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# Lucy Long Ago: Uncovering The Mystery Of Where We Came From



## Synopsis

Illustrated in full color throughout with stunning computer-generated artwork and with rare paleo photography, this story of scientific sleuthing invites us to wonder what our ancestors were like. From the discovery of Lucy's bones in Hadar, Ethiopia, to the process of recovering and interpreting them (a multidisciplinary approach with contributions from paleontologists, paleoanthropologists, archeologists, geologists and geochronologists), this book shows how a pile of 47 bones led scientists to discover a new -- and, at 3.2 million years old, a very very old -- species of hominid, ancestral to humans. Scientists involved include: James Aronson, geochronologist at Dartmouth, NH John Gurche, paleoartist at Cornell, NY Donald Johansen, scientist at Institute of Human Origins at Arizona State University Owen Lovejoy, biological anthropologist at Kent State, Ohio Dirk Van Tuerenhout at Houston's Museum of Natural Science, Texas.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5-10 -- The Beatles song Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds was playing the night paleoanthropologist Donald Johnson found the first fossilized remains of the hominid that became known around the world as Lucy. This extraordinary discovery changed how scientists understood one of the basic concepts of human evolution -- it proved that our ancestors began walking upright before the size of their brains increased. Thimmesh uses this discovery to

explore several topics in the fields of anthropology and evolutionary biology, such as how the bones were fossilized, the process for deciding that Lucy belonged to a previously unknown species (*Australopithecus afarensis*), and the cast-making process that allowed biological anthropologist Owen Lovejoy to reconstruct her pelvis and prove that she was bipedal. The author even touches upon what fossils can't teach us about our ancestors—their emotions and family patterns. The final chapter discusses the process used by paleoartist John Gurche to create a life-size sculpture of Lucy. The book's greatest strength is how it underscores the fluidity of our understanding in a field like anthropology; it shows how one discovery can change the thinking of scientists in a dramatic way. This book also emphasizes the rigor of the sciences that study our human ancestors and explains clearly how these scientists carefully take the known to formulate new ideas about the unknown parts of our human history. The clear writing, excellent photographs, and the unique approach of exploring the field of anthropology through one spectacular specimen make this book a first purchase.

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"Extensive research, clear organization and writing, appropriate pacing for new ideas and intriguing graphics all contribute to this exceptionally accessible introduction to the mystery of human origins, timed to accompany Lucy's six-year tour of U.S. museums."--Kirkus Reviews, starred review "Here is a nonfiction book that deserves the highest of compliments: it reads like a science book . . . Thimmes opens her narrative with a poetic conjecture that gives such adventure its mystery and due: "Long ago it lived...even before it had a name. It climbed trees; it roamed the savannah on two legs; it munched on berries and grasses. The answer to the implied question "What is it?" propels the reader to turn page after page . . . a handsome book, but also a substantive one."--The Horn Book Magazine "With unexpected simplicity and even poetry, Thimmes uses two beginnings to tell the story of the hominid who changed humans' family tree . . . the final portrait of Lucy as she may have looked is a stunner. Like the investigative method itself, this sparks questions and also answers them." • Booklist, starred review ". . . this should satisfy a young patron's request for material on seriously old human remains."--The Bulletin "The book's greatest strength is how it underscores the fluidity of our understanding in a field like anthropology; it shows how one discovery can change the thinking of scientists in a dramatic way . . . The clear writing, excellent photographs, and the unique approach of exploring the field of anthropology through one spectacular specimen

make this book a first purchase."--School Library Journal, starred review

The book was very informative. It was easy to read and fully covered the subject. It was very helpful in the preparation of my project.

Used this with our Project Archaeology unit as an additional read. It worked well to get students thinking about different theories and spawned interesting conversations.

It was just a bit of fossilized elbow sticking slightly above ground in Hadar, Ethiopia, but it was something that would stun paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson. He and his crew were exuberant and played a Beatles song, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," loud and long through the first night of discovery. Lucy, as she was named by Johanson, was later known in Ethiopia as "Dinkeneshe," or "beautiful one." They began to pull tiny bones from the soil. Eventually they pulled forty-seven fossilized skeletal bones that would change the way we thought about human evolution. Lucy in the ground . . . there were a lot of questions that needed answering! Johanson very carefully wrapped and tucked Lucy into his suitcase and they went off to Cleveland for reconstruction and research. Prior to Lucy's discovery, only bits and pieces of skeletons had been found. This was an unusual discovery because fossilization of bone was a very rare occurrence. After extensive thought and "detailed comparisons to chimpanzees gorillas, and South African australopithecine specimens, the scientists concluded that Lucy was in fact a new kind of hominid." There were still more questions the scientists had to ask themselves. How old was she? Boy or girl? Did she Wobble or walk? Why, if she walked, did she decide to do so? What did she look like? Questions, questions, questions . . . there were a LOT of them! This was an exciting and riveting read. It started off like a mystery and only got better. The book drew me in very quickly with such crisp, moving lines as "One day though, it crumpled to the ground and lay in a heap. Unmoving." The amazing, numerous photographs lend a lot to this story. Throughout the book are numerous informative sidebars that are very interesting. In the back of the book is a glossary, an index and additional source materials a student could look to for additional information. This is one Lucy story you are going to LOVE!

An earth-shattering discovery in Ethiopia rocked the anthropological world when scientists unearthed the skeleton of a little creature whose like had never been seen before. A mere 3.2 million years ago, the skeleton dubbed "Lucy" had walked on two legs, and defied all categorization scientists had made thus far--was she an early ancestor of man or ape? How did she live? What did

she look like? This beautifully designed and informative picture book is eloquent in its treatment of the subject. The author lays out, step by step, the process that takes place when handling field work. My only complaint is the lagging pace of the material towards the end: it provides a satisfying conclusion, but younger readers or those with short attention spans might lose interest. Recommended for older elementary school children and middle school students.

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