

Early Cultures



Ice Ages

- Earth went through periods of extreme cold called the Ice Ages.
 - Much of Earth's water was frozen into huge sheets called glaciers, causing land that had been covered by water to appear.
- Hunters and animals walked across these natural "land bridges."
 - People crossed Beringia from Asia to the Americas.



Hunter-Gathers

- The first settlers in the Americas survived by hunting animals, called mammoths, and gathering wild plants.



The Earliest Farmers

- By 10,000 B.C., the glaciers began to melt. This caused the oceans to rise and cover the land bridges.
- People began to settle in one area and plant seeds.
 - The area had a warm climate and was rich in natural resources.



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Specialization

- Once people learned to farm, they were able to grow more food than they needed.
 - This meant people could specialize, or spend most of their time doing one kind of job. This led to the development of more complex societies.



Artifacts

- Archaeologists often learn about past civilizations by studying artifacts.
 - An artifact is an object made by people in the past.



Olmec

- From 1300 to 400 B.C., the Olmec people lived along the Gulf coast of what is now southern Mexico.
- They grew corn, beans and squash along the river.
- They used stone in sculpture and architecture.
- They are known for creating a calendar.



The Maya

- The Maya began to develop a complex culture around 300 B.C. in what is now southern Mexico and Guatemala.
- Corn (maize) was the main source of food for the Maya.
- The Mayan had written records and invented the idea of zero.
- Mayan temples and religious centers were the largest at that time.
- The Maya traded a variety of goods within their region.
- By around A.D. 909, the Mayan civilization disappeared due to food shortages and wars.



The Mound Builders

- Adena- settled along the Ohio River between 800 B.C. and 100 B.C.
- Hopewell- settled along the Ohio River between 100 B.C. to A.D. 500
- Cahokia- lived along the Mississippi River around A.D. 1000.
- Mounds were used for religious purposes.



Anasazi

- The Anasazi lived in an area known as the Four Corners from about — A.D. 200 to 1300.
 - The area is called the Four Corners because Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona all meet there.
- They developed villages beneath rock cliffs, on the sides of canyons, and on the tops of tall, flat hills or mesas.
- The Anasazi were able to farm in the desert by using irrigation to water their crops.
 - Irrigation is a method by which water is brought into dry areas.



Comprehension Questions

1. Why did land bridges form in the north during the Ice Age?
2. What was Beringia?
3. In what ways did farming and trade lead to the start of civilization?
4. In what ways were the Olmec and Maya similar?
5. How were the Mound Builders and Anasazi different?

