

The Americas

Lesson 1 The First Americans

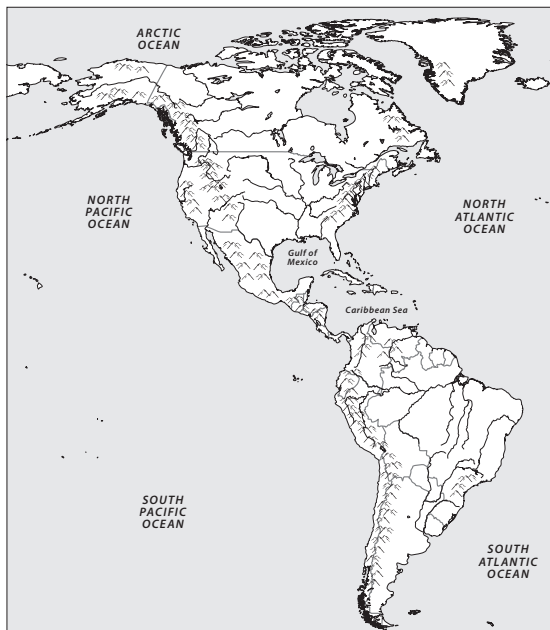
ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does geography affect the way people live?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *How did geography shape the ways people settled in the Americas?*
2. *How did prehistoric people reach the Americas and form settlements?*
3. *How did farming make civilization possible in the Americas?*
4. *Why did a large number of societies develop in North America?*

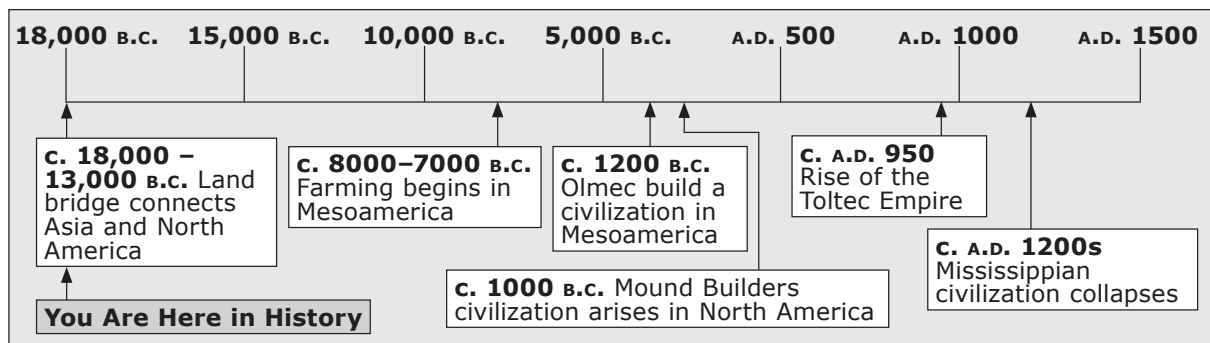
Where in the world?



Terms to Know

isthmus a narrow piece of land that connects two larger areas of land
maize corn

When did it happen?



The Americas

Lesson 1 The First Americans, *Continued*

Geography of the Americas

The Americas is a vast region. It includes North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Central America is an isthmus. An **isthmus** is a narrow piece of land that connects two larger areas of land. Central America connects North and South America.

The Americas have many different geographic features. Mountain chains run along the western side of North and South America. The Rocky Mountains are in western North America. The Andes range stretches along the Pacific coast of South America.

The Mississippi is the largest river system in North America. It runs from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The Amazon is South America’s largest river system. It starts in the Andes and flows to the Atlantic Ocean.

Settling the Americas

About 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, ocean levels were low. A thin strip of land linked Asia and North America. Some scientists think that early people walked across this land bridge from Asia into North America. Other scientists believe the first people came to America by boat.

The first Americans were hunters and gatherers. They moved from place to place looking for food. They used what they found for food, clothing, and shelter.

When the last Ice Age ended, the climate grew warmer. Farming began in Mesoamerica around 9,000 to 10,000 years ago. Mesoamerica is the land from central Mexico to Costa Rica in Central America. The land in Mesoamerica was rich. The climate was mild. Crops grew well there. Early people grew squash, peppers, potatoes, and beans. Later, they grew **maize**, or corn. Maize became the most important crop in the Americas.

First American Societies

The Olmec civilization might be the oldest in Mesoamerica. It began about 1200 B.C. along the Gulf of Mexico and lasted about 800 years. The Olmec civilization was based on farming and trade. After the Olmec, inland civilizations grew powerful. One group built Teotihuacán, one of the first planned cities. More than 100,000 people lived there.

Another group, the Zapotec, built the city of Monte Albán. Monte Albán had stone temples, monuments, and tombs. The Zapotec also developed a writing system.



Defining

1. What is an *isthmus*?



Marking the Text

2. Circle the names of the major mountain ranges and rivers in North and South America.



Reading Check

3. Which four separate areas make up the Americas?



Reading Check

4. What were the first crops grown in the Americas?



Marking the Text

5. Underline the two reasons farming was successful in Mesoamerica.

The Americas

Lesson 1 The First Americans, *Continued*

Comparing

6. What were some of the similarities among the Mesoamerican cultures?

Marking the Text

7. Circle the achievement that allowed the Moche to farm in their desert homeland.

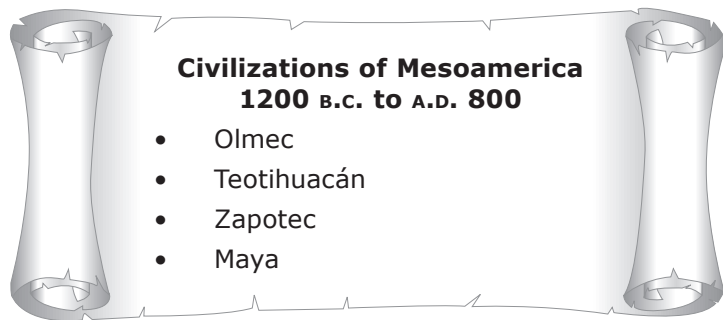
Reading Check

8. Why did early American cultures decline?

Examining

9. What made it possible for new civilizations to develop in North America?

The Maya civilization began in the rain forests of Mexico. From there, the Maya spread deeper into southern Mexico and Central America. Like the Zapotec, the Maya built cities. These civilizations declined around the A.D. 500s. Historians are not sure why. Perhaps there was too little rain to grow food or local people may have revolted. Whatever the reason, people left the cities.



Soon after this, the Toltec came to power. The Toltec conquered much of central Mexico and northern Central America. The Toltec built pyramids and palaces. Around A.D. 1125, the Toltec Empire began to decline. For 200 years there was no ruling group in central Mexico.

In South America, the Moche settled in the dry coastal desert of Peru. They built canals to bring water from the Andes to the desert. The Moche were able to grow enough food to feed a large number of people. The Moche did not, however, build an empire. The first empire in South America was built by the Inca, who lived in the Andes.

Early Cultures in North America

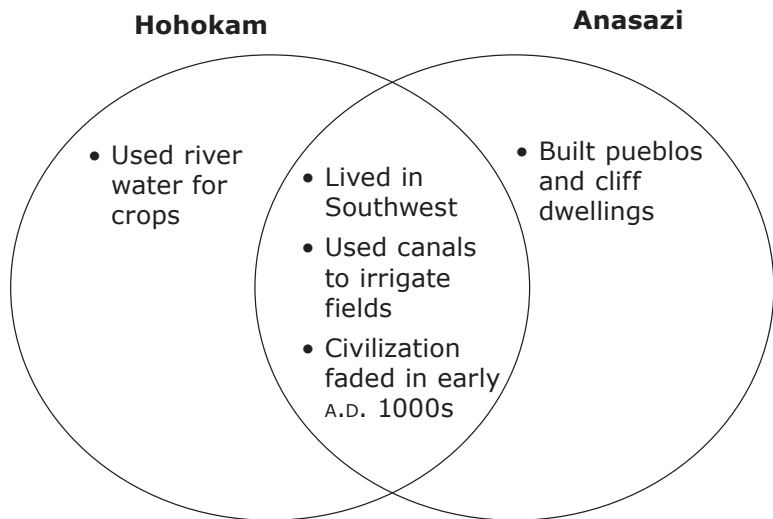
Many groups of people in North America learned how to farm from the people of Mesoamerica. As farming spread across North America, new cultures developed.

The Hohokam lived in the desert of the American Southwest. They dug canals to bring river water to their fields. They grew corn, cotton, beans, and squash. Another group, called the Anasazi, collected water that ran off cliffs. They sent the water through canals to their fields.

The Anasazi built stone buildings called pueblos. They also built dwellings in the walls of cliffs. The Anasazi and Hohokam both faded in the early A.D. 1000s. A lack of rain caused their crops to die. The large settlements broke up and people formed smaller communities.

The Americas

Lesson 1 The First Americans, *Continued*



East of the Mississippi River, another civilization arose—the Mound Builders. The Mound Builders built huge mounds of earth. The mounds were used as tombs or for ceremonies. Mound Builders were mostly hunters and gatherers. They did practice some farming. Corn was a popular crop. This civilization began about 1000 B.C. and ended about A.D. 400.

A new group of people grew in the Mississippi River Valley by A.D. 700. The Mississippians were farmers. They also built mounds. Their largest city may have had more than 16,000 people. The Mississippian society collapsed during the A.D. 1200s. Historians are not sure why. The downfall may have been caused by too little food or attacks by other groups.

Check for Understanding
Name two cultures that developed in North America.

1. _____
 2. _____

Name two reasons that civilizations developed in North America.

3. _____
 4. _____

Reading Check

10. How were early Americans able to grow crops in desert area of the Southwest?



11. Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Cut the tabs in half to form a four-tab Foldable. Label the four tabs *Hohokam*, *Anasazi*, *Mound Builders*, and *Mississippians*.

Use both sides of the tabs to list words and phrases that you remember about each civilization. Use your Foldable to help you answer the questions under the tabs.

Glue Foldable here.

The Americas

Lesson 2 Life in the Americas

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What makes a culture unique?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

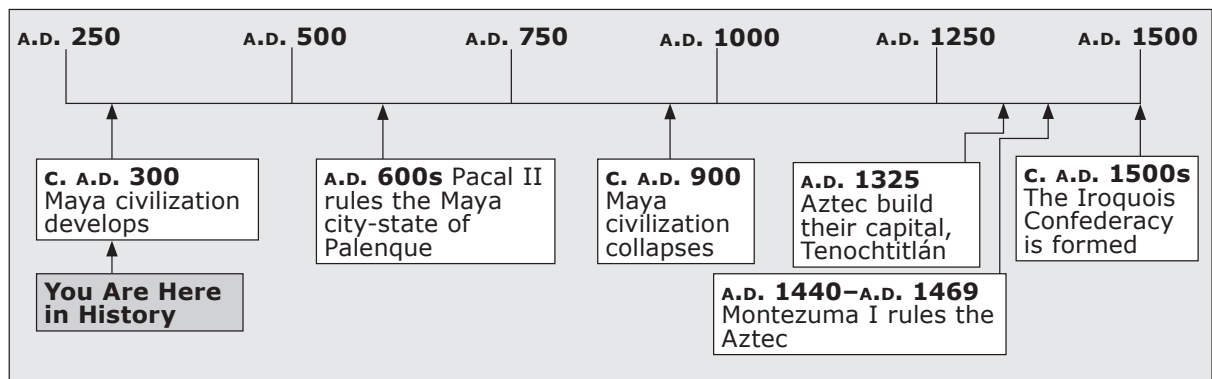
1. *How did the Maya live in the rain forests of Mesoamerica?*
2. *How did the Aztec establish their society in central Mexico?*
3. *How did the Inca organize their government and society?*
4. *What were the societies of North American peoples like?*

Terms to Know

sinkholes areas where the soil has collapsed into a hollow or depression

hogans square, wooden homes built by the Navajo

When did it happen?



What do you know?

In the first column, answer the questions based on what you know before you study. After this lesson, complete the last column.

Now ...		Later ...
	Where did the Maya, Aztec, and Inca establish their empires?	
	How did early Americans in North America adapt to their environments?	

The Americas

Lesson 2 Life in the Americas, *Continued*

The Maya

Around A.D. 300, the Maya developed a civilization in southern Mexico and Central America. They settled in an area of swampy forests. The swamps gave the Maya a source of water. The Maya also used sinkholes to reach water underground. **Sinkholes** are areas where the land has fallen and formed a hollow.

The Maya cleared forests to plant corn and build cities. They set up more than 50 city-states. A king ruled each city-state. Each king claimed the sun god was his ancestor.

Maya city-states had a strict class system. Kings, nobles, and priests were at the top. Below them were farmers, artisans, and hunters. These people had to pay taxes. They also had to work on large building projects.

Women played an important role in Maya city-states. At least two women ruled as queens. Royal Maya women often married into royal families of other Maya city-states. This practice increased trade. It also helped people in different city-states work together.

Maya Achievements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understood astronomy, able to predict eclipses • developed calendars • developed a system of mathematics • used the concept of zero • invented a written language

The Maya had two major calendars. They used one with 260 days for religious events. They used another calendar with 365 days for agriculture. The Maya also developed a system of mathematics. They invented a written language using hieroglyphics.

Around A.D. 900, the Maya civilization collapsed. Historians have some ideas why. Evidence shows that conflict and warfare increased among the city-states. Also, erosion caused food production to fall. Too little food would have led to diseases and starvation.

The Aztec

In A.D. 1325, the Aztec began building a city in central Mexico. The city was on an island in the middle of a lake. The Aztec called the city Tenochtitlán. It would become the largest city in Mesoamerica. It was the center of Aztec life.



Marking the Text

- Underline the two places where the Maya got water.



Evaluating

- What do you think was the greatest achievement of the Maya?



Connecting to Today

- What do you think future historians will say was our society's greatest achievement?



Reading Check

- How were the Maya governed?

The Americas

Lesson 2 Life in the Americas, *Continued*

FOLDABLES®

Explaining

5. Place a one-tab foldable along the dotted line. Write *Aztec Civilization* on the anchor tab. Write words and short phrases to explain the Aztec civilization.

Reading Check

6. Why did the Aztec develop two different calendars?

Reading Check

7. What building projects did the Inca carry out?

Evaluating

8. Do you think everyone in a society should have to serve in the military? Why or why not?

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Aztec rulers claimed to be descended from the gods. A council of priests, nobles, and warriors chose the emperor. Montezuma I was a powerful Aztec emperor. He ruled from A.D. 1440 to A.D. 1469. Montezuma expanded the Aztec empire. He built temples and roads.

There were four classes of people under the emperor. These were nobles, commoners, unskilled workers, and enslaved people. Most of the Aztec were commoners. They worked as farmers, artisans, or merchants.

Priests played an important role in Aztec society. Some sacrificed captives to the gods. Aztec priests also recorded Aztec knowledge in books that historians refer to today. They used two calendars. One was for important ceremonies and festivals. The other was for everyday use.

The Inca

In the A.D. 1400s, the Inca created a powerful empire in the valleys of the Andes. Strong rulers created a strong central government. They set up legal courts and collected taxes. The government stored extra food from good harvests to give to people when harvests were poor.

The Inca emperors demanded that everyone in the empire learn Quechua, the language of the Inca. People also had to work on government projects. One project was a system of roads that connected all parts of the empire. The Inca were skilled builders. They built Machu Picchu, a retreat for Inca emperors, without wheels or iron tools.

Inca emperors were the head of Inca society. Army leaders also had a high place in society. The Inca Empire was built on war. All young men had to serve in the army.

North American Peoples

By A.D. 1500 many different groups of Native Americans lived in North America. People adapted to the different environments they lived in.

The Inuit settled just south of the Arctic Circle. The land was harsh, cold, and treeless. The Inuit built homes from stone and blocks of earth. They also made shelters from blocks of hard-packed snow, called igloos. They hunted seals, walruses, and polar bears.

Many different groups of Native Americans lived along the Pacific coast. The climate was mild. People could hunt and fish. They used the trees to build houses and canoes.

The Americas

Lesson 2 Life in the Americas, *Continued*

The Hopi, the Acoma, and the Zuni lived in the Southwest. They built apartment-like homes from adobe, bricks made of dried mud. They dug canals to bring water to their fields. They grew corn, beans, squash, and melons.

Types of Native American Buildings	
Igloos	→ Far North: homes made of pressed snow
Pueblos	→ Southwest: homes made of adobe, or sun-dried brick
Hogans	→ Southwest: homes made of wood
Tepees	→ Great Plains: tents made from animal skins

In the A.D. 1500s, the Apache and Navajo settled in the Southwest. At first, they were hunters and gatherers. Later, the Navajo began to farm and settled in villages. They built square wooden homes called **hogans**.

Native Americans on the Great Plains were nomads. They lived in tepees. Men hunted antelope, deer, and buffalo. Plains people used every part of the buffalo. They made clothing from the skins and tools from the bones.

Native people of the Eastern Woodlands farmed and hunted. They formed governments that linked different groups. The Iroquois Confederacy was made up of five Native American groups. Its purpose was to keep peace. The league also created a constitution, or plan of government. This was the first constitution in what would become the United States.

Check for Understanding

List two things North American civilizations had in common.

1. _____

2. _____

Name two accomplishments of the Iroquois Confederacy.

3. _____

4. _____

? Drawing Conclusions

9. How did the people in the Southwest use the resources of their environment?
- _____
- _____
- _____

✓ Reading Check

10. Why did the Iroquois form a confederacy?
- _____
- _____
- _____



11. Place a three-tab Foldable along the dotted line. Cut each of the tabs in half to form six tabs. Label the six tabs *Arctic*, *Pacific Coast*, *Southwest*, *Great Plains*, *Eastern Woodland*, and *Iroquois Confederacy*.

Use both sides of the Foldable to write words and short phrases to record what you remember about each.

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