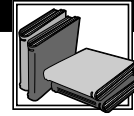


Chapter 1 Biography Activity

Many of the most exciting discoveries about the origins of humankind have been made by members of one family of British anthropologists—the Leakeys (textbook pages 8–9). Working in the 1960s at Olduvai Gorge in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Mary Leakey and her husband Louis S. B. Leakey (1903–1972) found fossils of both highly developed apes and early forms of humans. ♦ *As you read, think about how archaeologists and anthropologists put together evidence that tells us about prehistoric life. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Mary Leakey (1913–)

Growing up in England, young Mary Douglas Nicol preferred drawing pictures to concentrating in school. Her father was a well-known painter and regularly took his family through Europe on painting trips. From him, Mary also became interested in archaeology, especially the cave drawings and Stone Age sites in southern France.

Though she had little formal education, she went to scientific lectures and volunteered to work at “digs,” or excavations, in Britain. Soon she had met a number of important people in the field of archaeology. Because she was very talented in drawing stone tools and other objects from a dig—a valuable skill—she began to draw illustrations for books about archaeology.

Her illustration work led Mary Nicol to meet anthropologist Louis S. B. Leakey, who was already famous for his study of early humans in Africa.

The Leakeys were married in 1936 and worked together at several places that had been Stone Age campsites, especially in Kenya and Tanzania (then Tanganyika). Leakey had pioneered research on Stone Age life and technology. With evidence such as stone tools and fragments of bone,

especially skulls and teeth, he found how early humans and hominids (not-quite-humans) lived and what they could do.

One of the richest sites, where they often returned, was Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania. It was there, in 1959, that Mary Leakey found a large portion of hominid skull, which they called *Zinjanthropus* (nicknamed “Zinj”). This find was a major turning point in her life. Tests dated the skull at

1.75 million years old—much earlier than people thought that early humans had lived. As Mary Leakey put it, “Zinj made good television.”

The discovery made the Leakeys world famous.

The Leakeys made several other important discoveries about early humans, showing different branches of evolution and pushing back the dates of hominids to more than 3 million years ago. After Louis’s death in 1972, Mary Leakey continued to

direct work at Olduvai and other sites as well as lecturing and writing. One of their three sons, Richard Leakey, also an anthropologist, has found other important early human fossils in Kenya.



UPI/BETTMANN

Questions to Think About

1. What skill led Mary Leakey into the field of archaeology?
2. Where did the Leakeys do most of their scientific work?
3. What was important about the skull Mary Leakey found in 1959?
4. **Drawing Conclusions** Think about what you could learn by studying the skulls and teeth of animals and early humans. What differences might you find? What could you learn from them?