



0. NEANDERTHALS and FIRE - Story Preface

1. LET'S MEET T. REX

2. WHO WAS ATTILA?

3. ATTILA: FEARSOME RULER

4. MEET the VIKINGS

5. VIKING SHIPS and SETTLEMENTS

6. SACAGAWEA: TEEN INTERPRETER

7. SACAGAWEA: TRIUMPHANT MISSION

8. LEWIS and CLARK

9. MEET A MUMMY

10. MUMMIES of PHARAOHS

11. MEET KING TUT

12. MEET the NEANDERTHALS

13. NEANDERTHALS and FIRE

14. TEDDY and TEX

15. NIGHT at the MUSEUM 3: KEEPING the FACTS STRAIGHT

This image depicts an artist's interpretation of how Neanderthals may have controlled fire during the Pleistocene Age. [NASA tells us more](#): "The extinct animals of the Pleistocene epoch pictured in this image are, the Woolly Mammoth, the Bush Antlered Deer, and the Sabre Toothed Cat. Pleistocene animals in this image that still exist are the Eurasian Horse, the Oryx, the Banded Lemming and the Musk Ox. Some of the plant life of the Pleistocene epoch consisted of grasses (which did not exist until this time), ferns, trees, sedges and shrubs." Image Credit: JPL/NASA. Click on the image for a magnificent view.

Most experts believe Neanderthals invented a [type of adhesive](#) (from birch wood) and [used fire](#). *How* they used it is the source of debate. Commenting on findings from Grotte XVI - Cave 16 - in southwestern France, one of the project's excavators, Jan Simek, [observes](#) (scroll down 60%):

Neanderthal fire use has been something that's sort of been debated in archeology for a very long period of time. I don't think anybody's questioned that they made fires, that they knew how to use fires for heat and light, maybe even cooking their food, but we have some reason to believe that they were doing a little bit more.

These fireplaces are so well preserved [in Grotto XVI excavations, southwest France] that in some levels we can actually still see the remains of the material being burnt ...We know, for example, that they burned several different kinds of wood: juniper, pine, among others.

They also burned significant numbers of grasses, and grasses is kind of peculiar to us because they had to bring it in from outside the cave, dry it, and then use it to start their fires. There's enough in there that suggests that maybe they were using the grass for maybe a little bit more, perhaps generating smoke to drive off mosquitoes, to prepare the site for habitation.

Neanderthal fossils, found in [Gibraltar caves](#), appear to be the most recent remains of Neanderthal life. It is for that reason they are called "the last" Neanderthals. The findings have led experts to conclude that dramatic temperature changes may have been responsible for the Neanderthals' demise.

At least for awhile, it is thought, Gibraltar - with its [livable caves](#) - may have provided them with shelter and a kind of "Mediterranean Serengeti" source of food. But climatic changes may have eventually been too much even there, according to Professor Clive Finlayson (from the Gibraltar Museum). [He told](#) the BBC News:

If you've got a shrinking Neanderthal population on the edge, it [climate change] might just be enough to tip them over the edge.

Someone known for living "on the edge" most of his adult life is the final character we will meet in this story. From a sickly youngster, he grew into a president who believed it wise to "speak softly and carry a big stick."

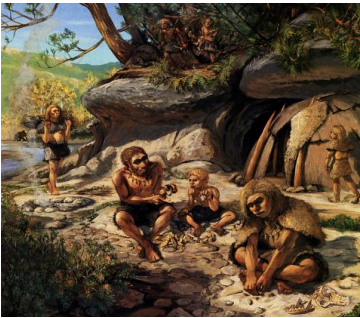
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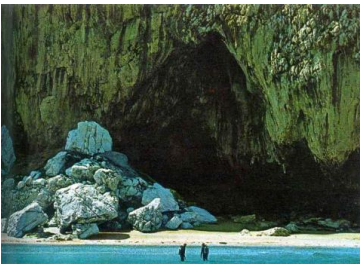


Neanderthals - Used Fire

Image online, courtesy University of Geneva's TECFA (an "academic unit in the field of educational technology"). TECFA is part of the University's School of Psychology and Education.

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Gibraltar - Livable Caves

This photo is from the Natural History Museum, London. Online, courtesy the Archaeology News Network [website](#).

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NEANDERTHALS and FIRE

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Neanderthals - Created and Used Birchwood Glue

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