

Lascaux Caves

Pre-historic Cave Paintings

Discovery of the Lascaux Cave

- ▶ The Lascaux caves were first discovered in 1940 by 4 teenagers and their dog, Robot.
- ▶ The cave is located in the Bordeaux region of France on the river Vézère.



"Robot is going to be okay," Jacques reassured Marcel as he handed him the oil lamp.



History of the Lascaux Caves

- ▶ The cave was decorated during the Paleolithic period at about 17,000-15,000 B.C.E., during the time Homo Sapiens inhabited Europe.
- ▶ Estimated to be about 20,000 years old
- ▶ The French government granted access to the caves in 1948, but closed them to the public in 1963

What did they use to paint the caves?

- ▶ Used minerals and pigments that were predominantly red, yellow, and black
 - ▶ Red was from hematite, either raw or as found within red clay and ochre
 - ▶ Yellow was from iron oxyhydroxides
 - ▶ Black was either from charcoal or manganese oxides
- ▶ Pigments prepared by grinding, mixing, or heating
- ▶ Painting techniques include drawing with fingers or charcoal, applying pigment using “brushes” made of hair or moss, or blowing the pigment

Sections of the Lascaux Cave

- ▶ The sections of the Lascaux cave include:
 - ▶ The Great Hall of the Bulls
 - ▶ The Painted Gallery
 - ▶ The Chamber of Felines
 - ▶ The Chamber of Engravings
 - ▶ The Main Gallery
 - ▶ The Shaft of the Dead Man



Types of Images Found in the Cave

- ▶ Lascaux houses the most famous examples of prehistoric cave paintings.
- ▶ Nearly 2,000 figures, mostly animals (900), but there are some symbols and one human
- ▶ The following animals are represented in the cave
 - ▶ Horses are the most numerous
 - ▶ Deer
 - ▶ Aurochs - extinct type of large wild cattle
 - ▶ Ibex - a species of wild goat
 - ▶ Bison
 - ▶ Some felines (lions) and bears, one bird, one rhinoceros
- ▶ Besides these paintings, which represent most of the major images, there are also around 1400 engravings of a similar order



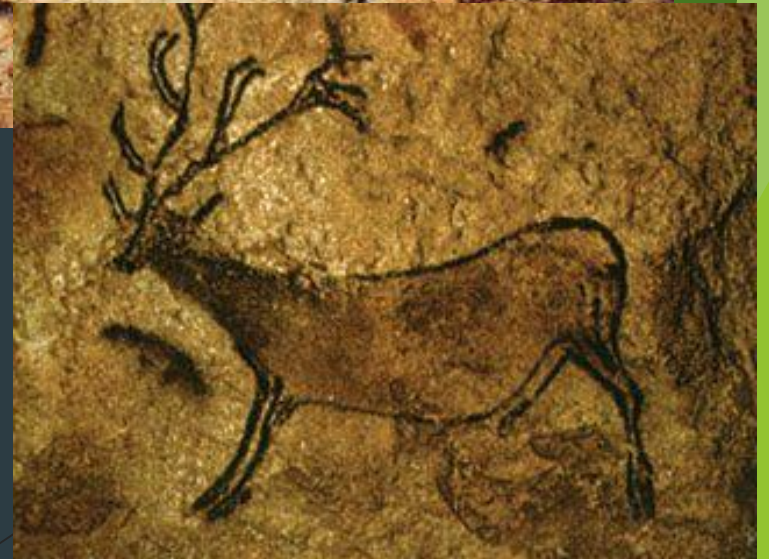
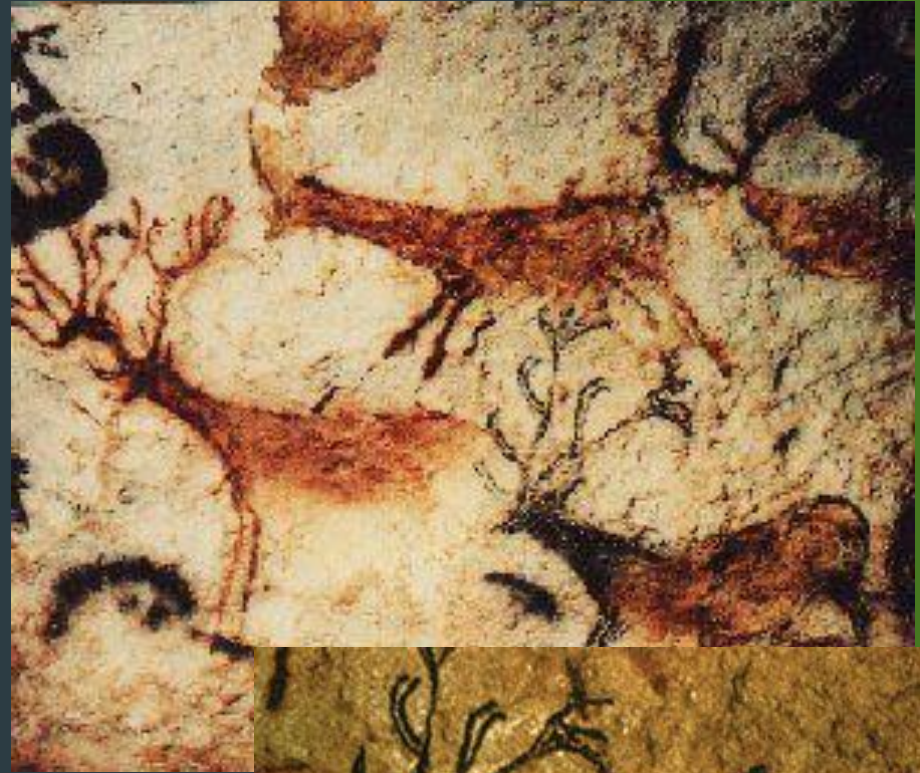
Interesting Facts

- ▶ The cave permanently closed to visitors in 1963, but there is a replica of the Great Hall of the Bulls and the Painted Gallery sections for tourists only 200 metres away from the original cave and a virtual tour is available online.
 - ▶ Visitors (breath; carbon dioxide) caused the growth of algae leading irreparable damage to the walls
 - ▶ To this day, the condition of the caves continue to deteriorate, French authorities have even closed the caves to scientists and preservationists
- ▶ Other than the paintings, flint and bone tools were also found in the cave. Shellfish shells were also found.
- ▶ There were no pictures of reindeer even though they were a primary food source.

Horses



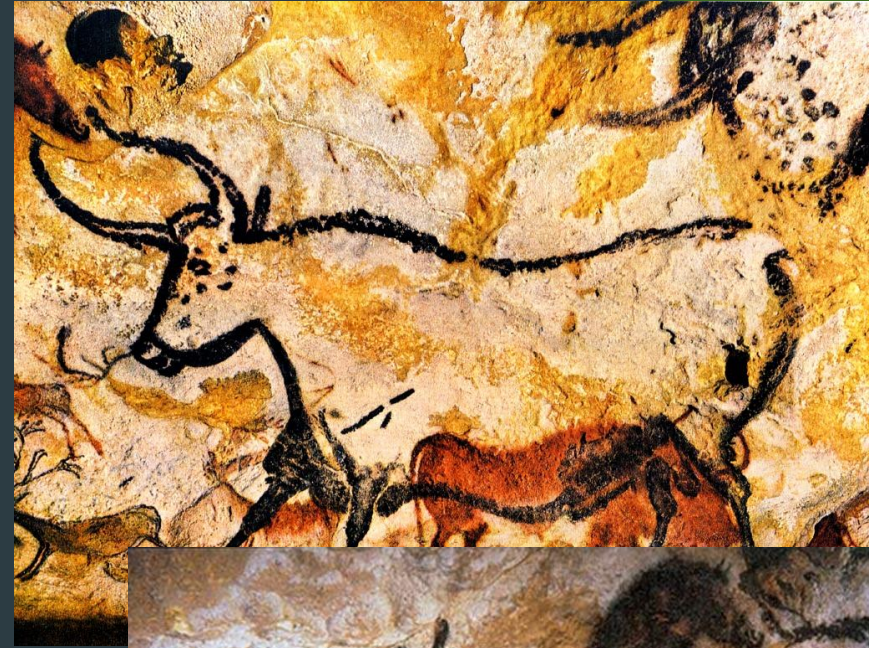
Deer



Bison



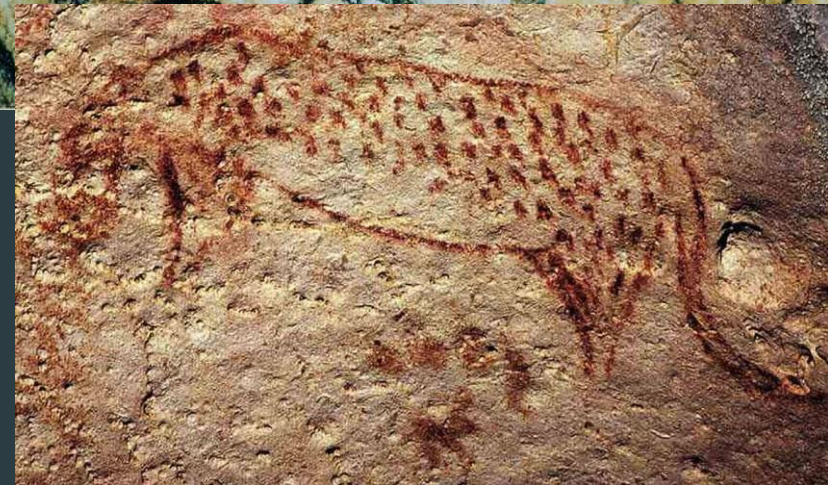
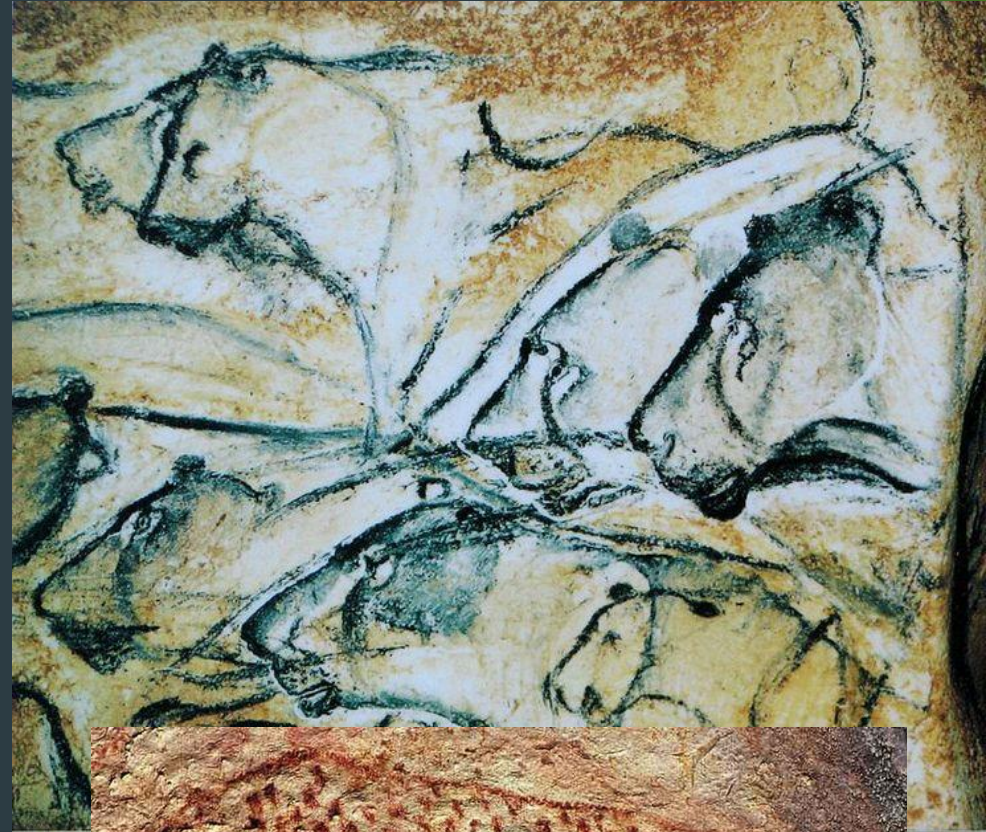
Aurochs



Ibex



Felines



Guiding Questions

<https://PollEv.com/surveys/0z6MGw6Hb/web>

- ▶ How do people express ideas through art?
- ▶ What can we learn about people who lived long ago by looking at a picture?
- ▶ Why do people use images to tell stories and to communicate?
- ▶ What did people use to record important events in their lives or history long ago?
- ▶ How has art been used throughout history to tell stories or to show us what people in other times and places considered important?

Virtual Tour

<http://www.lascaux.culture.fr/#/en/00.xml>

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