

Quest

Sunday, October 21 at 9:15am in Dobkin Hall

Childcare Provided

Our Ancestors and Ourselves



with Jimmy Reeves

In this week's Quest we will examine some of the latest theories that try to explain how we homo sapiens became the only human species left standing. We'll also consider the influences of our more recent relatives and ancestors that have shaped us as individuals.

PBS Nova is airing a multi-part series that presents some of the latest discoveries found in ancient fossils, DNA and stone tools that shed light on our perilous path to where we find ourselves today. For this Sunday's Quest, we'll focus on episode 3, human neanderthal encounters:

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/human-neanderthal-encounters/>

Questions To Consider

1. There's been a lot of speculation about what it is that separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom, tools, brain size, imagination? Does this portrait of Neanderthals cause you to view our species' separateness differently?
2. What reasons might explain why we succeeded in settling in Europe 40000 years ago?
3. The authors contend that our arrival in Europe at that time resulted in the final demise of Neanderthal. How do you think that might have happened? What were the factors that in all likelihood doomed the neanderthals?
4. The authors suggest that a major factor that made us successful was our willingness to explore the unknown, leaving Africa several times, in many cases only to die out, but we persisted. Do you think that is what separated us from other animals?
5. How do you think the factors that allowed our ancestors to succeed affect us today? What lessons can we learn from this history?
6. Recent ancestry affects us personally. How do you feel your heritage and your recent ancestors (parents, grandparents, etc.) helped shape who you are and how you view the world.
7. Who in your life has had the most influence on who you became as a person, and in what ways does show up in your sense of self?