PREHISTORIC MEDICINE – THE NATURE OF EVIDENCE

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Introduction
- What do we mean when we talk about...

Prehistory
Prehistoric people

The prehistoric age is defined as the time before written records

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Important!

Prehistoric man did not live with dinosaurs!

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Background Information
- Lived nomadic lives
- They were hunter-gathers, they didn’t grow crops
- They left no written records
- Historians wanting to find out about prehistoric people have to rely on archaeological evidence

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Problems with archaeological evidence
- Archaeological evidence may sometimes be difficult to interpret
- Skeletons at a site may not represent those that lived there. The only skulls may be those of enemies whose skulls were kept as trophies
- Bones may have been damaged in excavations. A hole in the skull might be the result of many different things
- Few sites contained human bones. Dead bodies were exposed so the flesh would rot and then bury bones away from living sites.
- Skeletons don’t tell us everything

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**Finding out about prehistoric man**

1. The problem of evidence can be overcome by studying those who, until recently, lived in a similar way to prehistoric people.
2. For example, the Australian aborigines and Plains Indians.
3. Historians use the attitudes and practises of modern aborigines to guess what prehistoric people did.

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**Do you know your stuff?**

1. What do we mean by ‘prehistory’?
   - The time before written records.
2. What kind of lives did prehistoric man live?
   - Nomadic; hunter-gather.
3. What are the problems with finding out about prehistory?
   - No written records, skeletons don’t tell us everything.
4. How can we overcome this problem?
   - Study those who lived similar lives more recently, e.g., aboriginals.

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