, among the wattles of the hut.
We replied to the salutation.
The spirits said, “You have come to enquire about something.”
The person whose familiars they were said, “Strike the ground for them; see, they say you came to enquire about something.”
So we struck the ground.
They said, “That about which you have come is a great matter; the omen has appeared in a man.”
We struck the ground, and asked, saying, “How big is the man in whom the omen has appeared?”
They replied, “It is a young person.”
We struck the ground vehemently there, when we perceived that she had hit the mark.
They said, “I say the omen is a disease.”
We smote the ground vehemently.
They said, “It is disease in the body of that young person.” They said, “Let me see what that person is? It is a boy.”
We assented strongly.
They said, “He does not yet herd. He is still small.”
We smote violently on the ground.
They said, “But you wonder at what has occurred to him.” They said, “Strike the ground, that I may see what that is which has occurred to the body of the little boy.”
We struck the ground vehemently, and said, “We will hear from you, for you have seen that it is a little boy.”
They said, “There he is; I see him; it is as though he had convulsions.”
Upon that we smote the ground vehemently.
They said, “What kind of convulsions are they? Enquire of me.” We said, “We have nothing to ask about. For behold you know; you have already first told us. For it is proper that you should tell us to ask, if you were not going the right way; but as we perceive that you are going the right way, what have we to ask of you?”
They replied, “I tell you to ask, for perhaps I am going wrong.”
We said, “No; you are not going wrong; you are going by the way which we ourselves see.”
They said, “The disease began in the child when he began to walk. When he was very young, you did not see the disease—when he was a little infant; at length when he began to laugh, the disease had not yet appeared; at length he began to sit up, it not
having yet appeared; at length he began to go on all fours, it not having yet appeared; at length he began to stand before he was affected by it; when he began to lift his foot from the ground to toddle, the disease came upon him. When you saw the disease, you saw it without expecting anything of the kind; he died in his mother’s arms; his mother poured water on him when he was turning up his eyes; she uttered a great cry, you started, and ran into the house; when you entered he had again come to life. The mother said, ‘You heard me cry; my child was dead. Do you not see he is wet? I poured water over him for some time, and therefore he has come to life again.’” The spirits continued, “I have now told you this; deny if what I say is not true.”

We replied, “We can in no way dispute what you say; we have told you already that you were going by the right path.”

The spirits said, “This disease resembles convulsions. You have come to me to know what is this disease which is like convulsions.”

We said, “Just so, you say truly; we wish to hear from you, spirit; you will tell us the disease and its nature, that we may at length understand of what nature it is; for you have already told us the name of the disease; tell us also the medicines with which we shall treat it.”

They replied, “I will tell you the disease. You are greatly alarmed because you say the child has convulsions; and a child with convulsions is not safe; he burns himself in the fire. I shall tell you what caused this disease. Just smite on the ground, boys, that I may understand if the child is the only son of his father.”

We said, “Yes; he is his only son.”

They said, “Smite the ground, that I may understand what relation you are to the child, since you come here to enquire.”

We smote vehemently on the ground.

They said, “The boy is your brother. Smite the ground, that I may see if he is really your brother born of your own father, or not. Not so. He is not really the son of your father. Your fathers are brothers. He is your brother, because your fathers were brothers.”

We smote the ground violently.

They said, “Smite, that I may understand which is the older of the two fathers. I say, boys, your own father is dead. Smite, that I may understand where he died. There he is; I see him; he died, boys, in the open country. He was stabbed with an assagai. By what tribe was he stabbed?”

We smote the ground vehemently.

They said, “He was stabbed by the Amazulu on this side the Utukela; that is where your father died, boys. The father of that child is your uncle, because he was your father’s brother; he was the elder of the two.”

They said, “Let me now tell you the disease which has attacked the boy. His disease is like convulsions; but it is not convulsions. And you are greatly alarmed because you think it is convulsions. But I shall tell you, for you will not again see him have a fit. I shall tell you what to do when you get home. Did you ever sacrifice for him? You have never sacrificed for him.”

They said, “Let me just see where you live. You live among the Amathlongwa; that is the tribe where you live. Let me just see where you were born. You belong to the
Amadunga. Just let me see, since you are here among the Amathlongwa, why you were separated from the Amadunga to come here. You quarreled with your own people, and so came here to the Amathlongwa. Smite the ground, that I may see if you have built your own village.”

We smote the ground.

They said, “You have not yet built it. You live in the village of another; you have not yet built your own village on the hill. As for the boy, the disease attacked him in the village where you now are. Smite the ground, that I may see what relation the man with whom you live is to you.”

We smote the ground.

They said, “He is your cousin on the mother’s side. I see nothing wrong in the village of your cousin; he is good; I see no practicing of sorcery there; I see that the village is clear; you eat with your eyes shut, for you have nothing to complain of. What I shall tell you is this, it is the ancestral spirits that are doing this. It is not convulsions the child has. For my part I say he is affected by the ancestral spirits.”

We wondered that we should continually hear the spirits which we could not see, speaking in the wattles, and telling us many things without our seeing them.

The spirits said, “I point out your ancestral spirits. When you reach home you shall take a goat. There it is, a he goat; I see it.”

We said, “How do you see it?”

They said, “Be silent, I will tell you, and satisfy you as to its colour. It is white. That is it which has just come from the other side of the Ilovo from the Amanzimtoti. It is now a large he goat. You shall sacrifice it, and pour its gall on the boy. You will go and pluck for him Itongo-medicine. I see that Itongo; it says that your village is to be removed from its present place, and built on the hill. Does not the Itongo ask, ‘Why has the village staid so long in the midst of another?’ It injures the lad, saying, ‘Let the village remove from this place.’ The he goat you will sacrifice to your grandmother; it is she who refuses to allow the child to die, for your grandfather had been earnest to kill him, that he might die and be buried in accordance with his wish. I tell you this to satisfy you. I tell you that if the disease returns, you may come back to me and take your money. I tell you that this disease is caused by the ancestral spirit, because it wishes that your village should remove.”

The spirits said, “Now I have divined for you; so give me my money.”

We took out the money.

Then they said to her whose familiars they were, “Take it; there is the money.”

They added, “I just take this money of yours. You will come and take it again if the disease returns. I say, it will never return again.”

The woman with the familiar spirits sat in the midst of the house, at the time of full daylight, when we enquired of her; for the spirits cannot go alone when they are going to divine; their possessor goes with them. For if they wish to go they tell their possessor, saying to her, “Let us go to such a place,” wherever they wish to go. The possessor of them cannot speak; she usually says little, for she too enquires of the spirits, and says, “So-and-so, when you say so, do you tell the people who come to enquire of you, the truth?” In reply they say, they do tell the truth, and those who come to enquire will see it. She says, “Tell them the truth. They will come to me here.
if they come to take back their money; and if you tell them falsehoods, I shall give
them back their money again. If you do not tell them the truth, I shall give it back
to them.” The spirits assent, saying, “You may give it back. For our parts we speak
truly; we tell no lies.”

So the possessor of the spirits took the money.

The spirits said to us, “Go in peace.” We wondered, “When they bid us go in peace,
without our seeing them. They told us to give their services to all our people at home.
We said we would.”

They said, “When you get home, do exactly what I have told you.” We replied,
“Yes; we will do all you have told us to do.”

So we went home. On our arrival we found the child better. As we were speaking
with him, our father came into the house, and we said, “O father, we never had such
confidence in a doctor. When we heard we said, ‘The spirit has divined.’ The spirits
divined; they told us all things—our birth, and the order of our birth, and that he with
whom we live is our cousin; they told us every thing. They said the boy has nothing the
matter with him that will kill him. They said we are alarmed, thinking he has convul-
sions; and we assented, saying, ‘Yes, yes; we think he has convulsions.’ The diviner
denied, saying, ‘No; he has not convulsions; he is possessed by a spirit. The spirit says
that your village must be moved.’ The spirits pointed out a white goat, and directed
that it should be sacrificed for the child, and the village be moved; and they ordered us
to pluck for him Itongo-medicine, and sacrifice the goat. They said, if the disease
returned, we were to go and take back our money.”

Our father said, “O, they have divined, both as regards the disease and our relations
with our cousin. We see they have divined. Why did not our ancestral spirits tell me in
a dream that there was something which they wanted, instead of revealing themselves
by coming to kill the child in this way? What prevented them from telling me in a dream
what they complained about, instead of revealing themselves by coming to kill the child
in this way, without saying any thing to me first? These dead men are fools! Why have
they revealed themselves by killing the child in this way, without telling me? Go and
fetch the goat, boys.”

We went to fetch the goat from the house. We killed it, and poured the gall over
the boy. Our cousin went to pluck the Itongo-medicine; he squeezed the juice into a
cup, and gave it to the boy to drink, and left the cup outside the kraal. The goat was
eaten.

We worshipped the ancestral spirits, saying, “We shall see that the child is possessed
by a spirit by his getting well, and not getting ill again; we shall say the spirit has lied if
he is still ill. We shall see by his recovery; and shall then say, the spirits have told the
truth. We do not understand why you have killed such a child as this. What prevents
you from making old people ill? That is a good spirit which appears in dreams, and tells
what it wants.” Such were the words with which we addressed the spirits.

Our father said, “I shall now quit this place with my village in the morning, and put
it in a place by itself. Why, when I thought I was living in peace, am I still obliged to be
a wanderer? There is a site of an old village; I will examine it well. I shall now remove
the village; may the new place be healthy and good, and this boy of mine be no longer
ill. If he is still ill, I shall say he is not possessed with a spirit; and I will quarrel with the
spirits, and say they have not divined properly.” Our father said thus. He said, “I will look at the new site in the morning; let us go together, my cousin, and look at the new site, and inspect it well, for I say I am still a wanderer; for the ancestral spirits have killed me for staying here.”

So he and his cousin went in the morning to inspect the site. They went to a place on the river Umathlongwa, and thoroughly inspected it and thought it good, and that it was a proper place for us to build on, for there was water near. They returned home.

In the morning we took our axes, and went to cut wattles and poles for the village. When we had finished cutting, the people of our village left that of our cousin and went to it, and then we completed it. The boy was not ill any more. It turned out in accordance with the word of the spirit; he was not ill again. At length he took out the calves at milking time, and herded the calves; at length he not only herded the calves and goats, but all the cattle—calves, goats, sheep, and cows. And at length he grew to be a man. His name is Umpini. He is now a diligent man. Next year he will milk the cows.

The name of the woman with the familiar spirits is Umkaukazi. It was not a man, but a woman. She saw us for the first time when we saluted her on our arrival; for we too had been told by others that she was a great diviner. She lived on the Umtwalume by the sea, at a distance from us. It is a day and a half’s journey from this.

### Becoming a Doctor

#### Divining with Sticks and Bones

The account of diviners when they begin to enter on divination. No one knows that a man will be a diviner. He begins by being affected with sickness; it appears about to cease, but it does not. It is in this respect at the commencement that diviners, and those that have familiar spirits, are alike; they differ in their mode of divination, for the diviner with familiar spirits does not resemble another diviner.

When a diviner divines for people, even he tells back to the people the truth which he first took from them. If as regards that which is done by the diviner we put all together, we shall say, it is the people who divine; for the diviner does not begin with any thing that he has not heard from the people who come to divine.

#### The Initiation of a Diviner

The condition of a man who is about to be an inyanga [note from the translator on the use of the word “Izinyanga”.—It is, perhaps, better to retain the native word than to translate it by a word which does not fairly represent it. Inyanga, generally rendered doctor, means a man skilled in any particular matter = magus. Thus, an inyanga yokubula is a doctor or wise man of smiting, that is, with divining rods—a diviner. Inyanga yemiti, a doctor of medicines. Inyanga yensimbi, a smith, &c.] is this: At first he is apparently robust; but in process of time he begins to be delicate, not having any real disease, but being very delicate. He begins to be particular about food, and abstains from some kinds, and requests his friends not to give him that food, because it makes him ill. He habitually avoids certain kinds of food, choosing what he likes, and he does not eat much
of that; and he is continually complaining of pains in different parts of his body. And he tells them that he has dreamt that he was being carried away by a river. He dreams of many things, and his body is muddled and he becomes a house of dreams. And he dreams constantly of many things, and on awaking says to his friends, “My body is muddled to-day; I dreamt many men were killing me; I escaped I know not how. And on waking one part of my body felt different from other parts; it was no longer alike all over.” At last the man is very ill, and they go to the diviners to enquire. . . . He is possessed by the Itongo. There is nothing else. He is possessed by an Itongo. . . . If you bar the way against the Itongo, you will be killing him. For he will not be an inyanga; neither will he ever be a man again; he will be what he is now. If he is not ill, he will be delicate, and become a fool, and be unable to understand any thing. I tell you you will kill him by using medicines. Just leave him alone, and look to the end to which the disease points. Do you not see that on the day he has not taken medicine, he just takes a mouthful of food? Do not give him any more medicines. He will not die of the sickness, for he will have what is good given to him.

So the man may be ill two years without getting better; perhaps even longer than that. He may leave the house for a few days, and the people begin to think he will get well. But no, he is confined to the house again. This continues until his hair falls off. And his body is dry and scurfy; and he does not like to anoint himself. People wonder at the progress of the disease. But his head begins to give signs of what is about to happen. He shows that he is about to be a diviner by yawning again and again, and by sneezing again and again. And men say, “No! Truly it seems as though this man was about to be possessed by a spirit.” This is also apparent from his being very fond of snuff; not allowing any long time to pass without taking some. And people begin to see that he has had what is good given to him.

After that he is ill; he has slight convulsions, and has water poured on him, and they cease for a time. He habitually sheds tears, at first slight, and at last he weeps aloud, and in the middle of the night, when the people are asleep, he is heard making a noise, and wakes the people by singing; he has composed a song, and men and women awake and go to sing in concert with him.

Therefore whilst he is undergoing this initiation the people of the village are troubled by want of sleep; for a man who is beginning to be an inyanga causes great trouble, for he does not sleep, but works constantly with his brain; his sleep is merely by snatches, and he wakes up singing many songs; and people who are near quit their villages by night when they hear him singing aloud, and go to sing in concert. Perhaps he sings till the morning, no one having slept. The people of the village smite their hands in concert till they are sore. And then he leaps about the house like a frog; and the house becomes too small for him, and he goes out, leaping and singing, and dripping with perspiration.

As to the familiar spirits, it is not one only that speaks; they are very many; and their voices are not alike; one has his voice, and another his; and the voice of the man into whom they enter is different from theirs. He too enquires of them as other people do; and he too seeks divination of them. If they do not speak, he does not know what they will say; he cannot tell those who come for divination what they will be told. No. It is his place to take what those who come to enquire bring, and nothing more. And the man and the familiar spirits ask questions of each other and converse.
4. TWO ARTICLES ON THE DISCOVERIES AT BLOMBOS CAVE


I. Origins of Modern Human Behaviour: The Debate

The origins of anatomically modern people (Homo sapiens) almost certainly lie in Africa at about 300,000–150,000 years ago and genetic evidence shows that all living people are related to these African ancestors. . . . Evidence emerging from a few recently excavated African sites is beginning to change the picture. One of these sites, Blombos Cave, located in the southern Cape, South Africa, contains excellently preserved Middle Stone Age (MSA) deposits that date to older than 70,000 years. Excavations at this site between 1992–2000 have yielded remarkable, yet anomalous finds that are directly relevant to the modern human behaviour debate. These finds include a range of bone tools, finely crafted bifacial stone points, an engraved bone fragment and evidence for modern subsistence practices including fishing.

II. Abstract Engravings Show Modern Behavior Emerged Earlier Than Previously Thought

People were able to think abstractly, and accordingly behave as modern humans much earlier than previously thought, according to a paper appearing in this week’s issue of Science.

Christopher Henshilwood, professor at the University of Bergen, Norway, adjunct professor at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and the Iziko-South African Museum in Cape Town and his team found abstract representations of two pieces of ochre, two and three inches long. The objects, dated to at least 70,000 years ago, were recovered from the Middle Stone Age layers at Blombos Cave, a site on the southern Cape shore of the Indian Ocean 180 miles east of Cape Town, South Africa. Henshilwood’s work at the cave is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The earliest previous evidence of abstract representations is from the Eurasian Upper Paleolithic period mainly in France and dated to less than 35,000 years ago. Ochre, a form of iron ore, is frequently found in stone age sites less than 100,000 years old and may have been used symbolically as a body or decorative paint and possibly also for skin protection and tanning animals’ hides.

Rather than being outlines of animals or other representations drawn from nature, the designs on the two pieces of ochre show a consistent representation of the development of arbitrary conventions to express mutually understood concepts. “They may have been constructed with symbolic intent, the meaning of which is now unknown,” Henshilwood said. “These finds demonstrate that ochre use in the Middle Stone Age was not exclusively utilitarian and, arguably, the transmission and sharing of the meaning of the engravings relied on fully syntactical language,” he added. The two pieces of ochre were first scraped and ground to create flat surfaces. They were then marked with cross hatches and lines to create a consistent complex geometric motif. The discovery adds important new insights to understanding the development of humans, who are known to have been anatomically modern in Africa about 100,000 years ago.
5. HYMN TO THE NILE, A PRAYER FROM ANCIENT EGYPT


*The hymn is contemporary with Moses, from the nineteenth dynasty, during the time of Menaphtah, the son of Ramses II. The author is named as Enna, who wrote numerous extant sources.*

Hymn to the Nile

I. Hail to thee O Nile!
Thou showest thyself in this land,
Coming in peace, giving life to Egypt;
O Ammon, (thou) leadest night into day,
A leading that rejoices the heart.
Overflowing the gardens created by Ra.
Giving life to all animals;
watering the land without ceasing:
The way of heaven descending:
Lover of food, bestower of corn,
Giving fight to every home, O Ptah!

II. Lord of fishes, when the inundation returns
No fowls fall on the cultures.
Maker of spelt; creator of wheat:
who maintaineth the temples!
Idle hands he loathes
For myriads, for all the wretched.
If the gods in heaven are grieved,
The sorrow cometh on men.

III. He maketh the whole land open to the oxen, And the great and the small are rejoicing; The response of men at his coming!
His likeness is like Num!
He shineth, then the land exulteth!
All bellies are in joy!
Every creature receives nourishment!
All teeth get food!

IV. Bringer of food! Great lord of provisions!
Creator of all good things!
Lord of terrors and choicest of joys!
All are combined in him.
He produceth grass for the oxen;
Providing victims for every god.
The choice incense is that which he supplies.
Lord in both regions,
He filleth the granaries,
He filleth the granaries, enricheth the storehouses,
He careth for the state of the poor.

... VII. The inundation comes, (then) cometh rejoicing;
Every heart exulteth:
The tooth of the crocodiles, the children of Neith
(Even) the circle of the gods who are counted with thee.
Doth not its outburst water the fields,
Overcoming mortals (with joy):
Watering one produceth another.
There is none who worketh with him;
He produces food without the aid of Neth.
Mortals lie causes to rejoice.

... X. Establisher of justice! Men rejoice
With flattering words to worship thee,
Worshipped together with the mighty water!
Men present offerings of corn,
Adoring all the gods;
No fowls fall on the land.
Thy hand is adorned with gold,
As moulded of an ingot of gold, ...

... XIII. O inundation of Nile, offerings are made to thee;
Oxen are slain to thee;
Great festivals are kept for thee;
Beasts of the field are caught for thee
Pure flames are offered to thee;
Offerings are made to every god
As they are made unto Nile.
Incense ascends unto heaven,
As oxen, bulls, fowls are burnt!
Nile makes for himself chasms in the Thebaid; ...

... XIV. Mortals extol (him), and the cycle of the gods!
Awe is felt by the terrible ones;
His son is made Lord of all,
To enlighten all Egypt.
Shine forth, shine forth, O Nile! Shine forth!
Giving life to men by his oxen;
Giving life to his oxen by his pastures!
Shine forth in glory, O Nile.
[Hammurabi] was the ruler who chiefly established the greatness of Babylon, the world’s first metropolis. Many relics of Hammurabi’s reign (1795–1750 B.C.) have been preserved, and today we can study this remarkable King. . . . as a wise law-giver in his celebrated code. . . . the most remarkable of the Hammurabi records is his code of laws, the earliest-known example of a ruler proclaiming publicly to his people an entire body of laws, arranged in orderly groups, so that all men might read and know what was required of them. The code was carved upon a black stone monument, eight feet high, and clearly intended to be . . . in public view. This noted stone was found in the year 1901, not in Babylon, but in a city of the Persian mountains, to which some later conqueror must have carried it in triumph. It begins and ends with addresses to the gods. Even a law code was in those days regarded as a subject for prayer, though the prayers here are chiefly curses of whoever shall neglect or destroy the law.

. . . 15. If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death.

16. If any one receive into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the major domus, the master of the house shall be put to death.

. . . 53. If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.

. . . 108. If a tavern-keeper (feminine) does not accept corn according to gross weight in payment of drink, but takes money, and the price of the drink is less than that of the corn, she shall be convicted and thrown into the water.

109. If conspirators meet in the house of a tavern-keeper, and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the tavern-keeper shall be put to death.

110. If a “sister of a god” open a tavern, or enter a tavern to drink, then shall this woman be burned to death.

. . . 129. If a man’s wife be surprised with another man, both shall be tied and thrown into the water, but the husband may pardon his wife and the king his slaves.

130. If a man violate the wife (betrothed or child-wife) of another man, who has never known a man, and still lives in her father’s house, and sleep with her and be surprised, this man shall be put to death, but the wife is blameless.

131. If a man bring a charge against one’s wife, but she is not surprised with another man, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.

132. If the “finger is pointed” at a man’s wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband.
138. If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father’s house, and let her go.

141. If a man’s wife, who lives in his house, wishes to leave it, plunges into debt, tries to ruin her house, neglects her husband, and is judicially convicted: if her husband offer her release, she may go on her way, and he gives her nothing as a gift of release. If her husband does not wish to release her, and if he take another wife, she shall remain as servant in her husband’s house.

142. If a woman quarrel with her husband, and say: “You are not congenial to me,” the reasons for her prejudice must be presented. If she is guiltless, and there is no fault on her part, but he leaves and neglects her, then no guilt attaches to this woman, she shall take her dowry and go back to her father’s house.

143. If she is not innocent, but leaves her husband, and ruins her house, neglecting her husband, this woman shall be cast into the water.

195. If a son strike his father, his hands shall be hewn off.

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

197. If he break another man’s bone, his bone shall be broken.

198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.

199. If he put out the eye of a man’s slave, or break the bone of a man’s slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.

200. If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.

201. If he knock out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a gold mina.

[Conclusion:] The king who rules among the kings of the cities am I. My words are well considered; there is no wisdom like unto mine. By the command of Shamash, the great judge of heaven and earth, let righteousness go forth in the land: by the order of Marduk, my lord, let no destruction befall my monument. In E-Sagil, which I love, let my name be ever repeated; let the oppressed, who has a case at law, come and stand before this my image as king of righteousness; let him read the inscription, and understand my precious words: the inscription will explain his case to him; he will find out what is just, and his heart will be glad, so that he will say: “Hammurabi is a ruler, who is as a father to his subjects, who holds the words of Marduk in reverence, who has achieved conquest for Marduk over the north and south, who rejoices the heart of Marduk, his lord, who has bestowed benefits for ever and ever on his subjects, and has established order in the land.”
How the Princes Learned to Shoot

Now Bhishma, the royal grandsire, became eager to find for the princes of the two imperial houses a teacher who might train them thoroughly in the use of arms. And it happened one day about this time that the boys, all in a company were playing at ball in the forests outside Hastinapura, when their ball rolled away from them and fell into an old well. Try as they would, there was not one of them who could get it back. All kinds of efforts were made by each in turn, but without avail. It seemed as if the ball would never be recovered. Just when their boyish anxiety and vexation were at their height, their glances fell, with one accord, on a Brahman sitting near whom they had not at first noticed. He was thin and dark of hue, and appeared to be resting after the performance of his daily worship. “Oh Brahman!” cried the lads, surrounding him in a body, “can you show us how to recover our ball?” The Brahman smiled a little and said: “What? What? Scions of the royal house, and you don’t shoot well enough for that! If only you’ll promise me my dinner, I will bring up not only your ball but also this ring, which I now throw down, by means of a few blades of grass.” And suiting the action to the word, he took a ring off his own finger and threw it into the well. “Why, Brahman-ji, we’ll make you rich for life,” cried one of the lads, “if you can really do as you say.”

“Is it so,” said the Brahman. “Then look at this grass,” and he plucked a handful of long grass growing near. “I am able by a spell to give to this grass a virtue that weapons might not have. Behold, here I throw”; and as he spoke he took aim and threw a single blade of grass with such deftness and precision that it pierced the ball that lay in the well as if it had been a needle. Then throwing another blade, he pierced the first, and so on and so on, till he had a chain of grass, by which it was easy to draw up the ball.

By this time the interest of the boys was centered more on the skill of the Brahman than on the recovery of their plaything, and they exclaimed with one accord: “The ring, too, O Brahman! Show us how you can recover the ring!”

The Recovery of the Ring

Then Drona—for that was the name of the Brahman—took up his bow, which had been lying beside him, and selecting a arrow from the quiver that he wore, he shot it into the well, and the arrow, returning to his hand, brought up the ring. Taking the jewel, he handed it to the princes, whose astonishment and delight knew no bounds. “What can we do for you? What can we do?” they cried. The Brahman’s face had grown grave
again. “Tell Bhishma, your guardian, that Drona is here,” he answered briefly, and relapsed again into the depths of thought.

The lads trooped off, with their enthusiasm fresh upon them, to describe to Bhishma, the Protector, the extraordinary experience of the morning; and he, struck by the thought that Drona was the very teacher he was seeking, hastened in person to see him and bring him to the palace. Bhishma had known of Drona formerly as the son of the great sage Bharadwaja. . . . Drona, after his father’s death, had performed great austerities and gone through a very determined course of study, in consequence of which he had been mysteriously gifted with divine weapons and the knowledge of how to use them.
8. FROM THE HYMNS OF HOMER


The Homeric Hymns are ancient texts praising the gods of the ancient Greeks. They are about 2,700 years old. This particular selection shows a common practice in history, naming the Earth Mother.

Hymn to the Earth Mother—A Homeric Poem
I will sing of well-founded Earth, mother of all, eldest of all beings.
She feeds all creatures that are in the world,
all that go upon the goodly land,
and all that are in the paths of the seas, and all that fly:
all these are fed of her store.
Through you, O queen, men are blessed in their children
and blessed in their harvests,
and to you it belongs to give means of life to mortal men
and to take it away.
Happy is the man whom you delight to honour!
He has all things abundantly:
his fruitful land is laden with corn,
his pastures are covered with cattle,
and his house is filled with good things.
Such men rule orderly in their cities of fair women:
great riches and wealth follow them:
their sons exult with everfresh delight,
and their daughters with flower-laden hands
play and skip merrily over the soft flowers of the field.
Thus it is with those whom you honour
O holy goddess, bountiful spirit.
Hail, Mother of the gods, wife of starry Heaven;
freely bestow upon me for this my song
substance that cheers the heart!
And now I will remember you and another song also.
abstract thinking  The ability many scientists maintain defines the behavior of modern humans.

accident  In the comparative method, one of the three possible explanations for coincidence. See also borrowing; shared descent.

anatomically modern human  The physically modern person.

animism  The belief that all things have spirit or life.

archetype  A motif or symbol that appears universally.

argument  An opinion supported by evidence.

assertion  An opinion not supported by evidence.

Atlantic World  A genre of historical study.

Battle of Marathon  Battle between Athenians and Persians around 2,500 years ago.

behaviorally modern human  The intellectually modern human.

big history  The study of the history of the whole of the universe, including human history.

Blombos Cave  Location in southern Africa of early behaviorally modern humans.

borrowing  In the comparative method, one of the three possible explanations for coincidence. See also accident; shared descent.

Brahman  A member of a Hindu class, also refers more specifically to a priest from that class.

Buddhism  Religion following the mystical teaching of Buddha.
Campbell, Joseph  Scholar of myths.
capital and labor  Marxist categories of social and economic history.
causality  Patterns of cause and effect.
Celtic  An Indo-European language group and people of western Europe, including Irish.
Code of Hammurabi  Ancient codified law.
codified  Written, usually in reference to a law.
comparative method  A scientific method of comparison.
Creasy, Sir Edward  Nineteenth-century British historian.
creation myth  A universal type of myth describing the origins of a people, humanity, or the universe.
critical thinking  To examine in context and comparison, using reason.
determinism  A theory of predictable patterns.
economic determinism  The argument of economics and structures as historical determinants.
First Language  The original human language.
genre  An area of historical study.
Germanic  A family of Indo-European languages and associated cultures, including English, German, and others.
Great Men and Battles  A method of historical analysis, largely out of date.
hero myth  A myth that follows a particular pattern of separation, initiation, and return.
Hildegard of Bingen  German nun of the twelfth century.
historical  Supportable by evidence.
Holocaust deniers  Those asserting evidence for Holocaust against the Jews is insufficient.
Hymn to the Nile  Ancient Egyptian prayer.
inclusive  To include rather than exclude; can be used to measure the degree to which a society is democratic.
Indo-European  The world’s largest family of languages.
Islam  The religion and body of followers of Muhammad.
Latin  A family of Indo-European languages and associated cultures including French, Italian, Spanish, and others.
**Mahabharata** Sacred text and myth of India.

**Marx, Karl** German economic philosopher of the nineteenth century.

**material culture** Food, clothing, and shelter.

**Maya** People of Mesoamerica, ancient and modern.

**mead** An ancient alcoholic drink made from honey.

**Middle English** The ancestral language to Modern English, descended from Old English.

**Mother Earth** A traditional association of the earth with the feminine divine.

**Muhammad** In Islam, the messenger or prophet of God.

**mysticism** Belief in the unity of all things in God; a universal religious principle.

**myth** Story that carries a truth or grand meaning but may or may not be historically authentic.

**Normans** “Norsemen” who brought French Norman to the British Isles in 1066.

**Paradox of Genealogy** The illusion that ancestry is unique, not shared.

**Popul Vuh** Sacred text and myth of the Kiche Mayan.

**primary sources** Sources produced or used by the people under investigation.

**propaganda** Information used to advocate or further a cause; also information to damage an opposing cause.

**Qur'an** Sacred text of Islam.

**revisionism** Revision of historical interpretation on the basis of new argument.

**Sanskrit** Indo-European language of India and the sacred language of Hindus.

**Saxons and Angles** Germanic tribes whose languages are ancestors to English.

**secondary sources** Commentary on primary sources; historical arguments.

**shared descent** In the comparative method, one of the three possible explanations for coincidence. See also accident; borrowing.

**Shona** A people of Africa, ancient and modern.

**Silk Road** Networks of land and sea routes spanning much of Asia and eastern Europe; used for centuries to connect societies from Japan to Italy and all points in between. Also refers to the migratory and cosmopolitan culture along the Silk Road.

**Slavic** A family of Indo-European languages and associated cultures including Czech, Polish, Russian, and others.
**Sufism**  Mystical tradition within Islam.

**Sunnah**  Second sacred text of Islam.

**Teotihuacan**  Ancient people of Mesoamerica, with an advanced technology but no writing.

**unhistorical**  Not supported by evidence.

**universals**  Aspects of culture found in all societies.

**Zimbabwe**  Central African culture.

**Zulu**  A Bantu people and culture of southeastern Africa.