

This week is going to be very exciting. We have the high school graduation on Friday. Well, when I say exciting, I mean for those students and for me. The rest of you won't be here. Sorry. You will have a graduation one day though, and then you can see how exciting it is. Everyone gets their hair done. I am going to have to get up extra early to get my hair styled. And we all get dolled up in beautiful clothes. Then we sit and listen to a lot of speeches. Then we go to a hotel and have a "party". It is a fun day. Many students ask us to sign their yearbooks.

Something You Didn't Know (Neanderthals)

1. Neanderthals¹ lived from about 200,000 to 30,000 years ago.
2. No one knows why Neanderthals went extinct², but some reasons might be: competition from modern humans (the ice age³ caused climate change and the Neanderthals were not able to adapt their hunting methods in the way that we could – they mostly only hunted big game⁴ and we became hunter gatherers⁵), interbreeding⁶ with modern humans, disease, natural disasters etc.
3. They lived for about 30 years and were about 160cm tall.
4. The size of Neanderthal brains means that they probably had a language. However, there is no way that anyone will ever be able to find out what it was.
5. The first skeleton was found in 1856 and people thought it was a bear.



Idiom: Get dolled up.

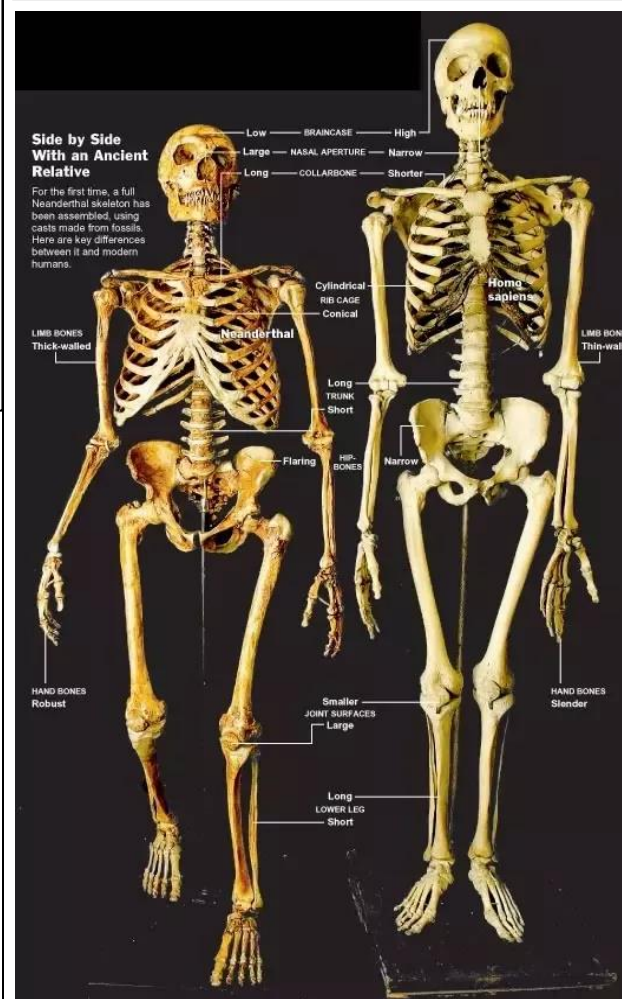
This idiom is not very difficult to imagine. It means that you are dressed up in very nice and stylish clothes. The phrase is often used for women, but it can be used for men as well. The phrase came about because dolls are made up with perfect faces and dressed in beautiful clothes. Someone who does the same is dressed up like a doll.

A: What are you wearing that suit for?

B: I've got an important interview so I had to get dolled up.

Neanderthal Found Buried With Flowers

Last week, half of a Neanderthal skeleton was unearthed⁷ in a cave in Iraq. This is not the first time Neanderthal skeletons have been found there. About sixty years ago, another six whole skeletons were discovered. That is not unusual. What is unusual is that this skeleton was found with ancient pollen⁸ in the soil around it. Many experts have taken that to mean that the Neanderthals buried their dead with flowers. If that is true, then it will change the way we think about these ancient people.



The common perception⁹ of most people is that Neanderthals were dimwitted¹⁰, brutish¹¹, and closer to animals than they are to us. This discovery will change that view because burying with flowers shows a higher level of consciousness¹², abstract thinking¹³, compassion¹⁴, and the ability to mourn¹⁵. These are all very "human" attributes and are not demonstrated by animals. Some animals bury their dead, but for practical reasons.

Animals bury their dead because of the smell and the risk of attracting scavengers¹⁶. Burying with flowers is a different level. However, some experts think that the pollen simply fell into the grave at a later date and it is a coincidence. The expert counter this by saying that the pollen is the same age as the bodies and must have been buried with them. Will we ever know? I guess we won't, but it is certainly an interesting concept.

1. Neanderthal ネアンデルタール人 2. Extinct 絶滅した 3. Ice age 氷河期 4. Big game 大きな獲物
5. Hunter gatherer 狩猟採集民 6. Interbreed 異種交配する 7. Unearth ~を掘り出す 8. Pollen 花粉
9. Perception 知覚 10. Dimwitted ばかな 11. Brutish 野卑な 12. Higher consciousness 意識の高まり
13. Abstract thinking 抽象的思考 14. Compassion 慈悲心 15. Mourn 嘆く 16. Scavenger 腐食動物

World records



This one isn't technically¹ a "world record", but I thought I would use it because I was talking to Alex about it the other day. In October of last year, Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya was the first human ever to run a marathon (42.195km) in under 2 hours. He crossed the finish line in 1 hour 59 minutes and 40 seconds. If any of you have ever run farther than 10km, you know how amazing that is. He was travelling at about 21kmph. I challenge any of you to beat that on a bicycle! However, it will not count as a world record because he had special pacemakers and the truck carrying the clock projected a laser line on to the road in front of him, so he knew at what speed he needed to run.

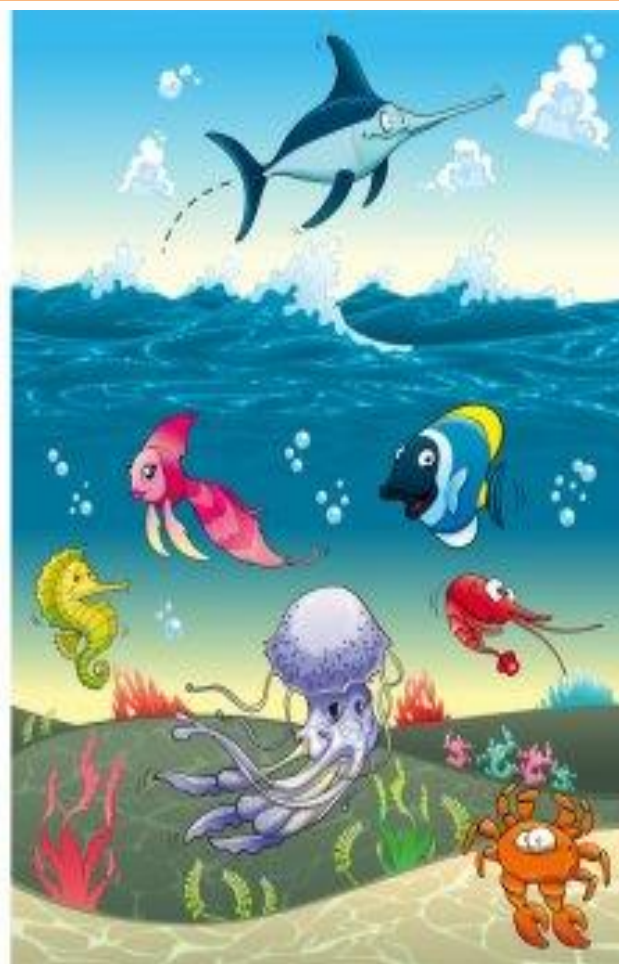
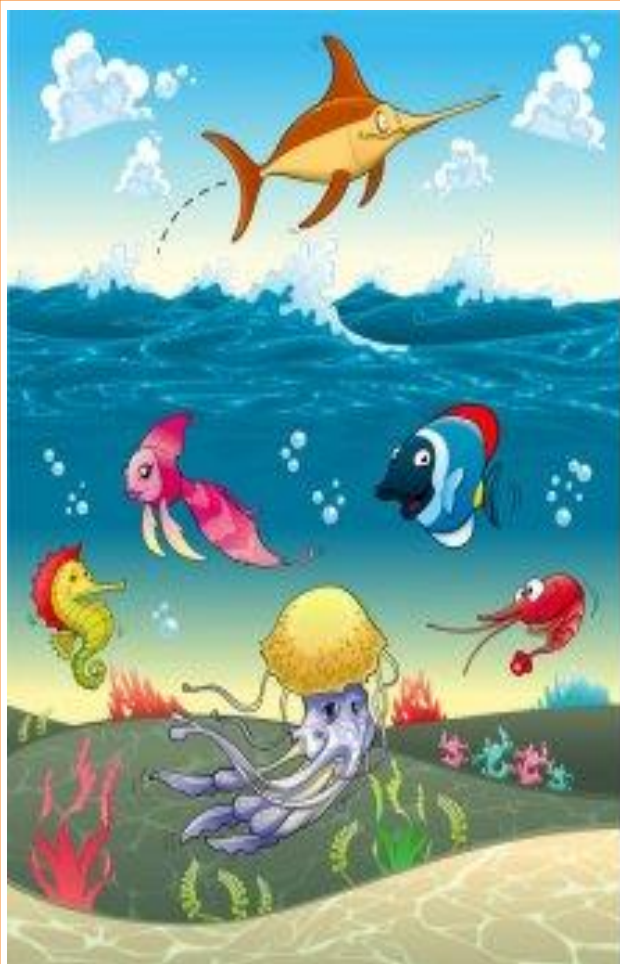
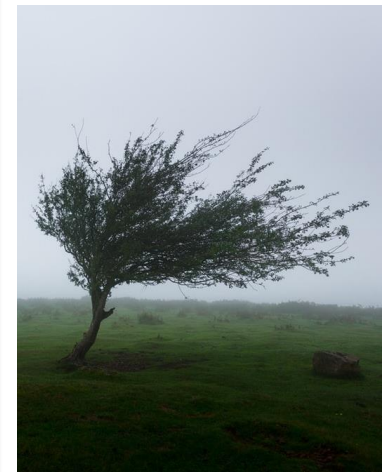
Something Big and Small

Do you know what the biggest plane in the world is? It is the Antonov-225, made in Russia. It can weigh up to 640 tons when it flies, depending on the cargo² it is carrying. It has 32 wheels and is sometimes used to carry space shuttles to launch altitude³. It has 6 engines. So, what is the world's smallest aircraft? Well, that would be some kind of drone, so I am going to talk about the world's smallest manned aircraft⁴. That would be the Bede BD-5. It weighs 160kg and it can hold one person. It is a kit that you can build at home. Do you fancy trying⁵? I wouldn't mind having⁶ my own small aircraft. I could fly to and from school every day. Unfortunately, there are only about 100 of these aircraft in the world because the Bede company went bankrupt⁷ and wasn't able to ship all of the orders.



Why do we...

... have wind? Some people love the wind because it helps them: sailboats, wind turbines, planes. Some people hate the wind because it makes it difficult to move. Whether you love it or hate it, have you ever wondered why we have wind? What is it? Where does it come from? Well, wind is obviously moving air. It is moving from an area of high pressure⁸ to an area of low pressure. So, why do we have high and low pressure? When air warms, it rises, leading to low pressure at ground level. When the air cools it sinks, leading to high pressure at ground level. When the pressure changes the air moves, causing wind. The level of the pressure corresponds¹⁰ to the strength of the wind.



Spot the difference – 10 differences

1.Technically 厳密には～が。 2.Cargo 積み物 3.Launch altitude 打ち上げ高度 4.Manned aircraft 有人機 5.Fancy ...ing～をするのはどうですか? 6.Wouldn't mind ...ing～をするのは悪くない 7.Bankrupt 破産者 8.Pressure 圧力 9.Correspond to～に対応する