

The Complete History of Mankind

When the first early humans debuted on the world stage 2 -3 million years ago in Africa, all they would have had for an audience is a bunch of almost human Australopithecus types and some other dead-enders, not exactly the kind you'd want to bring home to mother. Unless your mother was more of a smaller-brained, knuckle-dragging Australopithecus type herself who hadn't yet fully committed to terrestrial living. Having an almost human mother would have been hard to live down, even in those times, and is likely the reason some of the new early humans started to think about moving out of Africa.

Those early humans were no prize themselves, consisting at various times and places of the likes of *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, and *Homo neanderthalensis*, among other species who never really got it. Take *H. habilis* for instance, whose name means 'handy man'. He was known for being 3 ½ feet tall and for using stone tools, so how handy could he have been? What with his smallish brain, he could not appreciate the finer things in life, never progressing beyond the 'eat or be eaten' stage of thinking. That should have been a no-brainer, but as he was also known for going extinct some 1.5 million years ago, he obviously didn't see the future in brains.

Before he left though, *H. habilis* may have been considerate enough to pass along some of his genes to *H. erectus*, whose name means 'erect man'. For a time this was an apt name, as *H. erectus* measured 5 – 6 feet tall when he was introduced 2 million years ago. When he went extinct 110,000 thousand years ago however, he wasn't erect, and could only be measured horizontally. It was too late to change his name by then. *H. erectus* had a still bigger brain and developed weapons, and so progressed from a 'eat or be eaten' to a 'kill or be killed' philosophy. His enemies just shrugged and killed him anyway.

H. erectus was the first early human to discover Europe and Asia. There was plenty of elbow room in those places then, which, oddly enough, he may not have actually needed, as the fossil record so far indicates that he may not have had any elbows. He had feet, and that's all that mattered to him. That, and the female of the species. Females of other species may have occasionally mattered to him too, if we're to be honest about it.

H. heidelbergensis was the Heidelberg Man, and he didn't care who knew it because his brain had grown to 1.9% of his body weight since ditching *H. erectus*. He knew it and that was enough, despite those who called him an intermediate species behind his back. He was 5 ½ feet tall, controlled fire, hunted in groups, and hated to be reminded that he only lived in the Mid-Pleistocene, believing himself more advanced than he was. *H. heidelbergensis* made his home both in Africa and Europe, and you know how that goes. Pretty soon, or about 300,000 years ago, the families stopped communicating, the European side changed their names to *H.*

neanderthalensis, the African side to H. sapiens, and they all went along pretending the other didn't exist.

H. sapiens remained busy throughout Africa and the Middle East, then at the beginning of their Grand World Tour they thought they'd be the bigger species and went first to Europe to pay a visit. They were shocked by what they found. H. neanderthalensis had simply become Neanderthals, with limited speech capabilities, a receding forehead, and a double-arched brow ridge to go with a stocky, short-limbed body. The Neanderthals may have been apex predators and cooked their food, with a larger brain even than H. sapiens, but as evidenced by their low reproductive rate, it didn't even impress the women. It certainly didn't impress H. sapiens, and before long they were fighting like relatives everywhere. DNA testing indicates they did kiss and make up on occasion.

Homo sapiens, as we all know, is the Wise Man, and he knew that stone tools were so Middle Paleolithic. He also knew that he couldn't let the Neanderthals drag him down while transitioning to the Upper Paleolithic around 40,000 years ago. So he did what he had to and demonstrated what a big brain is really good for as he helped the Neanderthals on their journey to extinction. What can you say, he had that kind of talent. Still does to this day.

At some point around then H. sapiens became alternately known as the Early Modern Humans, or Cro-Magnon Men, because they all lived in a cave in France. They were also known for telling stories around the fire, singing, and drawing pictures on the cave walls of the other creatures they were helping on their journeys to extinction, like the woolly mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, and other woolly animals. They were not woolly themselves, and were not about to let some new Ice Age turn them into sheep.

Anyway, time passed as it usually does, and the Early Modern Humans became the Modern Humans, who are known for inventing things like pollution, over-population, pandemics, a new type of global warming, nuclear weapons, and conspiracy theories. Interestingly enough, at this very moment the Modern Humans are on the cusp of becoming the Late Modern Humans.