



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Bringing a Neanderthal to Life

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Description

This initial practice problem was part of a [course on problem based learning \(PBL\) using fractious problems](#). It asks students to consider research that would use the Neanderthal genome to bring a Neanderthal to life. Students were asked to apply six skills in analyzing and devising policy resolutions for the problems and to apply PBL skills in doing so.

Body

Practice Problem

Examining a fully analyzed Neanderthal genome might illuminate some of the genetic differences between Neanderthals and modern humans and their significance. But what if scientific curiosity extended to attempts — potentially successful — to bring a Neanderthal to life?

You are staffers for a senator in the state legislature who has heard that bringing a Neanderthal to life might be possible and that there are researchers within the state

who are contemplating joining a research team to attempt the feat. These attempts, and, if the attempts were successful, the birth of a Neanderthal might occur within the state. The senator has asked you to prepare a presentation for her and fellow members of the state senate's committee on scientific research and innovation.

She asks you to include in your presentation your findings about the current status of research on the Neanderthal genome and on the possibility of bringing a Neanderthal to life; the ethical and policy issues that attempts, including successful and unsuccessful attempts, would present; and your assessment of how these issues ought to be resolved.

Notes

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Use of Materials on the OEC

Resource Type

Open-ended scenario

Parent Collection

Problem Based Learning (PBL) Fractious Problem Case Assignments

Topics

Communicating Science and Engineering
Emerging Technologies

Ethics and Society
Governance
Public Well-being
Risk
Social Responsibility

Discipline(s)

Genetics and Genomics
Life and Environmental Sciences
Research Ethics