

Answers notes and references: for Hunter-Gatherer quiz

The answers below are drawn from a synthesis of the social behaviour of Hunter-Gatherer groups in Europe, Africa and Asia. These groups most likely reflect the behaviour of humans in Europe before farming.

Question...

- 1) (**Less than us**) Hunter-Gathers work, on average, 3.5 hours a day. The day after a hunt or successful gathering expedition there may be only a few minutes work to do. When moving camp or hunting there may be 7-10 hours work. The rest of their time is spent: talking, making music, dancing, playing games etc.
- 2) (**Healthier**) Generally 80% of their diet is fresh vegetables, 20% cooked meat. It is the diet for which our bodies have evolved and therefore is the one that makes us healthiest.
- 3) (**Kind, caring and supportive**) Hunter-Gatherers depend on each other as co-operation supports survival. Please refer to the document: Hunter-Gatherer problem solving..

><http://palaeoquest.com/documents/problem-solvingskills.htm><

- 4) (**Never go to school, never get told off and never get jobs to do**) Hunter-Gatherer groups have no system of discipline or seniority. No-one teaches anything as to be a teacher implies some *superiority* – which is universally shunned. No child is told off for the same reason, though their behaviour may be gently modified using humour and warmth. Responsible behaviour is encouraged through trust and interdependence.
- 5) (**Increase the variety of life around them**) Hunter-Gatherers enrich the areas in which they live by actively managing their environment. For instance they may burn away trees and shrubs when the over-growth of these endangers diversity. Likewise they may burn back old grass to encourage new growth etc. Their hunting skills, tactics and weapons ensure that the species around them are maintained at the healthiest and most vigorous level. The old, weak and sick are taken leaving the healthiest animals to breed. Where a species is endangered hunting will cease until numbers return. If Hunter-Gatherers leave an area the diversity of plants, the diversity and numbers of grazing animals and even predators drop.
- 6) (**Only what they can carry easily**) Frequently moving from camp to camp, sometimes over challenging terrain means carrying very little. A single set of clothes, some jewellery, a small musical instrument, collecting and carrying bags, digging sticks and some hunting weapons are the usual possessions. Both men and women may be carrying young children and need to be able to move freely at a moments notice if predators attack.
- 7) (**More intelligent than us**) Natural selection promotes problem-solving in Hunter-Gatherers. In our over-populated culture, natural selection promotes resistance to disease*.

* Jared Diamond (1997) Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies