

## Early Peoples through the Agricultural Revolution – Outline

### I. Scientists who study prehistory

- a. Anthropologists
  - i. Study human cultures, both past and present
  - ii. Cultures are the ways that groups of people live and see the world
- b. Archeologists
  - i. Excavate the sites where human beings used to live
  - ii. Examine the artifacts (objects made by human beings) that cultures left behind
- c. Paleontologists
  - i. Study fossils
  - ii. Fossils are evidence of life preserved in rocks

### II. What is prehistory?

- a. Prehistory is everything that happened before written records ∨
  - i. Writing developed in different places at different times ∨
    - 1. This means that, technically, the dates for prehistory vary around the world ∨
      - a. Historians using the term *prehistory* are generally referring to time before the very first human writing, about 5,000 years ago (circa 3000 B.C.E.)

### III. What is the Stone Age?

- a. Although there is some overlapping in some parts of the world, prehistory is roughly equivalent to the Stone Age
- b. The dates used by historians and archaeologists typically refer to the earliest time that some turning point occurred
  - i. For example, the Sumerians of Mesopotamia developed writing thousands of years before writing was used by European tribes
  - ii. The time period when Sumerians were literate and Europeans were illiterate is considered historical as opposed to prehistorical because writing existed in the world (even though Europeans weren't using writing yet)
- c. The Stone Age is divided into two parts:
  - i. Old Stone Age – also called the Paleolithic Age
  - ii. New Stone Age – also called the Neolithic Age

### IV. The Stone Age

- a. Old Stone Age
  - i. Paleolithic Age
  - ii. 2,500,000 to 8000 BCE
  - iii. Made stone chopping tools
  - iv. Hunter-gatherers
  - v. Humans migrated across the globe
  - vi. End of the Paleolithic coincided with the end of the last ice age
  - vii. Modern human beings overlapped with *Homo erectus* and Neanderthals

- viii. Cave paintings and small carvings
- b. New Stone Age
  - i. Neolithic Age
  - ii. 8000-3000 BCE
  - iii. Humans made numerous tools, as well as jewelry, from bone, wood, stone, tusks, etc.
  - iv. Pottery
  - v. Permanent settlements
  - vi. Agriculture (farming)
  - vii. Animal domestication
  - viii. Modern human beings left as the only hominids on the planet

## V. The last ice age

- a. Humans (nomadic hunter-gatherers) spread out across the globe (in bands of 25-70 people) in search of game and edible plants
  - i. The ice created a bridge between what we now call Siberia and Alaska
  - ii. Humans crossed this bridge (called Beringia) to North America and spread to South America very quickly
- b. The ice age ended about 10,000 years ago (circa 8000 BCE), leaving humans living all over the world
  - i. The ice bridge (Beringia) between Siberia and Alaska melted, leaving humans in the Americas separated from the rest of the world
- c. Temperatures increased, creating a longer growing season
  - i. The ice receded, making the land drier and better for growing plants
  - ii. During the ice age, a lot of large game was hunted to extinction (like wholly mammoths)
  - iii. The invention of farming allowed people to maintain a steady food supply

## VI. The Agricultural Revolution

- a. The Agricultural Revolution is also called the Neolithic Revolution
  - i. People developed farming for the first time
- b. For generations, humans had noticed plants growing where they had spit out seeds
- c. Humans began planting seeds on purpose, which was the invention of farming
- d. The final farming method was slash-and-burn
  - i. Farmers burnt grass and trees to clear a field
  - ii. The ashes fertilized the soil
  - iii. Farmers relocated every few years after exhausting the soil
- e. People continued to hunt, returning to their farms to harvest their crops
  - i. Eventually, people built permanent homes near their farms so they could store and guard their grain
- f. Permanent homes made following game difficult
  - i. Eventually, farmers domesticated animals, such as cattle, goats, pigs, and sheep
  - ii. Animals ate farm waste while fertilizing the soil with their waste

## VII. Agriculture around the world

- a. Africa (Nile River Valley)
  - i. 5000 BCE – wheat, barley
- b. Central America and Mexico
  - i. 5000 BCE – beans, corn, squash
- c. China
  - i. 6000 BCE – millet

- ii. 5000 BCE – rice
- d. India (Indus River Valley)
  - i. 5000 BCE – cotton
- e. Iraq (Mesopotamia – Fertile Crescent)
  - i. 5000 BCE – wheat, barley
- f. Peru
  - i. 3000 BCE – tomatoes, potatoes

### VIII. **Catal Huyuk**

- a. One of the world's very first permanent settlements
  - i. Populated 7500-5700 BCE
- b. Located in what is now Turkey
- c. Population of approximately 6,500 people
  - i. 1,000 dwellings crammed together like a honeycomb
  - ii. No streets – people climbed out through ladders in their ceilings
- d. Supported by agriculture and animal domestication
  - i. Barley, peas, wheat
  - ii. Cattle, sheep
- e. Famous because it is so well-preserved
- f. Trivia fact: The oldest-known village in the world existed in Jericho (in modern-day Israel) in 9000 BCE

### IX. **Why live in a settled community?**

- a. Pros
  - i. Common culture expressed
  - ii. Mutual protection
  - iii. Near farms
  - iv. Grain and seed storage
- b. Cons
  - i. Disease spreads more rapidly among a dense population
  - ii. Grain stores were tempting to raiders
  - iii. Permanent settlements suffered from natural disasters (drought, fire, floods)

### X. **Review questions**

- a. Describe the work of three types of scientists who study prehistory.
- b. Generally, when did prehistory end and history begin?
- c. How did the Neolithic (New Stone Age) differ from the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age)?
- d. How did humans reach the Americas during the last ice age?
- e. What was life like in a settled community such as Catal Huyuk?
- f. Imagine that you are a nomadic hunter-gatherer living 5,000 years ago. Would you maintain your lifestyle, or would you start farming? Explain your answer.