KEY CONCEPT 1.2

THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION AND EARLY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES
Beginning about 10,000 years ago, the Neolithic Revolution led to the development of new and more complex economic and social systems.

Agriculture and pastoralism began to transform human societies.
NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION

• Began 10,000 years ago (8000 BCE) in Southwest Asia
• Was not instantaneous, did not occur everywhere at the same time, did not directly affect everyone
• Key Developments
  – Agriculture
  – Pastoralism
  – Specialization of Labor
  – Towns and Cities
  – Governments
  – Religions
  – Technological Innovations
AGRICULTURE

• Warmer global climates after the last Ice Age
• Definition: the practice of raising crops or livestock on a continual and controlled basis
• Started to grow a **surplus** → trade
• Crops that were already growing wild
  – Southwest Asia = wheat and barley
  – Northern China = millet
  – Southeast Asia = rice
  – Mesoamerica = maize (corn)
• Led to decreased diversity in plants, insects, and animals as well as diets
PASTORALISM

• Domestication: the taming of wild animals so they could be brought up to live with humans
  – Dogs were first – useful in hunting and alerting people to dangers
  – Goats – provided meat and milk

• As people began to keep larger herds (cattle, sheep, horses, chickens, and pigs), they began to lead them from one grazing land to another = pastoralism
  – Llamas and alpacas in South America

• More mobile like hunters and gatherers; owned very little; regularly in contact with new people and ideas through trade; but also led to more disease

• Controlled food supply more effectively like farmers
  – Like farmers, they significantly affected the environment: overgrazing = less fertile soil
SPECIALIZATION OF LABOR

• Surpluses of food = some workers were free to focus on other tasks
• Artisans: people who made objects that were needed (cloth and pottery)
• Merchants: people who buy and sell goods for a living
• Craftspeople: construction workers to build houses, storage facilities, irrigation
• Soldiers/warriors: protected food supplies and sometimes attacked others
• Religious leaders: asked their gods to supply good harvests
• Scribes: the invention of writing – first used to keep records about trades and tax payments
  – Marks the transition from prehistory to history
• Politicians/kings: told everyone else what to do
TOWNS AND CITIES

• Food surpluses = increased population and opportunities to do work not related to producing food

• Change in food production led to social stratification – some people accumulated wealth in the form of jewelry and other prized items and by building larger and better decorated houses

• The concept of “private property” becomes more important

• Men who control the food surplus become the wealthy elite

• Earliest cities: Jericho (9000 BCE) and Catal Huyuk (7500 BCE)
  – Neither city became a major site for an emerging civilization
GOVERNMENTS

- Government was required to organize workers to clear lands and provide irrigation.
- Powerful leaders also supervised how food surpluses were used and the soldiers who were needed to protect them.
- Priests supervised religious ceremonies and explain how the actions of the leaders were based on the religious beliefs of the people.
RELIGIONS

- Early farmers experienced the same problems with the environment as modern farmers
  - Overfarming and overgrazing
- People look to the spirits of nature to help with their crops and herds
- Religious ceremonies became more elaborate and a special class of priests and priestesses developed
- One of the first groups to practice monotheism = the Hebrews, led by Abraham, along the Mediterranean Sea
- South Asia = the Vedic religion had a variety of deities and a heavy emphasis on rituals
- Modern-day Iran = Zoroastrianism, led by their teacher Zoraster, focused on the eternal battle between good and evil
TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

• Most people learned about new technology through trade, war, or other forms of contact
  – Waterproof clay pots – use to store food and carry water; sometimes decorated
  – Plow – made cultivating crops much easier
  – Wheel with axle – wheeled carts could transport everything more easily
  – Textiles – weavers (usually women), learned to spin hair from animals or fibers from plants
  – Metallurgy – the study of metals replaced stone tools and weapons (first copper, then bronze around 3000 BCE)
These seven developments created the foundation for a new form of human society: civilization
Label on your globe...

- Mesopotamia
- Egypt
- Indus Valley (India)
- Huang He Valley (China)