

The First Hominid

The first hominid was discovered in 1924 by Raymond Dart, an anatomy professor in South Africa. He found a beautifully preserved skull of a five-year-old that still had its baby teeth. While the skull had many apelike features such as a projecting face and small brain, it had human-like features as well. It had a rounded jaw and the position of the hole at the base of the skull suggested the creature walked upright. The skull was estimated to be around 2.8 million years old and Dart named his find, *Australopithecus africanus*. After this discovery, other remains of *Australopithecus* were found in other areas of Africa. In 1974, anthropologist, Don Johanson went to remote regions of Ethiopia looking for early human fossils and hit the jackpot. He found the most complete, well preserved *Australopithecus* skeleton known. He nicknamed her "Lucy" and her skeleton was over 40% complete and estimated to be over 3 million years old. The shape of her pelvis indicated she was female and her leg bones proved she walked upright. Her teeth were distinctly hominid, but her head was shaped more like an ape. This is a reconstruction of what many thought "Lucy" looked like. More than 300 specimens of *Australopithecus* have been discovered in the last few decades, showing this was a diverse group. Perhaps the evolution of hominids began with "Lucy", one of our relatives.
