

# INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the scientific study of humankind. It is the objective of this book to introduce students to this fascinating subject and the subfields into which it is divided. Students learn about the beginnings of anthropology as an outgrowth of the curiosity stimulated by the Age of Exploration and how it grew into the basic field of study it is today. Major developments and theories of outstanding anthropologists are presented.

Students gain insight into the origins and evolution of the human species, as well as an understanding of the evolution of human culture. They become aware of the wide variety of recent and contemporary societies. As they learn about the differences among peoples' lifestyles and beliefs, however, they also learn that all peoples share certain basic needs. Perhaps most importantly, students come to realise that in spite of superficial differences, we are all members of a single human species!

I hope your students enjoy learning about the most fascinating animal of all—the human species!

## BLOOM'S REVISED TAXONOMY

<b>REMEMBERING:</b>	Retrieving, recognising and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.
<b>UNDERSTANDING:</b>	Constructing meaning from oral, written and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarising, inferring, comparing and explaining.
<b>APPLYING:</b>	Carrying out or using a procedure through executing or implementing.
<b>ANALYSING:</b>	Breaking material or concepts into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate or interrelate to one another or to an overall structure through differentiating, organising and attributing.
<b>EVALUATING:</b>	Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.
<b>CREATING:</b>	Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganising elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing.

# WHAT IS ANTHROPOLOGY?

Anthropology is the study of human beings—both fossil and living—at all times and in all places. The term is based upon two Greek words: *anthropos*, meaning “man”, and *logia*, meaning “study”. As humans are a part of nature, anthropology must be considered a natural science. Anthropologists must be careful that the data they collect is in accordance with scientific methods and principles. In other words, it must be verifiable.

However, anthropology is not only a natural science, but also a social science, for human beings are culture-producing animals. **Culture** is the system of learned behaviour patterns, beliefs, arts and institutions characteristic of the society. Anthropologists study the various elements and systems within the society in order to attempt to comprehend the whole society. They believe that each element and system within a society is linked in some way to other elements within the society; therefore, the society cannot be understood accurately without an understanding of its parts and vice versa.

Every culture has certain needs which must be met. Because we are all members of a single species, many of the needs are the same for all cultures. In order to meet those universal needs, cultures all have certain basic systems: social organisation, economic organisation, political organisation, technology, art and language. The anthropologist studies these various aspects of culture and tries to explain why variations occur. The primary goal of anthropology is to gain knowledge about the nature of human beings and their relationships to their natural and cultural environments; however, the knowledge gained can also help us cope with the problems facing human beings in today’s world.

## BRANCHES OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The interests of anthropology are extremely diversified; therefore, it is necessary for anthropologists to specialise. The two main subdivisions are physical, or biological, anthropology and cultural anthropology. Cultural anthropology, which deals with the learned behaviour in human societies, is further divided into archaeology, ethnology and linguistics.

**Physical anthropologists** are primarily concerned with the biological, physical and genetic characteristics of human populations. They deal with our evolutionary origins and development and study how humans have adapted biologically to their environments.

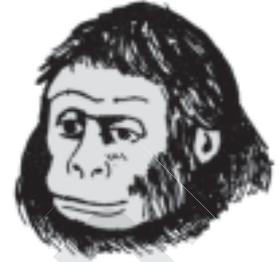
**Archaeology**, the first major branch of **cultural anthropology**, focuses on the reconstruction of past cultures through the study of material evidence. The remains that archaeologists study include everything made by human beings—from the simplest tools to the most elaborate palaces. They call those objects made or produced by human workmanship **artefacts**.

The second, and possibly the most basic division of cultural anthropology, is **ethnology**. *Ethnos* means “race” and *logia* means “study”. Ethnologists study and describe human societies; however, they do not stop there. They also study the origins of the cultures and attempt to learn how and why the cultures changed and developed as they did. In doing so, the ethnologist is necessarily concerned with interrelationships: between peoples and their own environment, between different cultures, between different aspects of their culture, etc.

# HUMAN EVOLUTION

## THE ROOTS OF HUMANITY

Scientists believe that humans' ancestors first lived about 70 million years ago in the form of small, four-footed, tree-dwelling animals much like the tree shrews of today. As primates—members of the order to which humans belong—grew larger, they began to grasp tree trunks with the fore and hind limbs.



*Australopithecine*

The next stage was brachiation, or arm-swinging. This stage lasted a long time for apes. Evidence of this is in their long arms and the inefficiency of their legs in walking. The direct ancestors of humans, however, evolved from this stage in a relatively short time. They took to the ground. These humanlike primates were the **australopithecines**.

1. Make a chart or poster that shows the main characteristics of a primate.
2. Opposability of the thumb (freedom to move the thumb in a swinging action across the palm of the hand) made a gradual appearance through primate evolution. It is fully developed only in humans. First predict what would happen if you didn't have use of your thumbs. Then tape your thumbs to your palms. What activities were inhibited by the loss of your thumbs? Record the results of the experiment. How did the results differ from your predictions?

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3. Humans have evolved quickly because of their adaptability. Perhaps the most important change, in addition to increased brain power, was the freeing of the hands from their function of locomotion. Analyse the importance of this change.

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# CASTE

Caste is the most complex and rigid of all systems of social stratification. It is based upon unequal distribution of goods and power. An individual's relationship to the technology and economic system is determined by the status of his or her caste. All members of a caste share more or less the same social position, behaviour and lifestyle. Each caste is assigned certain ritual observances that intensify the awareness of the separateness of the caste groups. Strict rules govern the behaviour of the members of one caste group toward those of other castes.

Caste systems are associated with societies in which productive goods are controlled by a relatively small group of political and/or religious leaders. Ethnic castes are often achieved through warfare. One group conquers and subordinates another; the conquered peoples become a socially inferior caste and the conquerors a socially superior one. Foreign immigrants who are barred from equal privileges also form a socially inferior ethnic caste. Some systems have pariah castes, or hereditary occupational groups which are treated as outcasts.

1. The Eta, an example of a pariah caste, is at the lowest level of the traditional Japanese social system. Although the group has varied origins, most of the Eta in medieval times were butchers, tanners and leather workers. Analyse the possible reasons for their low status.

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## THE CASTE SYSTEM OF INDIA

The most complex and refined caste system in the world is the caste system of India. It is based upon the belief that four varna castes came from primordial man: the Brahmins, the Kashatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. These four varna castes are all clean and unpolluted, but the first three are the purest because their male members are "twice born". The twice-born wear a sacred thread over their shoulders. The Brahmins are the priests; the Kashatriyas are the warriors; the Vaishyas are the farmers, cattle raisers and tradesmen; and the Shudras live in serfdom. At the bottom of this system are the polluted and untouchable harijan castes. Each caste refuses to drink water or eat food handled by a member of a lower caste. If a person does so accidentally, he or she must be ritually cleansed or the entire caste is in danger of becoming defiled.



Each of the varna and harijan castes are further subdivided into specific castes, known as "jatis". Members of a jati share certain things in common: the same degree of pollution or purity; whether or not they wear the sacred thread; what kinds of food they may eat; the amount of education they receive; and a set of occupations from which they

may choose. There are over 1000 jatis. Like the more general varna and harijan castes, these jatis are hereditary and endogamous (members must marry within their own jatis).

In this social system marked by such a high degree of social stratification, it is only natural that exchange of goods takes the form of redistribution. It is known as the jajmani system. Each jati serves one or more jajman to whom he or she has an obligation to contribute his or her labour or products. In return, the jajmans redistribute a part of the goods they receive to the caste members who serve them. Each collects his share in order of class rank.

The Indian Constitution of 1950 abolished caste "untouchability" and forbade restriction of public facilities on the basis of caste membership; nevertheless, in the rural villages (in which the majority of Indians live) the caste system still persists. Although most caste members no longer strictly adhere to the specific hereditary roles, they still engage in roles considered appropriate to their caste.

2. The Law of Karma states that one's caste status is determined by his or her acts in former incarnations. His or her next reincarnation will be determined by present acts. Suppose you believed in reincarnation. Think about the acts you have performed in your present life. Based upon those acts, what will you be in your next reincarnation? Will you be a member of a higher or a lower caste than the one to which you now belong? Draw a sketch and explain.



A large rectangular box intended for a student to draw a sketch and provide an explanation for the question above. The box is currently empty, overlaid with a large, light-colored watermark that reads "© Hawker Brownlow Education No further reproduction." diagonally across the page.

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3. Write your opinion of the Indian caste system: first from the point of view of a twice-born member of one of the varna castes and then from the point of view of a member of a harijan caste.