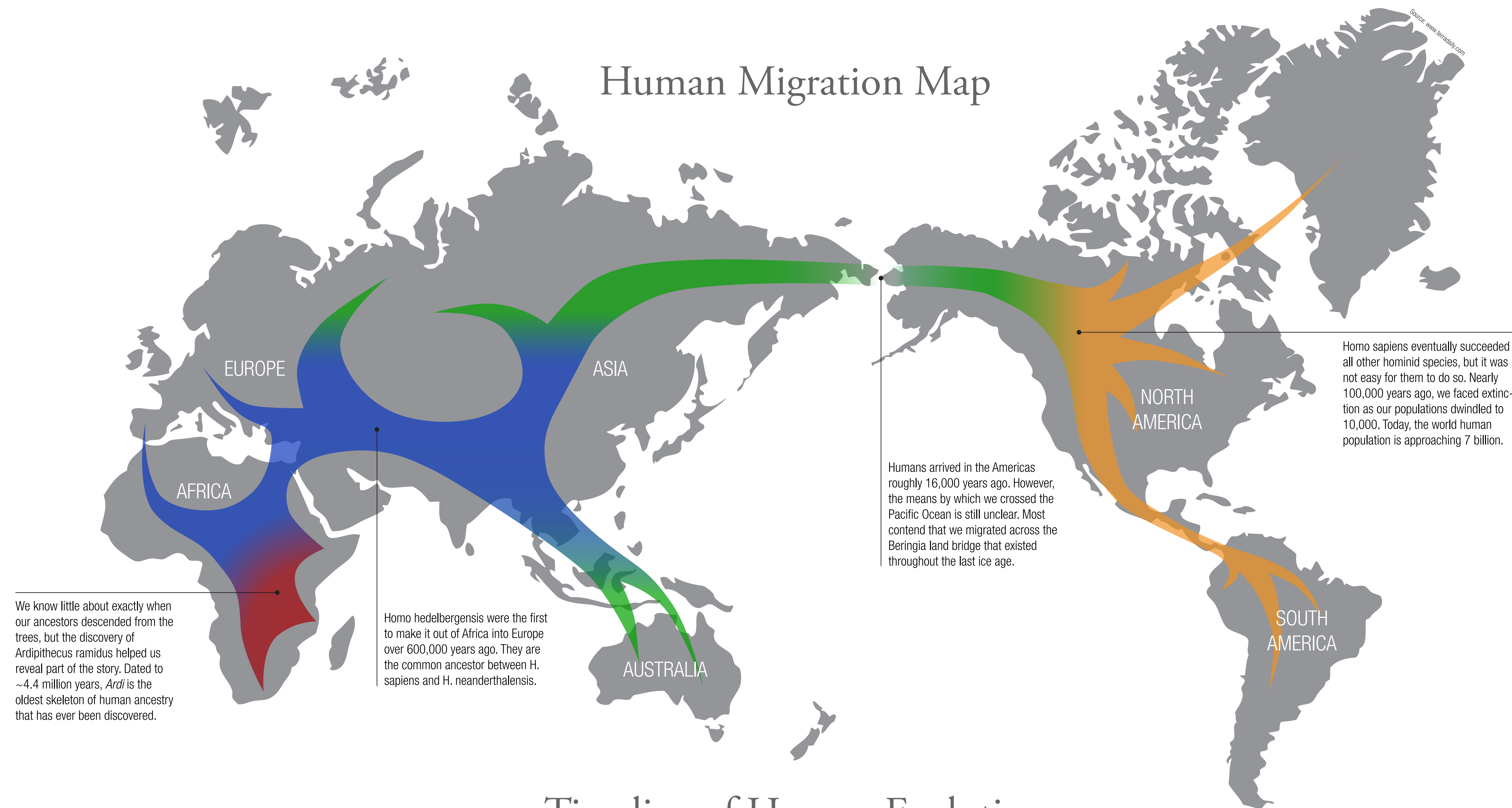


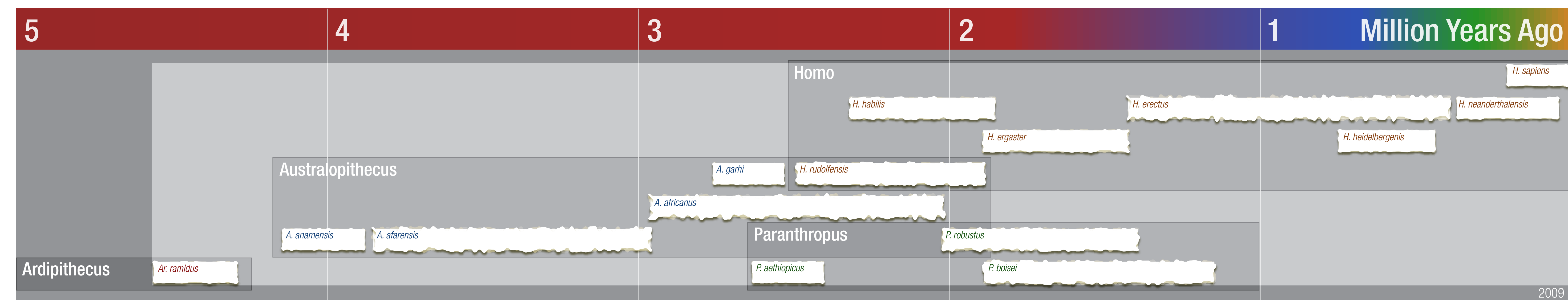
Origins

becoming human

Approximately five million years ago, an ape in Africa began to walk on two legs and took the first steps towards humanity. The road, however, was a long one, as it wasn't until very recently—only 100,000 years ago—that Homo sapiens emerged and ultimately became the foremost hominid species in the world. Trace the path of human evolution from its early beginnings in Africa to its widespread dominance today in order to learn more about what it took for humanity to thrive.



Timeline of Human Evolution



Ardipithecus

A genus whose distinguishing characteristics are bipedalism incorporating a grasping big toe, reduced canine teeth and a small brain size comparable to that of the modern chimpanzee. *Ar. ramidus* existed more recently than the most recent common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees, and is unlike the latter in many ways, suggesting that the common ancestor was itself rather different from modern chimpanzees.

Australopithecus

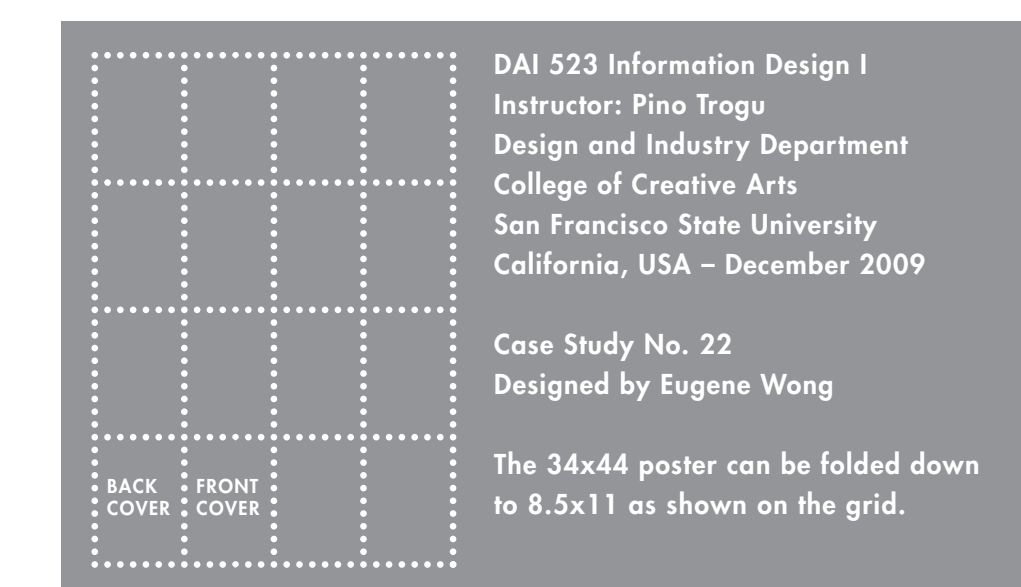
A genus found in Africa between about 4 -1 million years ago. At least seven species of australopithecines are now generally recognized. Among their many shared anatomical traits were a fully erect posture and bipedal gait. The most *primitive* anatomical feature was a small and apelike braincase, comparable in size to those of gorillas and chimpanzees when measured relative to overall body size.

Paranthropus

A genus often described as the *robust australopithecines*. They were early protohominids, and considered to be the sister group of Homo. Members of the genus, often called *nutcracker man*, were characterized by bipedalism, enormous molars and premolars, and reduced front teeth. They were common at such sites as Olduvai and Koobi Fora, in the Late Pliocene and Early Pleistocene.

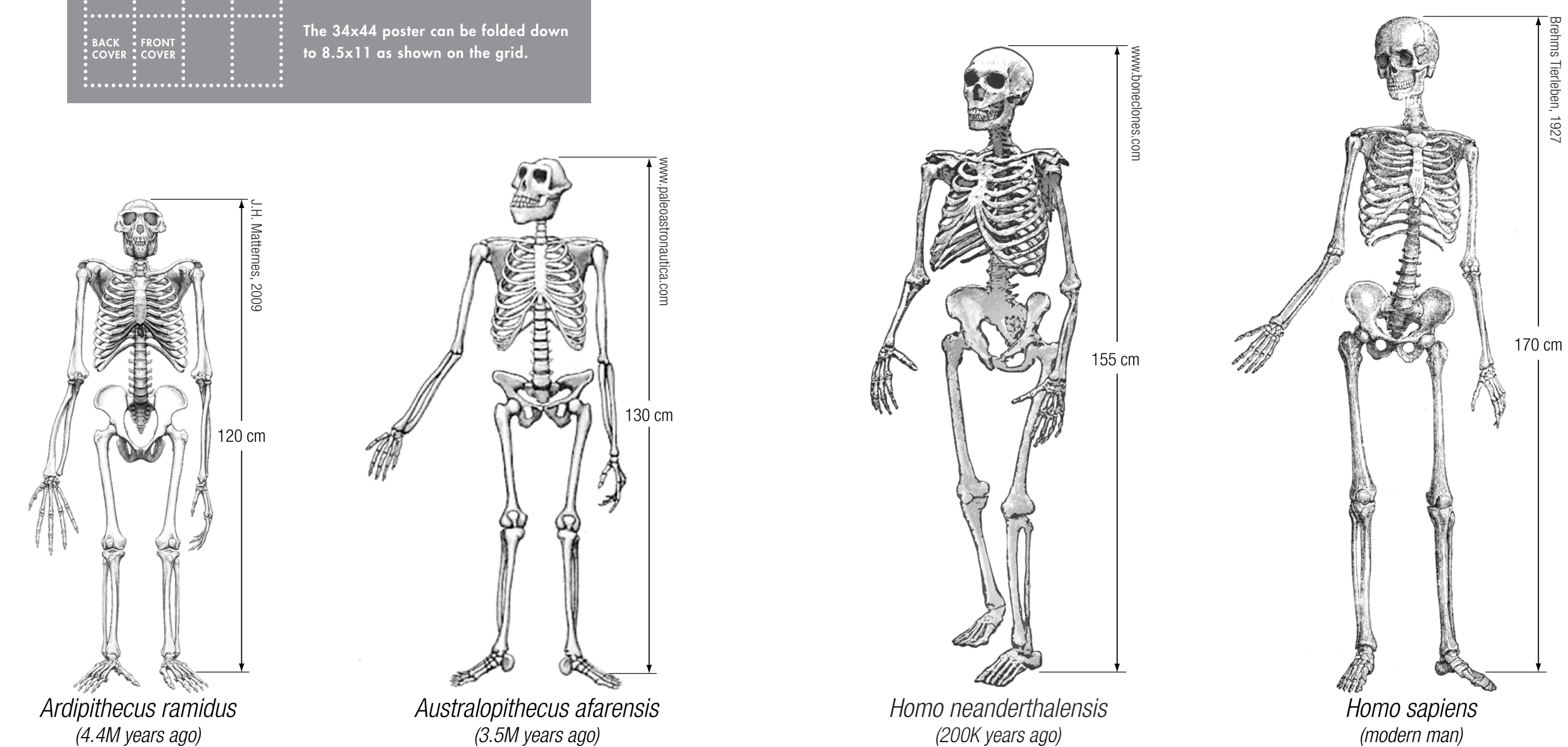
Homo

The genus that includes modern humans and species closely related to them. The genus is estimated to be about 2.5 million years old, evolving from Australopithecine ancestors with the appearance of Homo habilis. The advent of Homo coincides with the first evidence of stone tools and thus by definition with the beginning of the Lower Paleolithic. All species of the genus except Homo sapiens (modern humans) are extinct.



Origins

becoming human



This drawing of *Ardipithecus ramidus* depicts what the species may have looked like as it lived 4.4M years ago. Distinct features, like its grasping hands and small brain capacity, are rendered in fine detail to illustrate specific traits particular to the species. This artwork, termed *paleoart*, is often a result of weeks of collaboration between scientists and artists who are experts in their fields.

