

Read the passage carefully. Then answer the questions using clues and evidence from the text.

Giant Ape's Extinction: What Fossils Reveal



Deep within a cave system in southern China, a team of paleontologists unearthed a remarkable discovery: fossilized remains of a previously unknown species of giant ape. Dated to approximately 250,000 years ago, these ancient bones offer a rare glimpse into a time when colossal primates roamed the Earth. The initial find included several large teeth and fragments of a jawbone, suggesting an animal far grander than any ape alive today. The scientists carefully extracted the fossils, knowing each piece held vital clues about this mysterious creature.



By studying the size and shape of the molars, researchers inferred that this ape, which they named *Gigantopithecus sinensis*, likely had a diet rich in tough plant material, such as bamboo and fibrous fruits. The robust jawbone indicated powerful chewing muscles, necessary for grinding down such vegetation. Comparing these fossils to modern ape skeletons, the team estimated that *Gigantopithecus sinensis* stood over 10 feet tall and weighed more than 600 pounds, making it the largest ape species ever known.

The geological layers surrounding the fossils provided additional information. Evidence showed that the region experienced significant climate shifts around 250,000 years ago. Lush, dense forests, which were the ape's primary habitat and food source, began to shrink and fragment. This environmental change would have made it increasingly difficult for a creature of such immense size and specialized diet to find enough food to survive.

The disappearance of *Gigantopithecus sinensis* coincides with these dramatic changes in its environment. Scientists hypothesize that its slow reproductive rate, combined with its



reliance on specific, dwindling food sources, made it particularly vulnerable. Unlike smaller, more adaptable creatures that could switch diets or move to new areas, this giant ape faced a unique challenge. Its extinction serves as a powerful reminder of how sensitive even the largest species can be to ecological shifts.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- (1) **Based on the passage, what can you conclude about the diet of *Gigantopithecus sinensis*?**
- (A) It mainly ate meat from smaller animals.
 - (B) It had a specialized diet of tough plants like bamboo and fibrous fruits.
 - (C) It ate a wide variety of foods, including both plants and animals.
 - (D) Its diet is still completely unknown to scientists.
- (2) **What does the passage suggest about why *Gigantopithecus sinensis* went extinct?**
- (A) It was hunted to extinction by early humans.
 - (B) It could not adapt to changes in its forest habitat and food supply.
 - (C) A massive disease wiped out the entire species quickly.
 - (D) It migrated to a different continent and evolved into a new species.
- (3) **The author mentions the 'robust jawbone' most likely to show that...**
- (A) the ape had a very small head compared to its body.
 - (B) the ape was able to defend itself fiercely against predators.
 - (C) the ape possessed powerful chewing muscles for its tough diet.



(D) the fossil was well-preserved because of its strong structure.

(4) Which statement is NOT well-supported by evidence from the passage?

(A) *Gigantopithecus sinensis* was larger than any modern ape.

(B) The extinction of *Gigantopithecus sinensis* happened suddenly due to a single catastrophic event.

(C) Scientists used the ape's teeth to learn about its diet.

(D) Climate changes affected the ape's forest habitat.

(5) What clues in the passage helped you infer that *Gigantopithecus sinensis* was particularly vulnerable to environmental changes? Use at least two details from the passage to explain your reasoning.

