

The First Americans

Lesson 1 Migration to the Americas

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What are characteristics that make up a culture?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *Who were the first Americans and how did they live?*
2. *How did agriculture change the way of life for early Americans?*

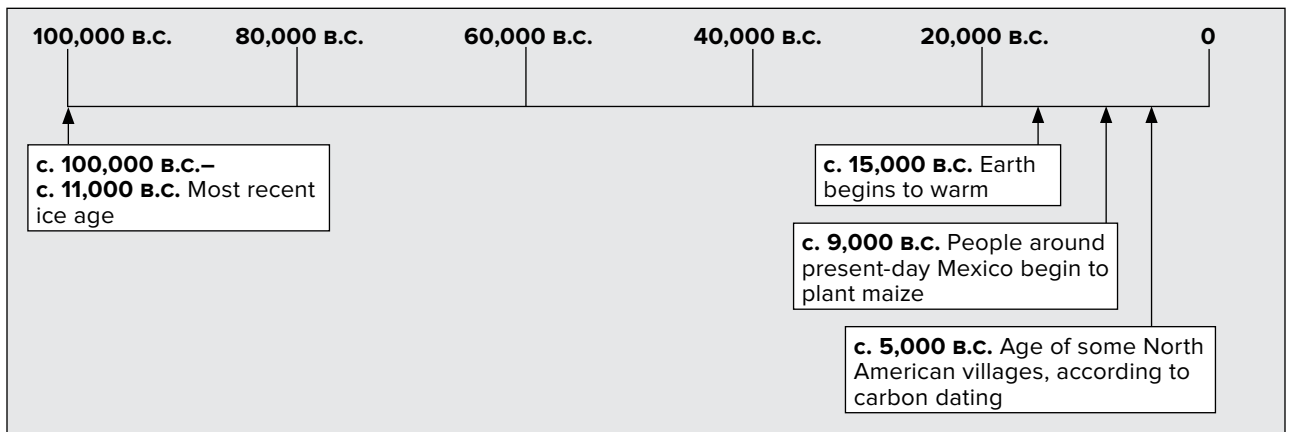
Terms to Know

- archaeology** the study of ancient peoples
- artifact** a tool, weapon, or object left behind by early peoples
- strait** narrow strip of water connecting two larger bodies of water
- migration** the movement of a large number of people into a new area
- nomad** a person who moves from place to place
- maize** a type of corn
- carbon dating** a scientific way to find out the age of an artifact
- culture** a people's shared values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviors

Where in the world?



When did it happen?



The First Americans

Lesson 1 Migration to the Americas, *Continued*

The Migration Begins

People lived in the Americas for thousands of years before Christopher Columbus arrived. Where did they come from? How did they get there? When did they arrive?

Scientists want to answer these questions. Some are experts in the study of ancient peoples, which is called **archaeology**. To discover clues, they study **artifacts**, or things that ancient peoples left behind. These things can be tools, weapons, or other objects. Artifacts are one of the tools archaeologists use to put together the pieces of the puzzle.

Some archaeologists think they understand how the first people arrived in North America. They believe that many thousands of years ago, a strip of land connected Asia and the Americas. This gave people a way to travel from one continent to the other. These scientists think that people used this strip of land to cross from Asia to the Americas 20,000 or more years ago.

Learning About Ancient Peoples	
archaeology	the study of ancient peoples
archaeologist	a scientist who studies ancient peoples
artifacts	objects left behind by ancient peoples, such as tools and weapons

The temperature of the Earth has changed throughout history. There have been some periods of extreme cold. These are called ice ages. The most recent one started about 100,000 years ago. It did not end until about 10,000 years ago. During the ice age, much of Earth's water began to freeze into huge sheets of ice. These sheets of ice are called *glaciers*. So much water froze into glaciers that sea levels were lower.

When the sea levels were lower, there was a strip of land that connected northeastern Asia to what is now Alaska in North America. Today, scientists call this strip of land—or land bridge—Beringia. Today, it is warmer and sea levels are higher. Beringia is covered by the Bering Strait. A **strait** is a narrow strip of water that connects two larger bodies of water. The Bering Strait was named for a famous explorer, Vitus Bering.



Identifying

1. What scientists study ancient peoples? What do they use for clues?



Assessing

2. When do some scientists think people first arrived in North America?



Defining

3. What is an *ice age*?



Calculating

4. How long did the last ice age last?



Mark the Text

5. Underline the definition of *land bridge*.



Reading Check

6. How did the ice age expose Beringia?

The First Americans

Lesson 1 Migration to the Americas, *Continued*



Identifying

7. What are two ways scientists think people may have traveled from Asia to the Americas?



Mark the Text

8. Underline the definition of *migration*.



Identifying

9. What did nomads eat?



Mark the Text

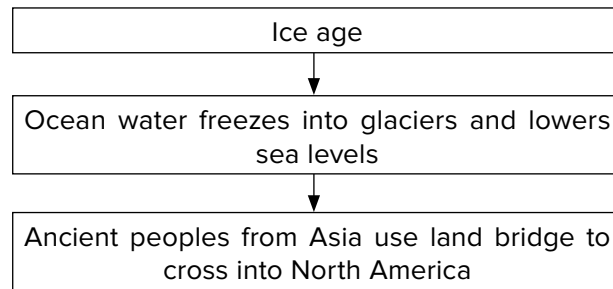
10. What did mammoths and mastodons look like? Circle the answer in the text.



Understanding Cause and Effect

11. How did farming change the lives of early Americans?

Many scientists think that people traveled from Asia to North America over this land bridge, but some scientists disagree. They think people may have come from Asia in boats. Coming by boat would have made it easier for people to spread throughout North and South America faster.



No matter how they came, people eventually spread east all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. They also spread south to the southern tip of South America.

When a lot of people move from one area to another like this, it is called **migration**. People probably traveled in search of food. Early peoples were **nomads**. Nomads are people who move from place to place, looking for good hunting grounds. Even though these people also ate wild grains and fruits, much of their food came from hunting.

When the first peoples arrived from Asia, they found many animals to hunt. For example, they hunted bison and two animals that looked like elephants—mammoths and mastodons. These people hunted with spears.

Around 15,000 years ago, Earth began to warm. As temperatures rose, glaciers began to melt. The oceans rose, and water covered the Beringia land bridge. This cut Asia off from North America once again. The large animals began to disappear, too. Early Americans had to find other sources of food, which included fish and small animals.

Settlement

Around 10,000 years ago, there was a major change in how people got food: farming. People in what is now Mexico began planting a type of corn called **maize**. They also grew pumpkins, beans, and squash. These crops gave them a good supply of food. Because they could grow their own food, they did not have to move around anymore. This meant they could spend more time doing other things. Their quality of life got better.

