

★ **Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art**

**Rebecca Wragg Sykes**

Bloomsbury (Jun 14, 2022)

Softcover \$18.00 (400pp)

978-1-4729-3747-6

Stereotypes of brutish, unintelligent Neanderthals are pulverized by Rebecca Wragg Sykes in her tender, absorbing profile of our hominin cousins. *Kindred* is a comprehensive review of the most up-to-date theories and technological advances in paleoanthropology and archaeology, and a fascinating tour of what is now known about the sophisticated Neanderthal culture.

In the past few decades, scientists have been able to glean data from microscopic evidence, spatial relationships between artifacts, and even DNA harvested from fossilized dental plaque. Scientists can also now harvest new information from Neanderthal sites excavated in Victorian times, so there is an abundance of fresh data and theories. Sykes relays these knowledgeable, approachable, and even playful prose.

Chapters uncover aspects of Neanderthal life, including medicine, impressive lithic technology, art, social relationships, and burial practices. Each section is introduced with an evocative illustration and a dreamy epigraph interpreting how a Neanderthal person might feel about the featured subject, the most poignant of which is a mother burying a dead child. These introductions are illuminating, dramatic counterpoints to the denser, more scholarly content.

This layering of the latest findings reveals a Neanderthal society of humans who lived physically demanding, nomadic lives over hundreds of thousands of years of shifting climate throughout Eurasia, often interacting with our more recent *Homo sapiens* ancestors. Though Neanderthals went extinct as a separate species, some of their genes live on in today's population—responsible for physical and intellectual characteristics ranging from the propensity toward diabetes, regulation of body clocks and thermal efficiency, and even math skills.

The sparkling conclusion synthesizes all of these spectacular recent findings and offers thoughtful lessons from Neanderthals for navigating contemporary challenges like climate change and racial and social inequity. *Kindred* interprets an impressive amount of scholarship; it is an illuminating recreation of Neanderthal culture.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (March / April 2022)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*