

Name: _____

Date: _____

Neanderthals

In 1856, quarrymen made an exciting discovery in a cave in the Neander Valley, near Dusseldorf, Germany. They found the remains of humans who were very different from you. Scientists later learned that "Neanderthal" humans inhabited Europe and parts of Asia and North Africa from about 125,000 to about 40,000 years ago. Neanderthals were the closest relatives of currently living humans, sharing more than 99.5% of our DNA sequence.

Fossils indicate that Neanderthals looked somewhat like humans, but they had heavy ridges above their eyes. Their skulls were larger than modern humans, indicating that Neanderthals may have had bigger brains. Bones in the throats of Neanderthal fossils led archaeologists to believe that their verbal communication probably consisted only of grunts. They apparently could not use words they way we do today.

Neanderthals lived side-by-side in many places with modern humans, and then they disappear from the fossil record. The mystery of what happened to the Neanderthals still puzzles scientists today, though recent evidence suggests there have been some interbreeding between Neanderthals and modern humans. A 2010 study found that people in Asia and Europe get between one and four percent of their genetic material from Neanderthals.

We don't know what happened to the Neanderthals. Some scientists believe they became extinct because the climate changed in Europe and Asia. Others suggest that the moderns humans absorbed Neanderthals through interbreeding. Scientists studying Neanderthal DNA are making exciting discoveries, and what we know about Neanderthals may soon change and new evidence is uncovered.

Fill in the Blanks

About 143 years ago, Q_____ in the N_____ Valley of G_____ discovered the r_____ of h_____ very d_____ from us. Apparently "N_____" humans *l_____ in E_____ and parts of A_____ and North A_____ as *r_____ as 40,000 y_____ ago. The N_____ looked somewhat like *u_____, but they had heavy r_____ above their e_____ and had much larger s_____. N_____ disappeared from the f_____ record about 30,000 years ago. While there are many t_____ to explain the *e_____ of the N_____, scientists are not sure of what actually happened.

Answer in complete sentences

1. Why do we refer to hominids that lived in Europe, North Africa, and parts of Asia as "Neandertals?"

2. What advantage did the ancestors of modern humans have over Neandertals?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.