Name _____ Date _____

CHAPTER 1
Section 2

HISTORYMAKERS

The Iceman

Frozen in Time

"I needed only one second to see that the body was [at least] 4,000 years old."—archaeologist Konrad Spindler

Two storms and two walks in the mountains combined to give archaeologists one of their most treasured finds in recent history. Around 3000 B.C., a lone man was walking through the Alps, a mountain range in south-central Europe. For some reason, he lay down to rest. While he was sleeping, a sudden storm dropped snow on him, and he froze to death. Yet the blanket of snow that caused his death preserved the man's body for thousands of years. It cushioned him from the great weight of the Alps' glaciers as they moved over his resting place.

In recent years warmer weather has melted those glaciers, revealing the snow underneath. Then, in the fall of 1991, came the second storm—a dust storm in the Sahara Desert, far away in Africa. It was so large that dust blew north to the Alps. The dust absorbed the heat of the sun, causing the snow to melt. Days later, a German couple strolled along this mountain trail and saw a human head and shoulders. After a long undisturbed rest, the Iceman was revealed to the world.

An archaeologist later commented on the timing of the couple's walk. "We think [the Iceman] was found only three days after he had melted out," the scientist said, "and three days later, the snow fell again—enough to have buried him. He was out of the ice, then, only six days, at maximum."

At first, no one knew what a treasure the Iceman was. Some thought he was a modern mountain climber who had died of the cold. Police tried to remove the body using a jackhammer, which tore away a piece of the Iceman's hip. Workers finally pried the body out using ski poles and wooden sticks. Then archaeologist Konrad Spindler arrived. Seeing a copper ax found with the body, Spindler realized that the Iceman could be thousands of years old. He also saw that contact with the air had caused fungus to grow on the body. He ordered the mummy placed in a freezer to save it for further study.

As the scientists examined the body, local people named him. Ötzi, they called him, after the nearby Ötztal Valley. He was five feet two inches tall and had brown curly hair. He had tattoo marks on his back, one kneecap, and one foot. Since all these areas would have been covered by clothing, scientists think the tattoos were not decorations but had spiritual meaning. His pants and jacket were made from the skin of animals. He also wore a long cape made of grass. His leather shoes had been stuffed with grass to help keep his feet warm in the cold mountains. In the tatters of his clothing, the scientists spotted some grains of wheat that grew only at low altitudes. The few pieces of charcoal he carried were made of trees that now grow in a valley just a few hours walk to the south.

Scientists also studied his tools. The Iceman had a six-foot long bow that had not yet been strung. He carried 14 arrows, two of which had stone arrowheads and feathers. His deerskin quiver excited the scientists—they had never seen such an object from this period. He carried a small stone-point knife and several pieces of flint that were ready to be sharpened into arrowheads or other points. A long stick ended in a piece of deer antler. Scientists think it was used to sharpen the flint into points. He had a backpack and carried two mushrooms that are known to have value as medicines. Most spectacular was the Iceman's ax. It had a wooden handle that curved at the top, where notches were made to fit the ax blade. The blade itself was solid copper, putting the Iceman in the period archaeologists call the Copper Age.

Scientists continue to work on the Iceman and his tools. They keep Ötzi's body frozen to preserve it, only removing it from the freezer for periods of 20 minutes at a time. As the scientists revisit this remarkable mummy, though, they add more and more to our understanding of the human past.

Questions

Determining Main Ideas

1. How was the body revealed?
2. How did the Iceman try to protect himself from the cold?
3. ***Drawing Conclusions*** Based on the evidence, what could you say about the Iceman's diet?