

Early human or different “Hobbit”? (Sat 5 Mar, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about skeletons / archaeologists / *The Hobbit* / Lord of the Rings / the brain / being small / evolution / humans ...Change topic / partner frequently to energize the class.

2. SKELETON BRAINSTORM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word skeleton. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

3. EVOLUTION: How did humans appear on this earth? Like the story of Genesis in the Christian Bible, as in Charles Darwin’s “Origin of the Species”, transported by aliens from another planet? Talk about this in pairs or groups. After you have finished, find someone new and talk more. What is the overall conclusion of the class?

4. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: Students face each other in pairs and engage in the following (for-fun) 2-minute debates. Students A are assigned the first argument, students B the second. Rotate pairs to ensure a lively pace and noise level is kept:

- a. Lord of the Rings is the best fantasy movie. vs. No way. Harry Potter is.
- b. Being an archaeologist is a wonderful job. vs. Lots of digging in the dirt is not wonderful.
- c. The skeleton found on Flores is a new species. vs. Hobbit is one of us, only smaller.
- d. We descended from the apes. vs. No.
- e. Archaeologists shouldn’t dig up bones. No respect for the dead. vs. That’s science.
- f. Skeletons are scary. vs. Skeletons are cool.
- g. Hunting, firemaking and toolmaking is advanced stuff. vs. Anyone can do it if they have to.
- h. Ten thousand years from now our brains will be the size of footballs. vs. Don’t be ridiculous.

PRE-READING IDEAS

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'early' and 'human'.

TRUE FALSE: Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

1. A recently discovered skeleton may turn out to be a new species of human. T / F
2. The skeleton looks and sounds like the Hobbit from *Lord of the Rings*. T / F
3. The skeleton is just fifty centimeters tall. T / F
4. The Hobbit skeleton is believed to have lived as recently as 12,000 years ago. T / F
5. The Hobbit was very intelligent. T / F
6. Scientists are not sure if the Hobbit is a new species or just a small human. T / F
7. The Hobbit is small because it suffered from a disorder that stunted its growth. T / F
8. The Hobbit is the missing link between apes and humans. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| (a) discovered | labeled |
| (b) species | showed |
| (c) edition | class |
| (d) nicknamed | advanced |
| (e) mature | ancient |
| (f) revealed | development |
| (g) structured | unearthed |
| (h) sophisticated | issue |
| (i) growth | organized |
| (j) primitive | adult |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases based on the article:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) A one-meter tall skeleton | being |
| (b) may turn | recently as 12,000 years ago |
| (c) human | thought |
| (d) online | CT scans |
| (e) scientific | raging |
| (f) lived as | discovered last year |
| (g) researchers conducted | complex tasks |
| (h) enabled conscious | title |
| (i) perform | out to be |
| (j) Debate is currently | edition |

GAP FILL

Early human or different “Hobbit”?

BNE: A one-meter tall _____ discovered last year by archaeologists on the island of Flores in Indonesia may turn out to be a separate _____ of human being. This is according to a new study published by Science Express, the online edition of the journal Science. Scientists have nicknamed the mini person the “Hobbit” after a character in a book by the fantasy writer, J.R. Tolkein, author of “Lord of the Rings”. Its scientific _____ is Homo floresiensis, named after the island on which it lived and was discovered. The Hobbit is believed to have lived as recently as 12,000 years ago. The one studied by scientists is of a _____ woman the size of a present-day four-year-old child. Its _____ skull revealed a brain that was smaller than a human’s, more like a chimpanzee’s brain. After researchers conducted CT (computer tomography) scans, it was found the brain was structured in a way that would have enabled _____ thought and to perform complex tasks such as hunting, firemaking and making sophisticated tools. Debate is currently raging whether the skull and collection of bones is actually a different _____ species of human, or whether it is simply a Homo sapien pygmy, a human suffering from the growth stunting disorder microcephaly. Either way, this _____ person may provide more answers about our evolution and how we developed into humans.

fossil primitive conscious skeleton mature species dwarf title

DISCUSSION:

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. Are you interested in archaeology?
- c. Did you see all of the Indiana Jones movies?
- d. Are you interested in fantasy?
- e. What fantasy books, movies and games do you like?
- f. How did we develop into humans?
- g. Would you like to work with skeletons?
- h. Is it important to study old bones?
- i. When we dig up old bones, we may be disturbing ancient customs and burial rights. Is this OK or does it show a lack of respect for the dead?
- j. How would you feel about being dug up and put on a scientist’s table 10,000 years from now?
- k. Do you have a nickname?
- l. What would life be like if you were one meter tall?
- m. Can you hunt, make fires or make tools?
- n. What other things could primitive people do better than us?
- o. If a person from 12,000 years ago came into our world today, what would they think?
- p. What would be their favorite movie and what flavor ice cream would they choose?
- q. Teacher / Student additional questions.

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCAB EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on Homo floresiensis. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. EVOLUTION:** Make a poster describing how you think we developed into human beings.
- 4. LETTER FROM HOBBIT:** Write an imaginary letter from the Hobbit telling scientists how you lived each day 12,000 years ago.

FULL TEXT

Early human or different "Hobbit"?

BNE: A one-meter tall **skeleton** discovered last year by archaeologists on the island of Flores in Indonesia may turn out to be a separate **species** of human being. This is according to a new study published by Science Express, the online edition of the journal Science. Scientists have nicknamed the mini person the "Hobbit" after a character in a book by the fantasy writer, J.R. Tolkien, author of "Lord of the Rings". Its scientific **title** is Homo floresiensis, named after the island on which it lived and was discovered. The Hobbit is believed to have lived as recently as 12,000 years ago. The one studied by scientists is of a **mature** woman the size of a present-day four-year-old child. Its **fossil** skull revealed a brain that was smaller than a human's, more like a chimpanzee's brain. After researchers conducted CT (computer tomography) scans, it was found the brain was structured in a way that would have enabled **conscious** thought and to perform complex tasks such as hunting, firemaking and making sophisticated tools. Debate is currently raging whether the skull and collection of bones is actually a different **dwarf** species of human, or whether it is simply a Homo sapien pygmy, a human suffering from the growth stunting disorder microcephaly. Either way, this **primitive** person may provide more answers about our evolution and how we developed into humans.