

Scientists show the world 'Dragon Man'

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Image: Chuang Zhao

Researchers in China have shown an ancient skull to the world for the first time. The skull could belong to a completely new species of humans that lived in Asia over 146,000 years ago. It could be from a group of humans that are the

closest relatives to us. The researchers have nicknamed the person the skull came from "Dragon Man". It was originally found in the city of Harbin in 1933 but was kept hidden. The Japanese army occupied the city at the time. The Chinese worker who found the skull decided to keep it safe. He hid it at the bottom of his family's well. It stayed there for nearly 90 years. The man recently told his family about the skull before he died. His family located it and gave it to scientists.

Scientists say Dragon Man could greatly change our understanding of human evolution. They say it belonged to "a large-brained male in his 50s with deep-set eyes and thick eyebrow ridges". He looked more like today's humans than any other extinct members of the human family tree. The species Dragon Man belonged to is probably closer to modern-day humans than Neanderthals were. Researcher Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum in London described Dragon Man's group. He said: "This population would have been hunter-gatherers, living off the land. From the winter temperatures in Harbin today, it looks like they were coping with even harsher cold than the Neanderthals."

Sources: bbc.com / asiatimes.com / nature.com / doi.org

Writing

It is important we know where we came from. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

researchers / ancient / skull / species / Asia / relatives / dragon / safe / army / family / change / understanding / evolution / eyes / eyebrow / extinct / population / winter

True / False

- 1) An ancient skull has been shown to the world for only the second time. T / F
- 2) The skull is over 140,000 years old. T / F
- 3) The skull was first found almost 90 years ago. T / F
- 4) A man hid the skull in a well belonging to his family. T / F
- 5) The skull could change how we think we evolved. T / F
- 6) The skull is of a teenager who had no eyebrows. T / F
- 7) The Neanderthals are still the closest relatives to humans. T / F
- 8) The skull belonged to a man who lived in very hot climates. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. ancient | a. more severe |
| 2. completely | b. relations |
| 3. relatives | c. development |
| 4. hidden | d. surviving |
| 5. died | e. very, very old |
| 6. evolution | f. passed away |
| 7. extinct | g. inhabitants |
| 8. population | h. totally |
| 9. coping | i. vanished |
| 10. harsher | j. concealed |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of evolution?
- c) How might Dragon Man change our understanding of evolution?
- d) How far back can you trace your family tree?
- e) What do you know about Neanderthals?
- f) Should we all go back to being hunter-gatherers?
- g) How did people survive the cold thousands of years ago?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Dragon Man?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. a completely new species | a. of human evolution |
| 2. The researchers have nicknamed | b. tree |
| 3. The Japanese army occupied the | c. his family's well |
| 4. He hid it at the bottom of | d. cold |
| 5. His family located it and | e. the person |
| 6. greatly change our understanding | f. of humans |
| 7. a large-brained male in his 50s with | g. gatherers |
| 8. family | h. gave it to scientists |
| 9. hunter- | i. deep-set eyes |
| 10. coping with even harsher | j. city at the time |

Discussion – Student B

- How interested are you in ancient humans?
- What do you know about early humans?
- In what ways might life 146,000 years ago be better than now?
- What do you think of the name Dragon Man?
- How important is the 146,000-year-old skull?
- Who were our ancestors?
- What might we look like in 146,000 years from now?
- Do you think scientists should recreate Dragon Man using DNA?

Spelling

- belong to a mlceotepyl new species
- the closest rveastlie to us
- the person the uksll came from
- The Japanese army epcduico the city
- The man crleetyn told his family
- His family loadtce it
- change our understanding of human evountilo
- thick eobewyr ridges
- ctxneti members of the human family tree
- bplyraob closer to modern-day humans
- winter tpmereausetr
- coping with even arsehrh cold

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. b	4. j	5. f
6. c	7. i	8. g	9. d	10. a

Role Play

Role A – Food

You think food is the best thing about life thousands of years ago. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as great. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): no technology, family or environment.

Role B – No Technology

You think no technology is the best thing about life thousands of years ago. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as great. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): food, family or environment.

Role C – Family

You think family is the best thing about life thousands of years ago. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as great. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): no technology, food or environment.

Role D – Environment

You think environment is the best thing about life thousands of years ago. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as great. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): no technology, family or food.

Speaking – Ancient times

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things about life thousands of years ago at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| • No stress | • Environment |
| • No technology | • Food |
| • No pollution | • Sleep |
| • Fitness | • Family |

Answers – True False

1 F	2 T	3 T	4 T	5 T	6 F	7 F	8 F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.