The Upper Paleolithic

Lascaux Cave, France
Upper Paleolithic

- Complex Hunter Gatherers at the End of the Paleolithic
- Dates: 47/45,000 – 20/18,000 b.p.
  (Epipaleolithic=20/18,000-10,000 bp)
- Industries include microliths and bone tools—not found in previous periods
- Raw materials were exchanged over long distances in this period
- Wide range of materials, other than flint, come into use: bone tools, stone vessels, ochre, shells
- Some probably for ritual purposes
Upper Paleolithic Peoples: Cultural Impact

In contrast to early modern humans (and Neanderthals):

- Size of teeth reduced
- Size of jaw reduced
- Muscularity diminishes
- Less skeletal trauma
- Increased longevity

Cro-Magnon cranium
Upper Paleolithic Artwork

Cave Art

Includes spectacular images of animals and abstract forms and, rarely, humans

Mobiliary Art

These portable art objects include Venus figurines

Body Ornamentation:

Pierced shells, pierced animal teeth, and bone beads were most likely work as necklaces or attached to clothing
Western European painted cave sites

Caves not living areas – visited briefly only
- Most paintings are animals (usually in profile)
- Often located in remote & dark recesses of caves
- Carefully planned, skillful
- Most date to ca. 17,000 bp (Magdalenian Period)
Horse, Cosquer Cave, France
Penquin or Auk, Cosquer Cave, France
Chauvet Cave

Bear

Bison
Portable art
Patterns of cave art & mobile art: European Late Upper Paleolithic

- Decoration on short-lived objects (spear points) simple and schematic
- Long term objects, décor more careful & realistic
‘Venus’ figurines

Dolni Vestonice

Lespugue

Willendorf
Venus Figurines

- Appear around 25,000 bp, Europe
- Carved in ivory, wood, stone, modeled in clay
- Breasts, hips, buttocks, thighs, usually large
- Head, arms, hands, legs & feet are only schematic
- Some are pregnant, others are not
Decorative items
Other Aspects of Upper Paleolithic Culture

Dwellings
- Huts with bone frameworks
- Floors with inlaid stone
- Stone-lined pits for hearths

Tailored clothing

Long-distance trade
Upper Paleolithic Tools

Blade technique

Long, parallel-sided flakes are struck off the edges of a specially prepared core
Blade manufacturing techniques

Blades: long flake, twice as long as wide
- Sharp parallel edges
- Removed from core like peeling carrot (sort of)
- Blades provide “blank” or form, which may then be shaped into different tools:
  - projectile points
  - burins
  - knives
  - drills
  - scraping tools
Tool technologies

- Variability of anatomically modern *H. sapiens* stone tools too great to define a single tradition
- Everywhere, more evidence for greater sophistication and specialization of stone tools

Upper Paleolithic burin
Scrapers, used for working hides
Upper Paleolithic Tool Manufacturing

Pressure flaking

Bone, wood, or antler is used to press small flakes from a stone
Upper Paleolithic Tools

Burins
  Stone tools with chisel-like edges
  Used for working bone and wood

Spear-throwers
  Effective killing distance increased

Net hunting
  For smaller game
Upper Paleolithic Tools

Bow and arrow
First appears in Africa
Increases effective distance between hunter and prey

Musical instruments
Bow
Flutes
Whistles
Levantine UP sites

Investigation of open air sites important contrast to caves

‘Circulating’ pattern of highly mobile UP groups

This contrasts to the ‘radiating’ pattern of Natufian groups during the Epipaleolithic
**Levantine Climate: Three Phases**

**Phase A:** ca. 45,000 – 32,000 bp  
relatively dry

**Phase B:** ca. 34/32,000 – 20,000 bp  
more humid

**Phase C:** ca. 22,000 – 13,000 bp  
very cold & dry, lasts until the Epipaleolithic
Levantine Aurignacian Tool Kit

Dominated by endscrapers and burins
Aurignacian Flint tools

Scraper on blade

Backed blade (knife)
Bone tools
Awls made of bone
Bone and antler become prevalent in UP assemblages

Ucagizli Cave, Turkey
Friday February 19

Obsidian with
John Cherry