

Ejercicios resueltos > Write in your own words

A relative difference

Palaeontologists have been digging in Africa's sands in search of the missing link between humans and primates. Discovery this year of a fossil skull could be the first evidence of an enormous diversity of ape-like, human-like creatures that existed from five to ten million years ago. Perhaps, humans and chimpanzees might be the only survivors of an ancient burst of evolutionary activity.

Actually, a mere 2% of our genes separate us from two species of chimpanzees: at some point, as human beings have made our way up the evolutionary scale, becoming taller and less hairy as we travelled, we probably separated from our closest relatives. Nevertheless, the longer scientists study the daily existence of primates, their family life and their complex societies, the more it seems obvious that we are, in fact, the third chimpanzee. This similarity has led chimp expert Dr Jane Goodall to call for human rights to be extended to chimpanzees.

In his book "What It Means To Be 98% Chimpanzee", anthropologist Jonathan Marks argues that the 2% gene difference gave humans the great leap forward of language, separating us significantly from monkeys. That seemingly small amount of genetic matter transported us from trees to urban jungle and transformed us from exhibits into zookeepers, but it does not seem to prevent us from literally killing our "cousins": development and destruction of their natural habitats, along with commercial hunting for food, have cut their numbers from two million chimpanzees at the turn of the last century to less than one-tenth of that now.

In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions.

a) Is there any proof that humans and monkeys have common ancestors?

A fossil skull has been found this year that may prove that humans and chimpanzees are the only survivors of a great diversity of ape-like, human-like creatures that lived more than five million years ago. This discovery and the fact that only 2% of our genes separate us from the chimpanzee prove that humans and monkeys have common ancestors.

Ayuda: "may prove": podría demostrar; "human-like": parecido a los humanos.

b) What is the "relative difference" between humans and primates and what are its consequences?

The most important difference has been the development of language in humans that has had important consequences in our lifestyle.

Ayuda: "development of language": desarrollo del lenguaje.