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BIG QUESTIONS

0:05–0:33

HOW DID WE
GET HERE?

Big History is always defined by big questions. That's what makes it big. It's not just the scale that we work on, but the questions are huge. And so the biggest question that we ask is, "So how did we get here?" And the "we" is the collective we. How did we as human beings arrive to this point in time, and what were the major turning points along that journey?

0:33–1:04

FUNDAMENTAL
QUESTIONS

Honestly, when I start teaching the story of life on Earth, I start with the fundamental questions:

- Where did life originate? Don't know.
- When did life originate? Don't know, but really early.
- How did life originate? Not a freaking clue.

But here's what we do know and here's what we can hypothesize based on what we know. And I really, really enjoy bringing hot-off-the-press items. "Look, here's something that was just discovered. This has totally changed our perspective of everything." I mean, there's been some great ones for the origins of the human race.

For example, there was, "Hey, we just realized that human beings actually integrated with Neanderthals." And I think it actually brings it alive because there are always hot-off-the-press items that are fundamentally changing everything about what we know. It's brilliant.

The message that Big History gives to students is, yes, the big questions about what it means to be human. Do we live at a sort of turning point in human or planetary history? Which I believe we do. What's my place in the cosmos? We're saying, in effect, "These are great questions. "We can't solve them for you, but modern science can help you think seriously and deeply and richly about these questions."

1:04–1:24

HOT-OFF-THE-PRESS

1:24–1:54

THINK DEEPLY ABOUT
THESE QUESTIONS