

Lesson 3 – “Man’s Best Friend” – The History of Dogs

Objectives

To understand that both people and dogs are/were social animals and live/d in family units suitable for the specialization of the individual members.

To understand the skills wild dogs and people had that made them both good hunters and able to benefit each other.

To learn how people were responsible for the wild dog’s adapting over the years into what we know today as our domestic canine.

To understand how and why the domestic dog depends on people for its survival.

(Prior to the lesson, read the Background Information to become familiar with the subject matter and prepare the **Caveperson and Wolf Cards**.)

Teaching the Lesson

Ask the class to pretend they have been transported back in time 12,000 years to pre-historic times. You may have to provide them with some background information on the time period. Break the class up into two groups; one will pretend to be cavepeople and the other will pretend to be wolves.

Distribute the **Caveperson** and **Wolf Cards** to each group. Give them fifteen to twenty minutes to consider the questions and formulate answers. They will be asked to report back to the whole class when finished.

Each group takes a turn reporting their findings to the class. If necessary, the teacher should guide the students, making sure all important information is covered.

On the board make two columns, one labeled **The Wolf**, the other labeled **Caveperson**. The teacher asks the following questions and records the class consensus under the appropriate column.

- Who is the better hunter? Why?
- Is it easier for a cavepeople or wolves to protect themselves from enemies? Why?
- Is it easier for a caveperson or a wolf to move from place to place? Why?
- Is it easier for a wolf or a caveperson to keep warm? Why?
- Is it easier for a wolf or a caveperson to find/make a place to live? Why?
- Who has an easier life? Why?
- Do you think the caveperson would benefit from the wolf’s help, or do you think the wolf would benefit from the caveperson? Why?
- What skills does the wolf possess that the caveperson needs?
- What skills does the caveperson possess that the wolf might need?

Display **cavepeople pictures** in order across the blackboard. (Preview the **Objectives for the Cavepeople, Wolves/Wild Dogs Pictures**, for more details.)

Tell students that these pictures depict the story of how cavepeople and wolves came to rely on each other. Ask students to explain the story using the pictures. Provide any missing information, making sure the following, main ideas are understood by the class:

- Wolves and people had similarities, they both lived in families and both ate meat.
- Each had skills that complemented each other on the hunt.
- Wolves became used to people, following them on hunts and living closer to caves.
- Wolves warned people of danger.
- Wolves became used to eating scraps thrown out of caves.
- People took wolf pups from dens and tamed them.
- Over time, and with adaptation, the descendants of these animals lost their wild instincts and became people's best friend.
- This process of domestication happened over the course of thousands of years.

Response Journals

Explain how the cooperation between people and wolves was beneficial. How did the wolf benefit? How did the people benefit? Which would you rather be if given a chance? Why?

Extension Activities

Duplicate and distribute the **Wild Dogs-Some Interesting Facts** page that follows on the next page. Students may add to this as they research and discover new interesting information.

Background Information

The Canine

The exact place of origin of the dog is unclear. Skeletal remains have been found throughout the world. The prehistoric ancestors of today's wild and domestic canines were long-limbed fast animals. They could chase down their prey and then make the kill with their strong jaws. Our dogs' ancestors acquired group instincts in the hunt, in sharp contrast to the solitary stalking cat.

Wolves and other wild ancestors of our dogs may have been closely related, or even the same kind of canine. Today's wolves and domestic dogs have similar traits. Both have a similar gestation period. They can crossbreed to produce fertile offspring. They fall prey to the same parasites and diseases. Both wag their tails with pleasure, tuck them between their legs in fright and curl their lips into a snarl when angered. Both scent-mark by urinating.

How long have dogs and people been together? Scientists have found fossils of dog skeletons resting near human remains dated as early as 9,000 to 8,000 B.C. This evidence gives credence to the theory that dogs and people had begun to associate by that time.

How and why did this alliance take place? Scientists believe that the basic reason people and dogs became partners was that they both hunted for meat and had a similar social structure. People are omnivorous, but in pre-agricultural times they could not gather enough plants to survive. Therefore, they needed to hunt for meat. Early in time, people and dogs had learned to live in extended family groups. Each member of the group had a well-defined role, making cooperative hunting an effective method of food gathering. There was also safety in numbers.

People and dogs probably discovered each other during their search for food. At first, they were probably competitors, fighting each other for food. As time went on, however, people realized that the dog's speed and natural hunting instincts enabled him to catch and corner prey. Humans, with their superior brain and hands, could fashion weapons to more efficiently bring down large game. Furthermore, people left the entrails of the kill at the hunting site. Dogs soon realized that they had but to wait, and a meal would be available.

As time went on, packs of wild dogs began to follow human hunting parties in order to pick up food scraps and the residue of a fresh kill. People soon learned that they could depend on these dog packs to signal an alarm if danger approached. They also learned to depend on the dogs to aid in the hunt. Slowly, throughout the years, the dogs began to follow hunting parties back to their homes. These animals lurked near the humans' dwellings, ready to scavenge the garbage that inevitably followed each meal.

Generation followed generation, and the haphazard relationship grew into a partnership. People began to feed dogs at their dwellings and deliberately left fresh meat for them

after a kill. Furthermore, they began raiding the dens of wild dogs, to bring back pups. These pups eventually lost their wild instincts, became tame and, as time passed, domesticated.

The relationship between people and dogs has continued to develop through the centuries. Today, millions of dogs play the very important role of companion to millions of people. Research has even indicated that pet companionship physically and psychologically benefits humans. Domesticated dogs have become totally dependent on people. People have a responsibility to care for animals that depend on them. Dogs meet many human needs, such as love and companionship. They also meet many specialized human needs in assisting the disabled and even as partners in many kinds of work. "Man's best friends" deserve the best care we can give them.

Caveperson and Wolf Cards

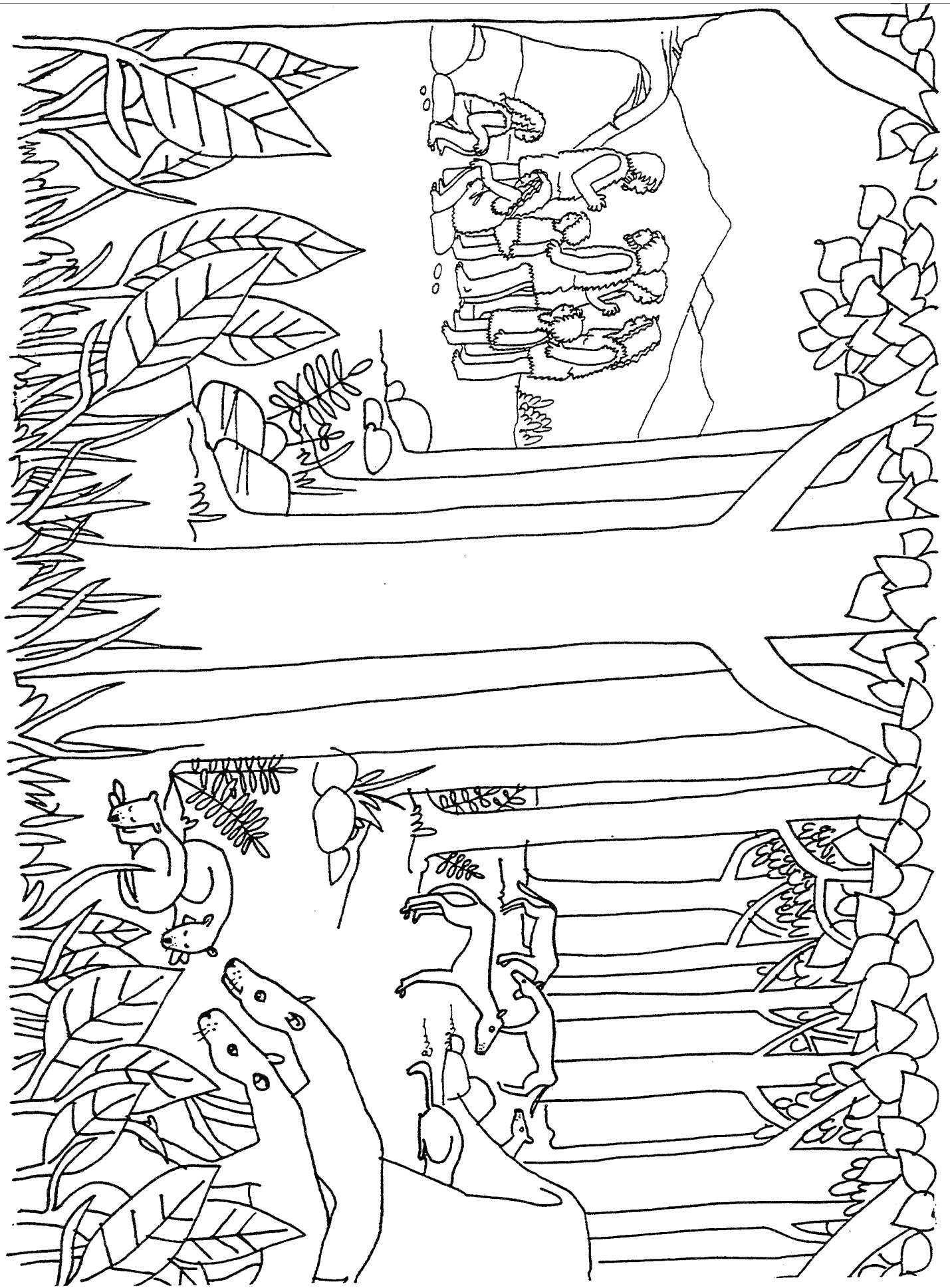
Directions: Write the questions below for the caveperson on one card and the questions for the wolf on another card. (Laminate the cards, if possible, to preserve them.) Or you may simply cut out the caveperson and wolf questions below and mount them on cardboard.

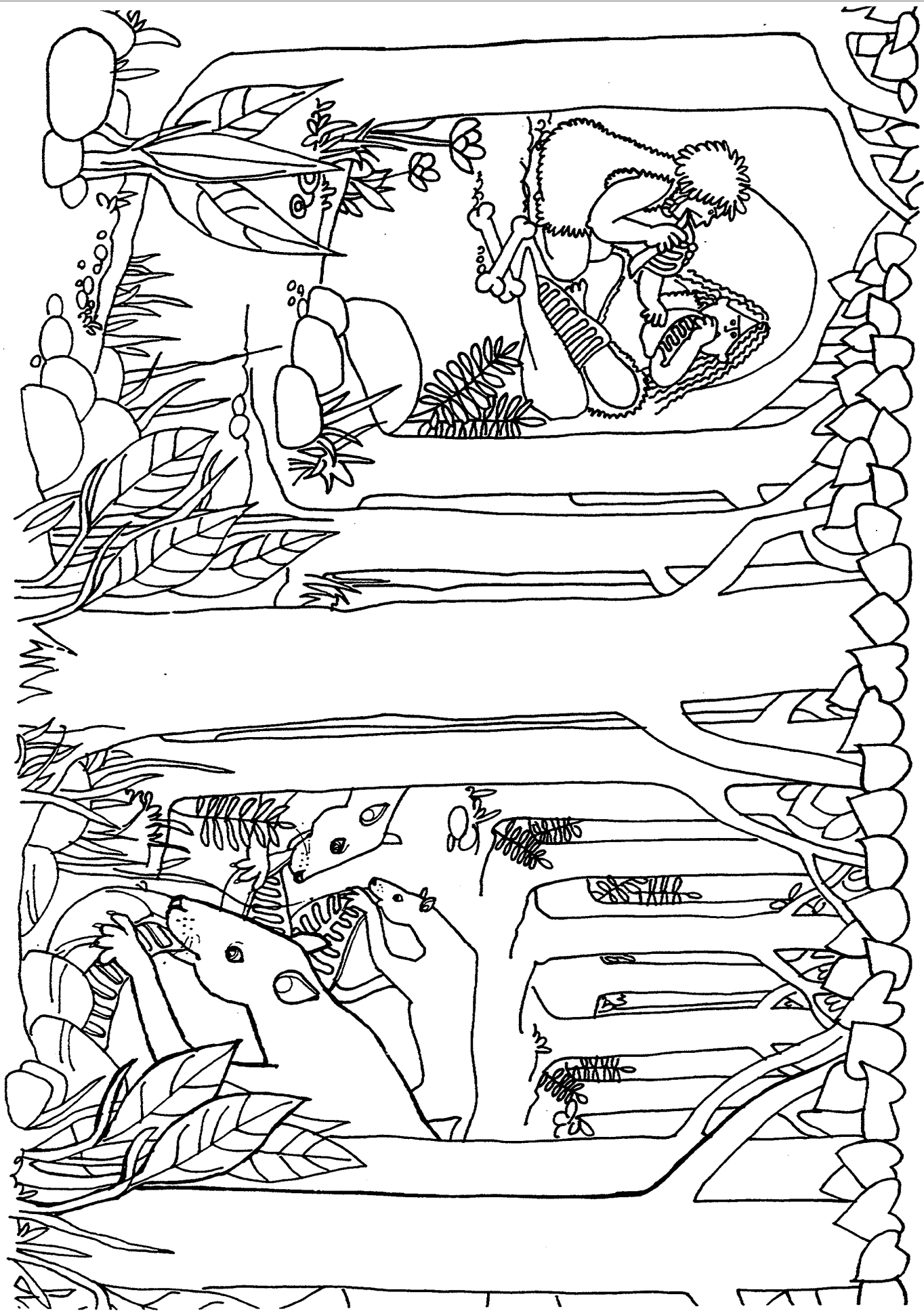
Caveperson Card

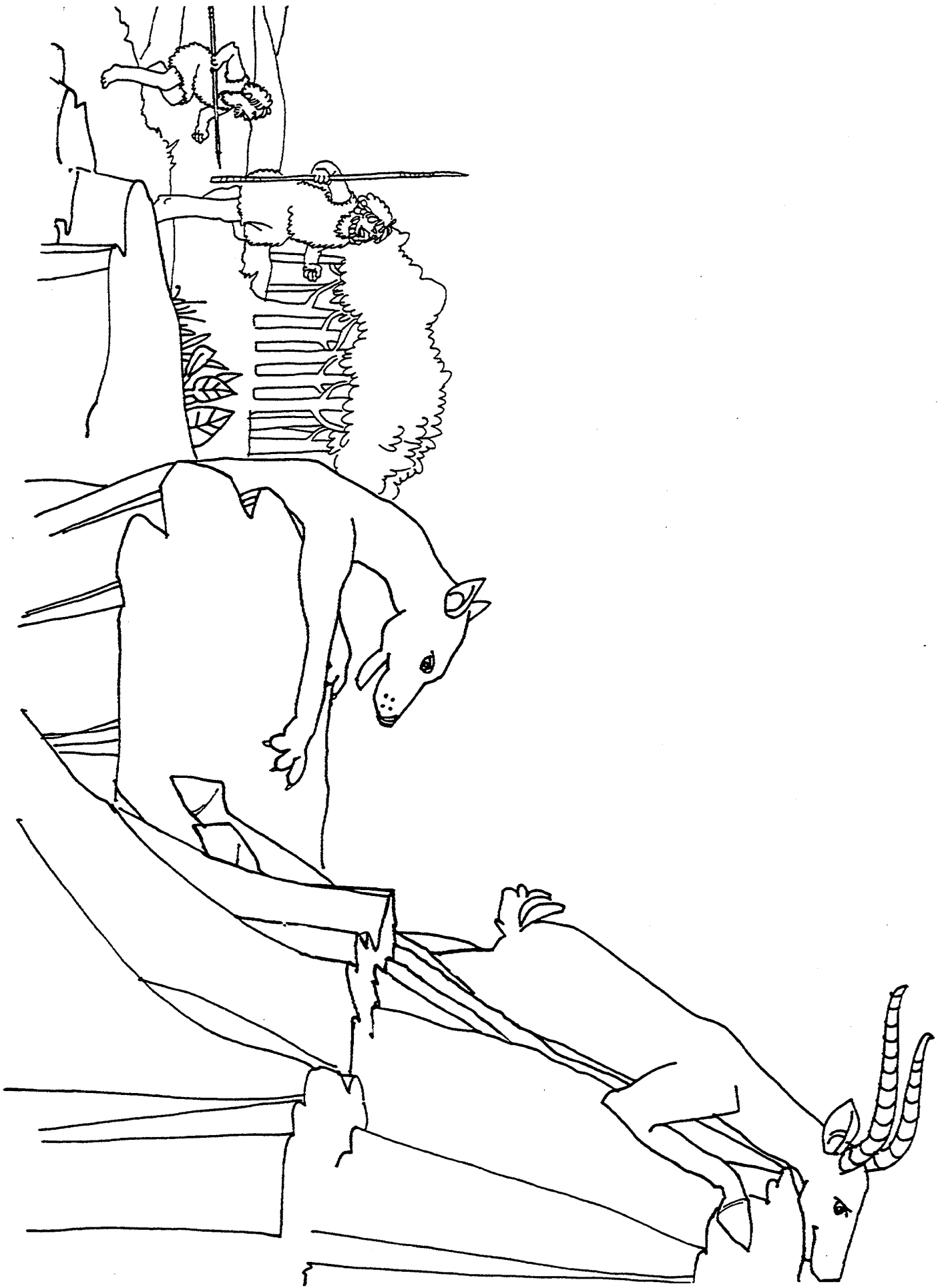
1. What do you wear. Describe your clothing.
2. How do you get your clothing?
3. How do you protect yourself from enemies?
4. How do you communicate?
5. How do you get your food? Do you hunt alone or in groups?
6. What skills make you a good hunter?
7. What kind of house do you live in? Do you live alone or in groups?
Why?
8. How do you move from place to place? Is it easy or is it hard to move? Why?
9. Is life easy or hard for you? Why?
10. How do you use your five senses to survive? (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling)
11. Which sense is most important to you? Why?

Wolf Card

1. Where do you live? Do you live alone or in groups? Why?
2. How do you keep warm?
3. How do you protect yourself from enemies?
4. How do you get your food? Do you hunt alone or in groups?
5. What skills make you a good hunter?
6. How would you use your five senses to survive? (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling)
7. Which sense is most important to you? Why?
8. How do you move from place to place? Is it easy or hard to move? Why?

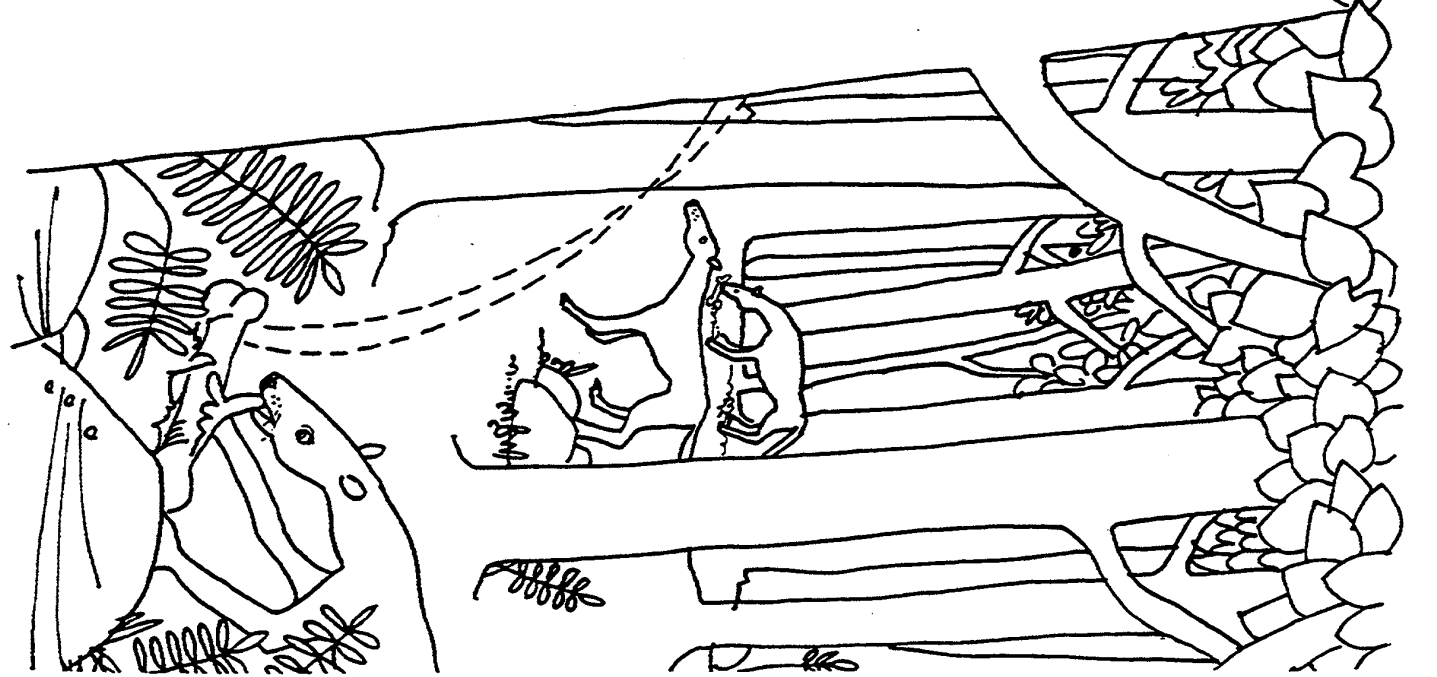
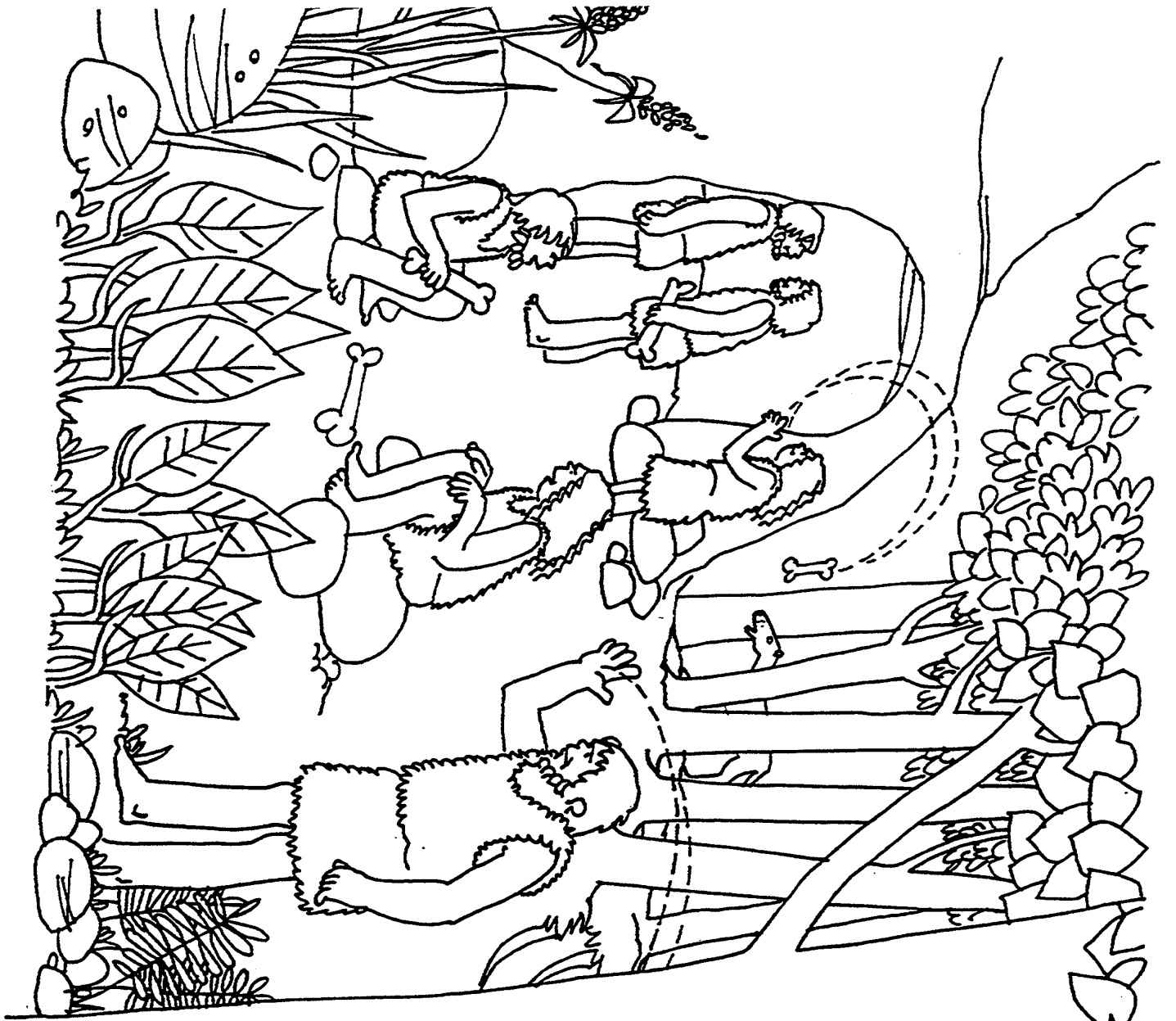


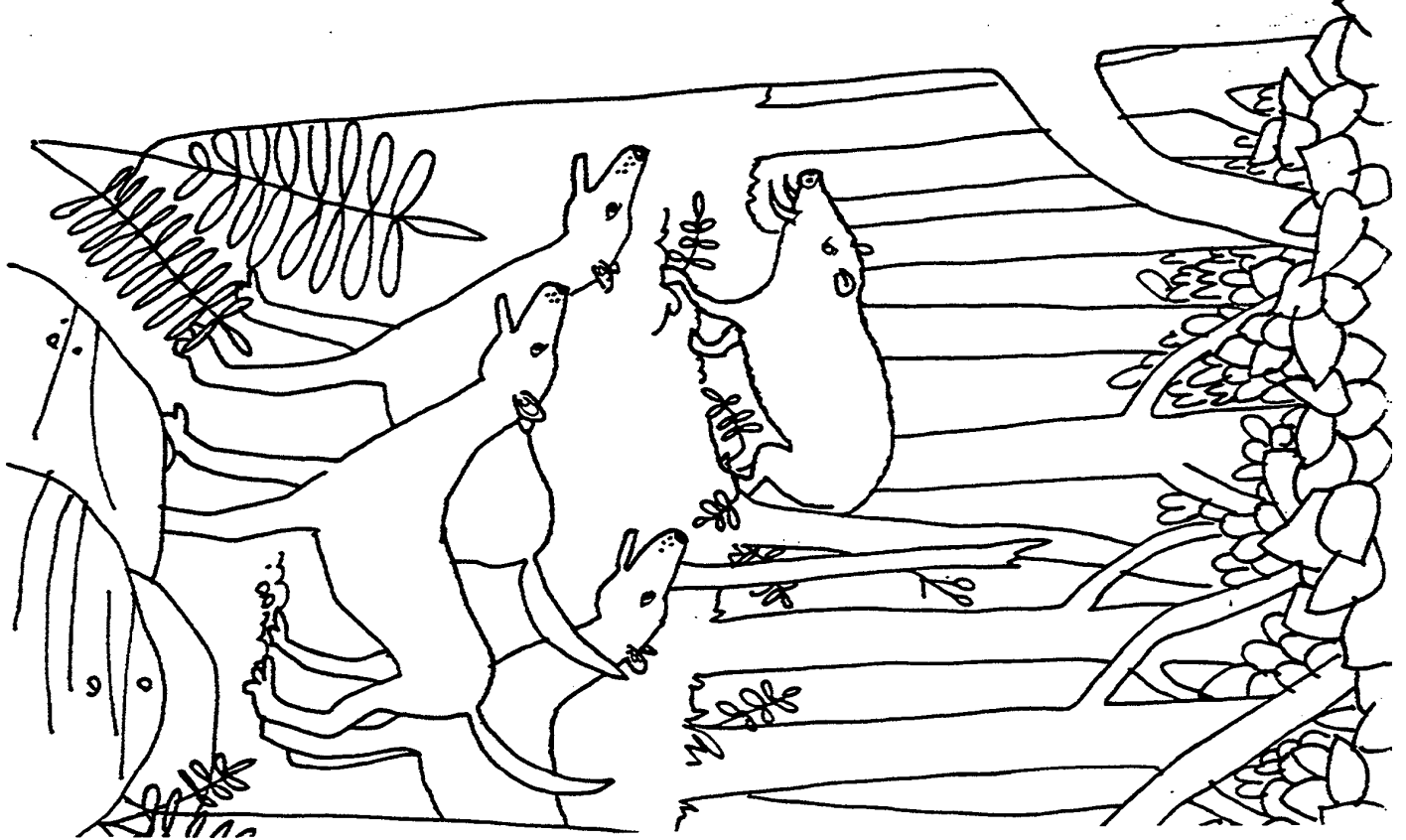














Cavepeople and Wolves/Wild Dogs Pictures' Objectives

The pictures will help students to understand that:

1. People and dogs were/are social animals who live in family units suitable for the specialization of the individual members.
2. At first, people and dogs must have been competitors for their prey, but eventually they learned to help one another. Dogs' superior sense of smell, sense of hearing and speed helped them chase down prey.
3. People's weapons helped them make the kill with less danger to themselves.
4. The hunting party probably left behind entrails and gristle, which the dogs enjoyed. The hunters may also have left some meat as a reward for the dogs' help.
5. Because of their sloppy housekeeping (cavekeeping) habits, cavepeople unintentionally attracted dogs to their living quarters.
6. The dogs also helped protect the cavepeople by unintentionally warning them of danger when they barked or growled.
7. Eventually, the cavepeople started bringing the puppies into their homes and caring for them. Thus began the domestication process.