**Article of the Week (AoW) Directions**

1. Mark your confusion – either highlighting or underlining.

2. Mark up the text. Annotate the article with comments, questions, inferences, etc. You can use a variety of sentences, phrases, and symbols to show your thinking.

3. Write a developed paragraph response to one of the prompts below.

**Our ancient ancestors may have slept better than you, but also less**

Source: Jen Christensen/CNN/October 29, 2015

**(CNN)-** Our hunter-gatherer ancestors must have gotten more sleep than you. Before modern stresses and schedules and binge watching "House of Cards," humans were certainly getting at least eight hours of solid deep cave sleep, right? A group of scientists studying the history of human sleep patterns says dream on.

Of course, these scientists didn't have time machines to peek in on our ancestors, so they did the next best thing to try and understand what "natural" sleep is. They studied the sleep patterns of three current preindustrial societies in Africa and Bolivia.

In other words, they found 94 people to observe who don't have the distractions of electric lighting, smart phones and Netflix and all the other trappings of modern life on which we blame our lack of sleep. The study ran in the latest edition of [Current Biology.](http://www.cell.com/current-biology/abstract/S0960-9822(15)01157-4)

What these scientists found was that despite their geographic and cultural differences, there was a pattern among all three groups: they were relatively healthy and they only got between 6.4 hours of sleep on average a day (ranging from 5.7 to 7.1 hours per night), sleeping another hour more in the winter.

The Hadza who live in northern Tanzania, the Tsimane, who live in Bolivia, and the San who live in Namibia helped these scientists dispel a few other notions people have about idyllic premodern sleeping. These peoples nearly never nap. They don't set a sleep schedule around when it's light out. Typically, they went to sleep three hours and 20 minutes after sunset and woke up before sunrise. And they slept through the night.

The result of these sleep patterns: nearly no one suffered from insomnia. In none of their languages is there even a word for insomnia. Most slept outside or in moderate huts.

By contrast, Americans even with all our modern conveniences such as adjustable beds, white noise machines and zillion thread-count sheets say we really stink at sleeping.

An estimated 48% of [Americans report](https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/insomnia/sleep-aids-and-insomnia) insomnia occasionally, 22% say they have insomnia every night or almost every night. An inability to sleep is not just annoying, it's dangerous and is tied to all sorts of health issues such as obesity, diabetes, depression, and cardiovascular disease. It limits our mental and physical abilities overall.

In contrast, these peoples were generally healthy. They had fewer problems with high blood pressure and obesity and were physically fit. And before you say it is because of all the exercise they get hunting and gatherings, previous studies have shown that their daily energy expenditure is similar to Americans.

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The other big takeaway from the study, Siegel said, was that it wasn't light that regulated a sleep pattern, it was the daily cycle of temperature change. With modern insulated buildings, that is a little difficult unless you leave a window open.

"Yes, turn off the lights, that is important for sleep, but also you can find a way to moderate the temperature in your bedroom," Siegel said. "Under natural conditions, the temperature is not just lower at night, it is falling throughout this period."

More research will need to be done. This is a study among only 94 people, but Siegel said the results are intriguing: "These people are quite healthy, so there certainly are lessons here."

**Respond to one of the following prompts. Use the a separate sheet of paper.**

1. How much do you sleep each night? How does your sleep affect your daily performance? Explain.
2. How could you apply some of the suggestions to increase the quality of sleep to your own life? Explain with details and examples.
3. Select a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph and respond to it.