

THE DATING GAME: A CASE STUDY IN HUMAN EVOLUTION

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“Lights ... cameras ... action!”

“Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to ‘The Dating Game,’ the only game show that uses carbon-14 to date its contestants! But, seriously folks, thanks to a generous grant from the Time Travel Emporium we have searched all of human evolution for the best and brightest contestants. And now let’s meet our lucky bachelorette!”

A short slender woman steps into the spotlight and waves to the audience before taking her seat on stage.

“Meet Lucy Simmins, an accountant from West Haven, Connecticut, and a graduate of Bowling Green University. Lucy enjoys reading, sky diving, and anthropology.”

(Drumroll)

“And now lets bring out our lucky bachelors! A *Homo sapiens*, *Australopithecus africanus*, and *Homo erectus*. Now, as you know, our bachelorette gets to ask the bachelors 10 questions in order to determine what type of hominid each of them is and which would make the best mate. In order to make this process more difficult, Lucy will be unable to see the bachelors, but will have to rely on their answers and her understanding of human evolution to make her decision. Now let’s meet our lucky bachelors!”

“Bachelor number 1 is a vegetarian from Southern Africa. He enjoys nature and sleeping under the stars. He says his goal in life is to become the dominant male. Bachelor number 2 is a hunter-gatherer from the savannas of South East Africa. He enjoys hanging out with his friends and relaxing by the fire. His goal in life is to master flint knapping and meet the right woman. Bachelor number 3 is a chief from Kadur Israel who likes to paint caves in his spare time. He enjoys the finer things in life and the occasional barbecued mountain goat. His goal in life is to have as many children as possible. And, now, let’s begin!”

Lucy takes out her notebook and begins by asking her first question:

“Bachelor number one, you invite me over for a romantic dinner under the stars, what would you serve?”

“Well, I might start off with a nice green salad and some juicy roots—whatever is in season. Then, I’d top it off with lots of soft ripe fruit!”

“Bachelor number two?”

“Soft fruit and leaves aren’t bad for a start, but when I really want to impress a woman, I tempt her with nuts, plants, small game, and rich marrow.”

“Bachelor number three?”

“I can make a roast fish that will knock your socks off!”

“Bachelor number two, it’s a cold September night and I’m getting the chills, how would you keep us warm?”

“I’d build us a nice cozy fire.”

“Bachelor number one?”

“Who needs a fire when you live in Africa? Besides, that’s what we have fur for.”

“Bachelor number three?”

“We would be living in a beautiful wind-proof cave, snuggled under blankets around a warm cozy fire.”

“Bachelor number three, I like a man that’s not afraid to express his feelings. How would you tell me you love me?”

“Honey, I’d live with you and care for our kids and sing love songs to you every morning.”

“Bachelor number one?”

“Well, I’d probably bring you tasty morsels of anything I found scavenging and grunt in a masculine, yet sensitive, way.”

“Bachelor number two?”

“I would call you ‘my flower’ because you are as beautiful as a summer flower.”

“Bachelor number two, if you could invent anything, what would it be?”

“Hmmm. Invent? Like something different? I don’t know, I’m a pretty conservative kind of guy.”

“Bachelor number one?”

“Same here, I wouldn’t even know where to start, although a leopard detector would be pretty handy.”

“Bachelor number three?”

“Well, ‘Invention’ is my middle name!”

“I thought it was Francis....”

“Shut up or you’ll be leopard food! Oh, um, sorry, uh, I would invent a better tool to make clothes, perhaps a thin blade with a hole for string....”

“Bachelor number one, we’re out on a date when suddenly you get the scary feeling that something is watching you in the grass, what would you do?”

“I’d look around, smell the air. Luckily we’d probably be with a large group of hominids. If there were any trees we would probably run for them, but if not, shouting and throwing sticks as a group works—sometimes. That’s why a leopard detector would be so handy.”

“Bachelor number two?”

“Well, that depends.... Are we being stalked by an animal or a rival hominid? Either way, a good hand ax is a pretty effective equalizer.”

“Bachelor number three?”

“It would have to be an animal, cause nobody messes with me! I’d call out the alarm and grab my spear and knife.”

“Bachelor number one, what’s your favorite movie?”

“Well, I would have to say ‘Planet of the Apes....’ Dr. Sayes is hot!”

“Bachelor number two?”

“Hmmm, ‘Beavis and Butthead Do America.’ I can definitely relate to their fascination with fire.”

“Bachelor number three?”

“Oh, definitely ‘Clan of the Cave Bear,’ although they got a little carried away with those Neanderthals.”

“Bachelor number one, how would you describe your looks?”

“Well, I’m short and lanky—almost 4 foot 5—with lots of curly black hair, and slim—almost 100 pounds—with a broad smiling face and strong shoulders and arms to hold you with.”

“Bachelor number two?”

“I’m kind of on the tall side, 5 foot 5, with a modern-build strong face. I’ve got that kind of heavy brooding brow that women go for and strong jaws.”

“Bachelor number three?”

“I’m tall and strong with a modern build, curly black hair and gorgeous blue-gray eyes. Put me in a suit and I’d fit right in on Fifth Avenue.”

“I need someone I can relate to intellectually as well as physically. Bachelor number one, how big is your brain?”

“Well, um, not too big, about 420 to 500 cc but, hey, who needs intelligence when you have instincts like these!”

“Bachelor number two?”

“Who wants a monkey when you can have a brilliant intellectual like me? I’ve got twice the brain power and modesty to boot!”

“Hey that’s not fair—you know bigger isn’t always better! Brains are expensive things. Did you know that 20 percent of the modern diet feeds the brain alone! Not that it does you much good in a football game.”

“Bachelor number one, be quiet, your turn is over. Bachelor number three?”

“Man cannot live on bread alone! Compared to these two buffoons, I’m an Einstein—1400 cc of sheer woman-wooing, catfish-catching, tool-training, bear-busting brain weight!”

“Bachelor number three, if I chose you, what time range would we live in?”

“Well, any time range from about 100,000 to the present, although we could go even further back to about 500,000 if you don’t mind living with my distant ancestors in Africa. Personally, I like around 40,000 years ago Israel.”

“Bachelor number two?”

“If you chose me we’d have a much bigger time range to choose from: 1.5 million to 200,000 years ago.”

“Bachelor number one?”

“Who wants to hang around with these guys when you can see how it all started? Back when evolution was an adventure and men were real men! Not these stone-carrying wimps! We’d travel back to 3.3 to 2.5 million years ago and relive the glory days of human evolution!”

“Bachelor number two, I like a man that knows how to use his hands—what tool-making skills do you have?”

“Funny you should ask, I’ve got quite a reputation around here for my hand axes and scrapers.”

“Bachelor number one?”

“Uh...well, I like to use whatever is handy, a broken stick, bone or sharp rock, but at least you’ll never have to worry about which fork to use at the dinner table!”

“Bachelor number three?”

“I’ve been trained in wood and bone working in addition to stone, and I like to use a lot of innovation when I create my spearheads, knives and tools.”

(Cue music)

“Well, it’s time for our commercial break, but don’t go away! When we come back, our lovely bachelorette will attempt to name each bachelor’s hominid type before choosing her lucky mate! Can you guess the hominids? Who would you choose? Stay tuned for the dramatic ending of The Dating Game!”

Can you guess the hominids? Who do you think would make the best mate?

Homework

Students will be staging their own “Dating Game” show during the next class period. You will break up into groups. Each group will be assigned a particular role. One group will represent the bachelorette, one of the smaller groups will be the bachelors, and the rest will represent the TV audience.

All students must fill out a contestant application form to be turned in for a grade at the end of class.

The Bachelorette’s Group

(In addition to the contestant applications) is responsible for writing 10 game show questions that will give the students clues as to each bachelors’ hominid type and mate potential.

The Bachelors

Each bachelor is responsible for filling out a contestant application form matching his hominid type as well as a short one-paragraph introduction for the host, including: occupation, location, hobbies and main goal or dream.

Bachelors should not reveal which hominid type they are representing, as students will have to figure that out from the show.

The Rest of the Groups

All other groups will play the part of the TV audience. Each group is responsible for filling out the contestant application forms for the hominids written on the board, as well as any additional hominids assigned. This way each group will have a complete set of hominid profiles to share.



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