**Game Changer: FIRE**

**The Domestication of Fire and its Value to Early Humans**

1. **PREDICT: How will *domesticating*, or controlling, fire help early humans on their path of development?**

For as long as man has inhabited the earth, he has had a close and mutual relationship with the environment; as much as the environment has affected man, man has affected the environment. Although it seems as though man has had an upper hand in the relationship in recent years, influencing the environment in both positive and negative ways, this was not always the case – in fact, in the time when Homo Erectus roamed the earth, the earliest ancestors of modern day man were almost completely at the mercy of the environment. It was not until man learned to manipulate its surrounding environment that he took the first steps toward social development and having the ability to control the events taking place in his life. One of the first victories man won in this power struggle occurred when he acquired the ability to harness fire.

1. **The paragraph says, “the earliest ancestors of modern day man were almost completely at the mercy of the environment.” What does it mean to be at the mercy of the environment?**

**Give a specific example.**

Fire, and the power it wields, served as a major tool for advancement among the earliest inhabitants of the earth. Fire provided the earliest men with a number of luxuries previously unavailable to the human species. For one, it **provided man with a source of warmth**. This was important for the obvious reason of comfort on cold nights, but it also has further reaching implications – it may have helped man expand geographically. While man was confined to warmer climates, once he was able to make fires and generate heat, he may have been able to migrate to slightly colder places because he had the ability to bring a source of warmth besides clothing with him. This may also have increased the lifespan of the average man, preventing him from getting frostbite or becoming sick from hypothermia or other temperature related illnesses.

1. **Why would it be important to our human species to spread to all continents on earth?**

**How did fire help with this?**

Other medical benefits brought about by the existence of controlled fire would be the **ability for man to cook meat** before eating it as opposed to eating it raw. Not only did this culinary use for fire provide man to eat more palatable meals, it also allowed him to kill a number of unhealthy bacteria present in raw meat such as E.Coli and salmonella. Although man was unaware of these dangers at the time, it is now a well-known fact that it is possible to contract fatal diseases from eating raw and uncooked meat; in this way fire also, similar to the function of providing warmth, may also have increased the average lifespan. Cooked meat is more nutritious and allowed for humans to develop larger, smarter brains. Fire also allowed man to cook and dry meats for preservation, giving man a means by which to save food for times when food was scarce.

1. **Use the your background knowledge and the context clues in this passage to define each of the following words:**

**Culinary**

**Palatable**

**Contract**

Similar to improving the process of eating meat that had been hunted, fire also proved to be an important **agricultural tool**. As opposed to small, confined fires which could be used for cooking food and generating warmth, humans also learned the benefits of large, widespread fires. Large fires could help improve the fertility of land that had previously been difficult to plant on and yield edible crops. It also could be used to clear large areas that were covered in bushes or trees, thus rendering the area more useful for hunting. Large fires could also serve as a means for protection, preventing predators and/or enemies from attacking by forming an impenetrable barrier.

1. **In what ways were these humans early, primitive farmers?**

Not only did fire improve the lives of early man by giving him a means by which to stay warm, cook food, improve crop growth, and stave off enemies, but it also served as a **community-building tool and allowed for the facilitation of spoken language**. As humans recognized the benefits of fire and those who did not have the capability to make fire looked to join those who did, small societies were formed and the framework of early cultures was laid. Humans began to gather together and interact on a more personal level, spending more time together, and the need for a spoken language increased. Although early man undoubtedly utilized other forms of communication, verbal communication is clearly easier than the use of gestures or symbols, and allows for more explicit description as well as the conveyance of important nuance. Spoken language was developed to meet the specific needs of the given group. Without fire to serve as a magnetizing force, humans may never have converged from small groups to form larger ones, becoming distinct in their lifestyles and daily practices. Fire, then, was a key component to aiding the process of spoken language facilitation.

1. **Describe how fire helped in the development of human language.**

Early man’s ability to make, control, and manipulate fire was a landmark catalyst in the development of the human species. Fire gave man crucial tools to aid survival, improving quality of life as well as lengthening the average lifespan. Aside from the immediate and tangible improvements fire brought to the lives of early man, it also was key in cultural development; it gave early groups another skill by which distinguish members, and also helped facilitate the creation and spread of spoken language. Considering all that fire contributed to the lives of the earliest humans, it may very well be the most important innovation in the history of man.

1. **In what ways does fire continue to play important role in our lives today?**