

# Section

# 1

## The Birth of Civilization

### Read to Discover

1. What discoveries have scientists made about life in prehistoric times?
2. What are the four characteristics of civilization?
3. Where were the first civilizations located?

### Define

hominid  
prehistory  
nomads  
land bridges  
irrigation

division of labor  
history

### WHY IT MATTERS

Scientists continue to uncover clues about how ancient people lived. Use [CNNfyi.com](http://CNNfyi.com) or other **current events** sources to learn about recent discoveries. Record your findings in your journal.



Hominid skeleton from about 3 million years ago

## Prehistory

In the late 1970s in Tanzania, a country in East Africa, scientist Mary Leakey discovered parts of a skeleton dating back millions of years. She believed the bones were those of a **hominid**, an early human-like creature. Scientists use the remains of bodies and other objects they have found to make educated guesses about hominid life. For example, scientists can tell that hominids stood upright and used primitive tools made of stone.

The period during which hominids and even early humans lived is called **prehistory**. This means that no written records were made for historians to examine. The period of prehistory in which stone tools were used is called the Stone Age. It began about 2.5 million years ago and lasted for more than 2 million years.



Scientists carefully unearth objects in "digs" such as this one.

**Interpreting the Visual Record** What kinds of objects might these scientists be looking for?



This cave painting in Lascaux, France, was made before the invention of writing. People may have drawn on cave walls to express ideas.



#### internet connect

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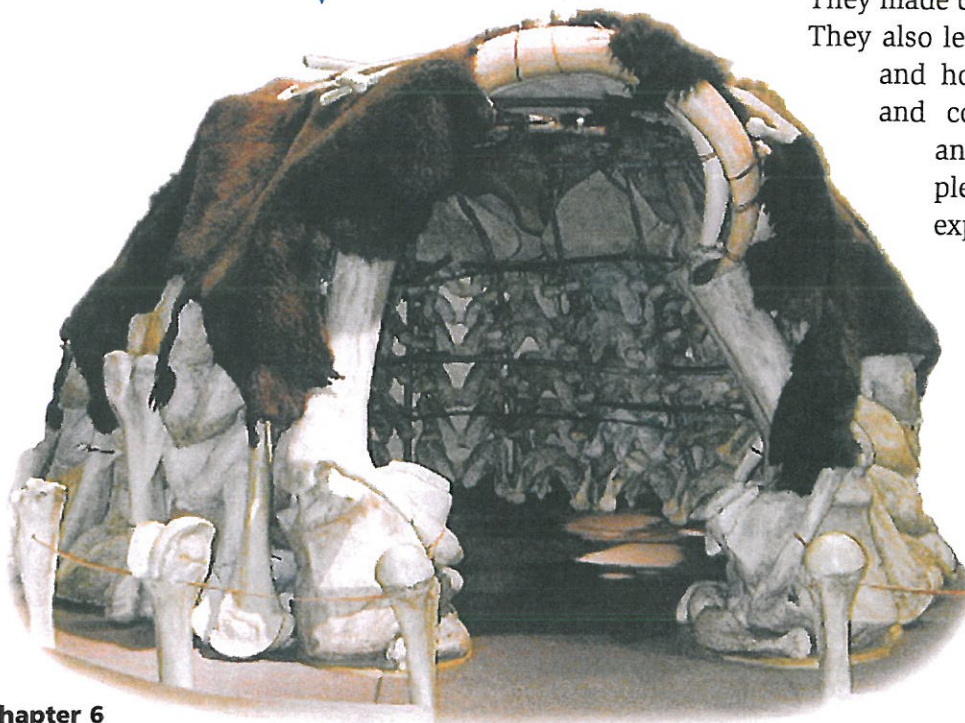
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FOR: Web sites about the ancient world



In northeastern Europe, early humans used the bones of giant mammoths to build shelters similar to this museum model.

**Interpreting the Visual Record** Why did people use bones to build a shelter instead of materials such as wood or stone?



**The First Humans** Early humans that looked like modern people probably appeared during the Stone Age between 100,000 and 400,000 years ago. These first humans, called *Homo sapiens*, may have first lived in Africa. They were **nomads** who moved from place to place in search of food. They lived on seeds, fruits, nuts, and other plants that they gathered. In time they also began to hunt small animals.

**Migration** Within the last 1.7 million years, Earth has gone through several periods of very cold weather. Together these periods are known as the Ice Age. During each period, large parts of Earth's surface were covered with ice. Sea levels dropped, leaving strips of dry land called **land bridges** between continents. One such land bridge connected the eastern part of Asia with what is now Alaska. Scientists think that early humans and animals migrated from Africa, into Asia, and across the land bridge onto the North American continent. Over time, humans spread to all parts of the world.

**Later Developments** In time *Homo sapiens* began to make more advanced tools. They were able to hunt larger animals with spears.

They made clothes from animal skins. They also learned how to control fire and how to use it for warmth and cooking. Between 37,000 and 27,000 years ago, people began to create art to express their ideas. Carved ivory figures show that some groups had time for activities besides hunting and tool making. Beautiful paintings found on the walls of caves in France and Spain show graceful, elegant animals such as bison, bulls, and horses.



Later, between 10,000 and 5,500 years ago, people learned to make sharper tools by grinding and polishing stone. With better tools, people developed better methods of hunting. They made bows and arrows, which made hunting easier. They shaped fishhooks and harpoons from bones and antlers. People hollowed out logs to make canoes to fish in deep water and to cross rivers. Also around this time, people tamed the dog. Dogs helped people hunt. They may also have warned people if wild animals or strangers were approaching.

In the late Stone Age people learned to practice agriculture. We do not know why people made the change from gathering grains and other plants to growing them, but life changed drastically when they did. Instead of moving from place to place to hunt animals and gather food that grew wild, people began to stay in one place. They became farmers. People also domesticated animals such as cattle and sheep. That means people tamed animals that had been living wild.

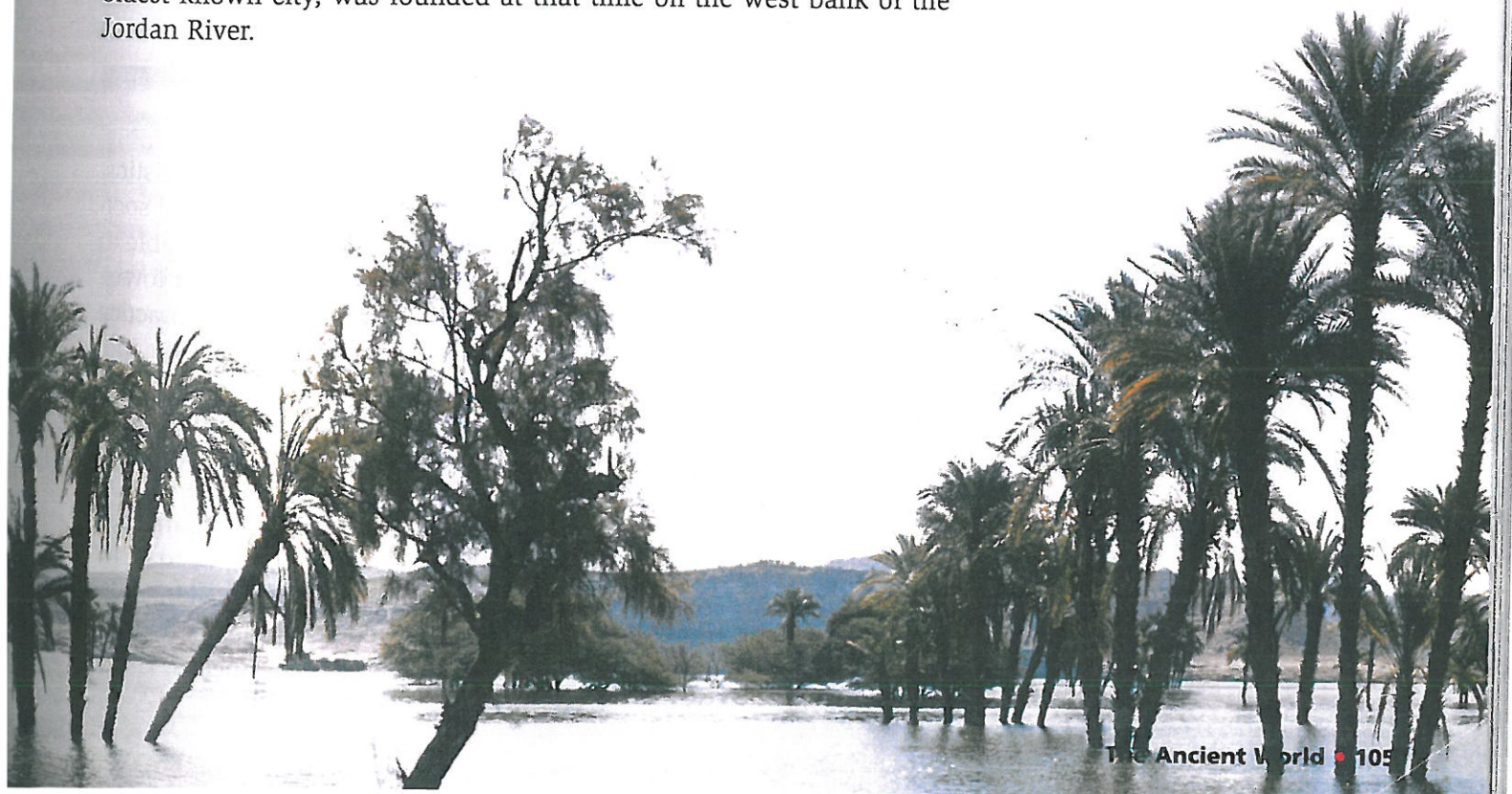
**The Importance of Agriculture** Agriculture changed the ways in which people interacted with their environment. To grow food, people had to find ways to control and change their environment. They cleared forested areas to make room for fields. They invented **irrigation** systems, digging ditches and canals to move water from rivers to fields where crops grew.

Agriculture also changed the ways in which people interacted with each other. Because people who farmed stayed in one place, they began to live in larger groups and form societies. By about 9000 B.C., people began to live in permanent settlements and villages. Because farming made food more plentiful, populations increased. Small villages eventually grew into cities. In towns and cities, people shared new ideas and methods of doing things. Historians think that the first cities may have been founded more than 10,000 years ago. Jericho, the world's oldest known city, was founded at that time on the west bank of the Jordan River.



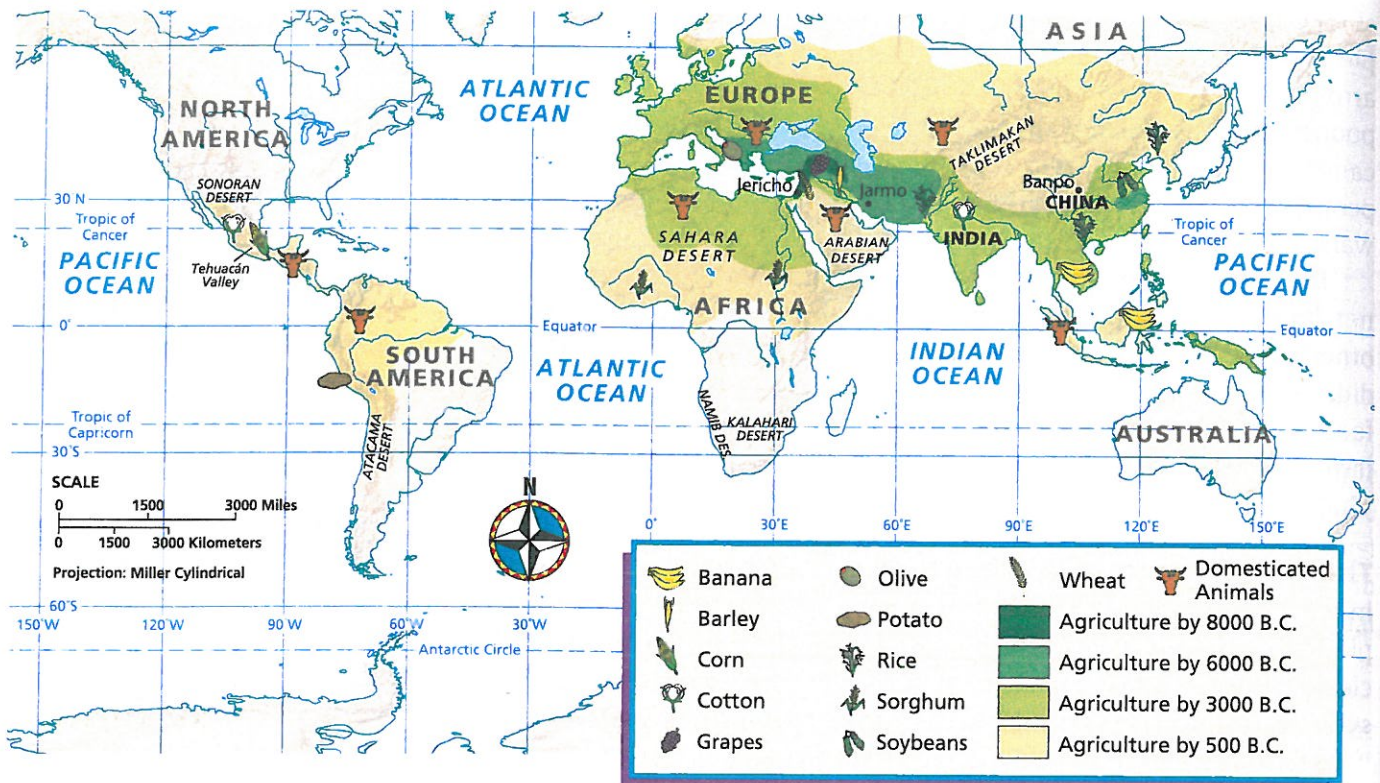
**T**he dog was the first animal that humans tamed. Dogs and people have been companions for thousands of years. Some Stone Age people were even buried with their dogs.

Before people developed irrigation they depended on yearly floods of rivers such as the Nile to water fields.





## Emergence of Agriculture



The practice of agriculture spread over a period of thousands of years.

**Interpreting the Map** Where was agriculture first developed?

Because of the ways it changed people's lives, the development of agriculture was enormously important. In fact, learning how to grow food prepared the way for a new chapter in the story of human life—the story of civilization.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Summarizing* How did agriculture change the ways in which people lived?



People made stone and ivory tools during the Stone Age.

## The Beginnings of Civilization

Historians describe civilization as having four basic characteristics. First, a civilization is made up of people who live in an organized society, not simply as a loosely connected group. Second, people are able to produce more food than they need to survive. Third, they live in towns or cities with some form of government. And fourth, they practice **division of labor**. This means that each person performs a specific job.

**Agriculture and Civilization** How did the development of agriculture affect the growth of civilization? Before agriculture, people spent almost all of their time simply finding food. When people were able to grow their own food, they could produce more than they needed to survive. This meant that some people did not have to grow food at all. They had time to develop other skills, such as making pottery, cloth, and other goods. These people could trade the goods they produced and the services they offered for food or other needs.