



Did you know that Neanderthals...

... began fashioning unique tools about 300,000 years ago! Production of these tools required not only skill but a significant amount of intelligence, planning and preparation.

... may have been the first “artists” of Europe. Pigments found at several sites may have been used as body paint or to create art, including some that were found in caves.

... buried their dead. Their burial practices are reflected in the arrangement of bodies in graves, and the inclusion of funeral-related goods.

... were quite well versed in natural medicine. They used medicinal plants to treat ailments similar to our own, such as rheumatism, arthritis, cancer, tooth abscesses and digestive problems. They even consumed molds containing a natural antibiotic.

... had a varied diet based on what was available around them. They would eat mammoths, small mammals, plants, nuts, fish, shellfish, tortoises, reptiles, birds and even sea mammals.

... shared many physical characteristics with their ancestors and with modern humans. They also had features entirely their own, including short stature, stocky bodies with strong skeletons, powerful muscles, large barrel-shaped chest cavities, and short forearms.

... were extraordinary artisans. Skilled and adaptable, they not only developed complex tools, but also fashioned ornaments, used pigments and may have created symbolic expressions.

... may have been prehistoric collectors. Visually appealing artifacts, with no clear purpose, have been found at Neanderthal archaeological sites.

Neanderthals : stereotypes vs reality

- ❖ Neanderthals lived in caves, right?

Wrong! Neanderthals mainly created open air shelters, such as this one found at the La Folie archaeological site near Poitiers, France.

- ❖ Neanderthals would often be seen carrying a club, right?

Probably not. No clubs have ever been found at Neanderthal archaeological sites.

- ❖ Neanderthals didn't like their veggies and mostly ate red meat, right?

Wrong! Researchers have found that Neanderthals were omnivorous — eating meat, plants and fish — adapting their diet to what was available. Much like we do.

- ❖ Making tools by hand requires talent that was clearly beyond Neanderthal capacity, right?

Wrong! Neanderthals were skilled artisans who, for hundreds of thousands of years, fashioned tools like knives, blades and scrapers.

- ❖ Neanderthals were definitely less smart than modern humans are, and that's why they disappeared, right?

We don't know. Their disappearance is shrouded in mystery, but was most likely due to multiple factors that may include the impact of Homo sapiens.