

Migration to the Americas

Essential Question

How did agriculture change the lives of early people?

Reading Guide

Content Vocabulary

archaeology (p. 7) maize (p. 9)
 artifact (p. 7) carbon dating (p. 9)
 nomad (p. 8) culture (p. 9)
 migration (p. 8)

Academic Vocabulary

source (p. 8) estimate (p. 9)

Key People and Events

Ice Age (p. 7)

Reading Strategy

Taking Notes As you read, identify reasons early peoples migrated from place to place.

Reasons Early Peoples Migrated

- 1.
- 2.

American Diary

In 1974 at Meadowcroft, Pennsylvania, archaeologist James Adovasio and his team made an amazing discovery. Digging through soil and rock, they found fire pits, bones, shells, and stone tools. This evidence seemed to show that humans had been living there more than 14,000 years ago. For Adovasio, this "meant that people had been . . . in western Pennsylvania some four thousand years before any human being was supposed to have set foot anywhere in this hemisphere."

—from *The First Americans*

The Journey From Asia

Main Idea The first Americans were hunters and gatherers who came from Asia and spread throughout the Americas.

History and You Do you know if any prehistoric mammals, such as giant woolly mammoths or saber-toothed tigers, lived in your area? Read to find out why early peoples migrated to the Americas.

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Recent archaeological finds such as those in Meadowcroft suggest that the first Americans arrived thousands of years ago, much earlier than once believed. By A.D. 1500, millions of Native Americans, belonging to more than 2,000 different groups, lived on the two continents of North America and South America.

When Europeans arrived in the Americas in the late 1400s, they found Native Americans living there. The Europeans wondered where these peoples had come from and how they happened to settle in the Americas. Some believed the Native Americans had come from Atlantis, an island that supposedly sank beneath the Atlantic Ocean.

Modern scientists are still trying to determine how the first people came to the Americas. Experts in **archaeology**, the study of ancient peoples, continue to piece together the story of the first Americans.

Archaeologists learn about the past from **artifacts**—the tools, weapons, baskets, and carvings of early peoples. Their discoveries show that many early peoples may have come across a land that later sank into the sea. This land was not the mythical Atlantis, however, but a strip of land called Beringia that once joined Asia and the Americas.

Crossing the Land Bridge

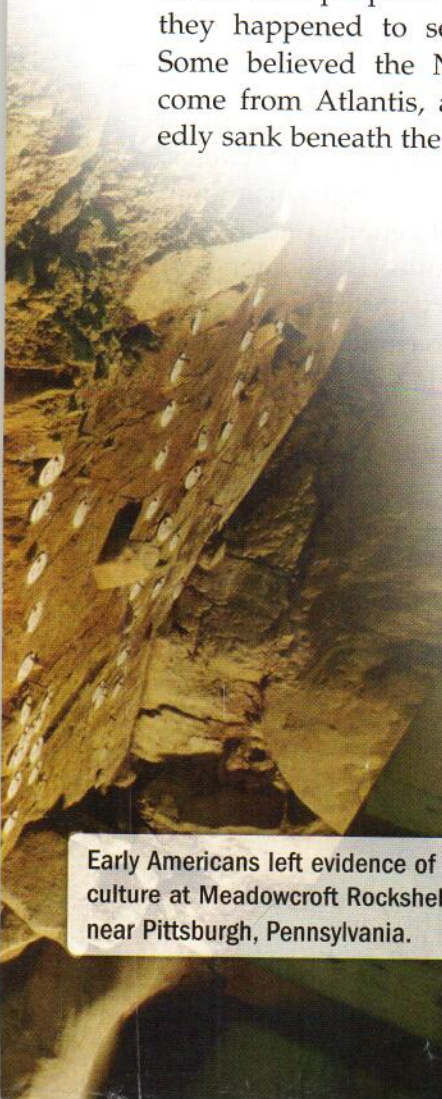
During its long history, Earth has gone through several ice ages. These are periods of extreme cold. Huge ice sheets, or glaciers, formed and covered much of Earth in the ice ages. The most recent **Ice Age** began 100,000 years ago and ended about 12,000 years ago. The lower sea level during this period exposed a strip of land that would have run from Siberia in northeastern Asia to what is now Alaska, the westernmost part of the Americas. That land bridge, Beringia, now lies under the Bering Strait.

If You Were There Early Toolmakers

A Way to Survive As an early American, you moved from place to place in search of food and shelter. One of your most important advances was creating tools, which made hunting, gathering, building shelter, and making clothing much easier. You may have made tools from bone or antler. Most tools were made from stone. As technology advanced, you began making specific tools, such as food choppers, meat scrapers, and spear points.

Antler or bone tool found at Meadowcroft ▼

◀ Spear point from Meadowcroft



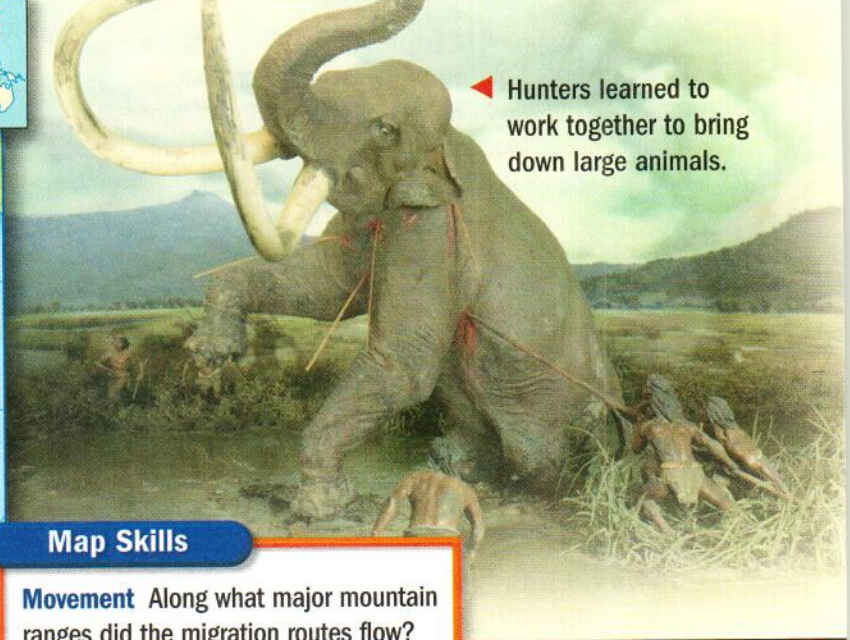
Early Americans left evidence of their culture at Meadowcroft Rockshelter, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Critical Thinking

Making Inferences Why do you think you would have chosen stones to make tools?



◀ Prehistoric people may have come over the Bering Land Bridge. But they might also have arrived by boat, sailing along the eastern and western coasts of the Americas.



◀ Hunters learned to work together to bring down large animals.

Map Skills

Movement Along what major mountain ranges did the migration routes flow?

Searching for Hunting Grounds

The early Americans were **nomads**, people who moved from place to place. They ate grains and fruits but depended on hunting for much of their food. While on a hunt, they crossed Beringia into what is now Alaska and Canada.

The crossing of the land bridge was a **migration**, a movement of a large number of people into a new homeland. As the centuries passed, many people traveled from Asia either on foot across the land bridge or in boats. They spread out across the Americas, going as far east as the Atlantic Ocean and as far south as the tip of South America.

Hunting for Food

Native American legends tell of giant beasts that roamed Earth in ancient times. When the first Americans arrived from Asia, they did indeed find huge mammals. There were the saber-toothed tiger, the woolly mammoth, and the mastodon. The mammoth and mastodon resembled modern elephants in shape but had shaggy fur and long tusks.

Early Americans were skilled at hunting these beasts. Armed with spears, bands of hunters stalked herds of bison, mastodons, or mammoths and then charged at the animals, hurling their weapons. A single mammoth provided tons of meat, enough to feed a group of people for months. The hunters and their families used every part of the animal. They made the skin into clothing, carved the bones into weapons and tools, and may have used the long ribs to build shelters.

About 15,000 years ago, the Earth's temperatures began to rise. As the great glaciers melted and the oceans rose, Beringia was submerged again. The Americas were cut off from Asia. At the same time, the hunters of America faced a new challenge. The mammoths and other large animals began to die out, either from being overhunted or because of changes in the environment. Early Americans had to find other **sources**, or supplies, of food.

✓ **Reading Check** **Explaining** How do archaeologists learn about the past?

Settling Down

Main Idea Agriculture changed the way of life for early Americans.

History and You Think about the crops grown in your state or region. Read to find out about the foods that early Americans learned to grow.

As the large animals disappeared, early Americans turned to other food sources. They hunted smaller game, caught fish, and gathered berries and grains. They also began to farm.

Planting Seeds and Farming

About 9,000 years ago, people living in what is now Mexico learned to plant and raise **maize**, an early form of corn. They also planted pumpkins, beans, and squash. Their harvests provided a steady, reliable source of food, so they no longer had to move from place to place. Farming also allowed people to spend time on activities other than finding food. This resulted in an improvement in the lives of early Americans.

Establishing Unique Cultures

Some early Americans remained nomadic hunters. Many others, however, knowing they would have a reliable food supply, began to settle down. Scientists have discovered villages that date from about 5,000 years ago. Using a method called **carbon dating**, scientists can measure the amount of radioactive carbon in an artifact made from bone or wood or another substance that was once alive. The amount of carbon provides an **estimate**, or approximate number, of the artifact's age.

The early Americans who settled down built permanent shelters from clay, stone, or wood. They made pottery and cloth. By studying and dating artifacts from these villages, scientists know that agriculture changed the lives of early Americans. These early Americans also developed common customs and beliefs. Over time, the groups of people living in the Americas developed their own **cultures**, or ways of life.

Reading Check **Explaining** What is carbon dating? How does it work?

Section 1 Review

History ONLINE
Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.

Vocabulary

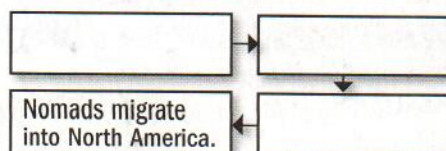
1. Use each of these terms in a sentence that will help explain its meaning: **archaeology**, **artifact**, **nomad**, **migration**, **source**, **maize**, **carbon dating**, **estimate**, **culture**.

Main Ideas

2. **Explaining** How did early peoples arrive in the Americas?
3. **Describing** Describe the changes that early Americans underwent as the large animals disappeared.

Critical Thinking

4. **Determining Cause and Effect** How do you think the first Americans discovered that they could grow their own plants?
5. **Sequencing** Use a diagram like the one below to describe the sequence of events that resulted in the migration of nomads into North America from Asia.



6. **Expository Writing** Write a short essay describing the elements of culture of the early Americans and the elements of culture for American society today.

Answer the Essential Question

7. How did agriculture change the lives of early people?