



By learning to plant and harvest crops, hunter-gatherers became farmers.

From Hunters and Gatherers to Farmers

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, you learned about five important groups of hominids. Like the hominids before them, early modern humans hunted and gathered their food. In this chapter, you'll read about how people learned, over thousands of years, to farm their own food.

Humans discovered farming toward the end of the Stone Age. The **Stone Age** gets its name from the tools people made of stone. It began with the first toolmaking hominids about 2 million years ago. It lasted until around 3000 B.C.E., when people learned to make tools and weapons out of metal.

Historians divide the Stone Age into periods. The first is the **Paleolithic Age**, or Old Stone Age. During this time, people got their food by hunting wild animals and gathering nuts, berries, and other plants. They lived much of their lives out in the open and rarely stayed in one place for long.

By about 8000 B.C.E., some groups of people had learned how to raise animals and crops for food. With this discovery, the **Neolithic Age**, or New Stone Age, began. For the first time, people settled down to live in one place.

The shift from being hunter-gatherers to being farmers is one of the most important advances people have ever made. In this chapter, you'll explore the many ways it changed human life.



The cartoon characters in this graphic organizer will help you understand what life was like during Neolithic times.

3.2 From Old Stone Age to New Stone Age

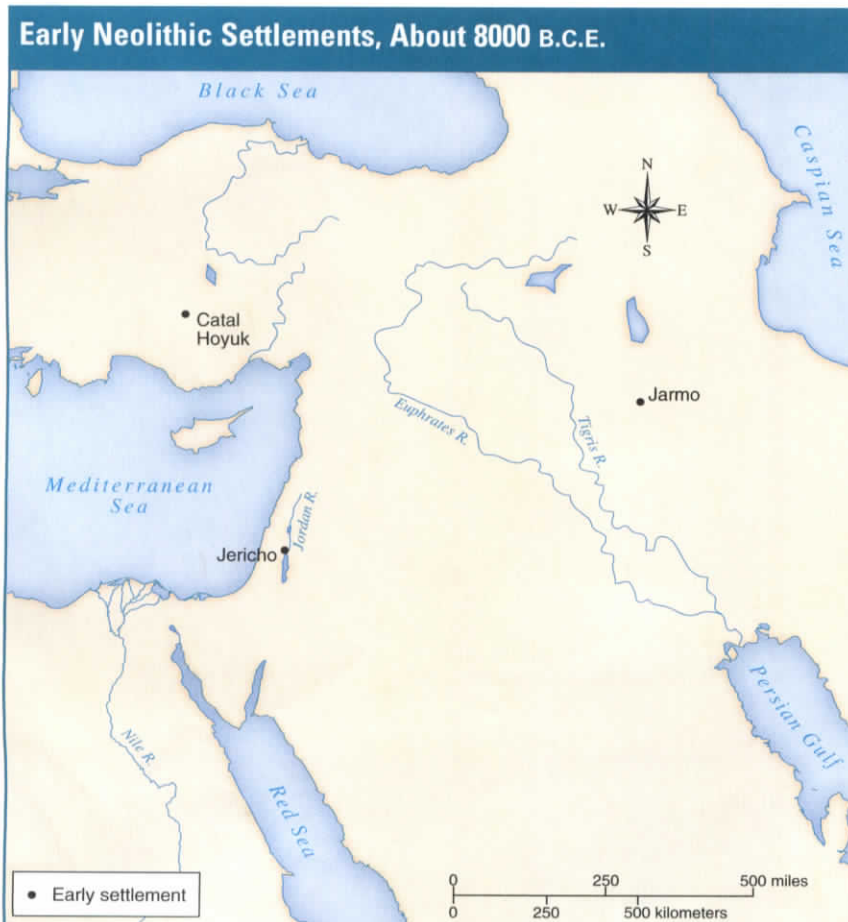
The Old Stone (Paleolithic) Age began about 2 million years ago and lasted until about 8000 B.C.E. It was during this time that early modern humans developed. Like the hominids who came before them, early humans were hunter-gatherers. They wandered from place to place, looking for animals to hunt and plants to gather for food. Often they took shelter in caves, like the cave painters you read about in Chapter 1.

The New Stone (Neolithic) Age began when people learned to farm and produce their own food. The discovery of farming did not happen all at once. Over thousands of years, people gradually learned to raise animals and plant crops. Eventually they began to rely on farms for their food. Now they could settle down in one place instead of roaming in search of things to eat.

The Neolithic Age began around 8000 B.C.E. and lasted until about 3000 B.C.E., when people learned to make tools out of metal instead of stone. Farming developed in many parts of the world during this time, including parts of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

Many Neolithic settlements were located east of the Mediterranean Sea, where the land was fertile (good for growing crops). Here, people built towns and villages such as Jericho, Catal Hoyuk, and Jarmo (see map).

People in settlements like these lived very different lives from earlier hunter-gatherers. With farms to provide their food, they could build permanent shelters and form larger communities. They could make better tools and clothing. And they could trade with people in other places for resources they wanted. As you will see, these changes made life safer, more comfortable, and more interesting.



3.3 Creating a Stable Food Supply

During the Paleolithic Age, people obtained food by hunting animals and gathering plants. But hunting and gathering did not provide a very stable, or dependable, food supply. Wild plants and animals grew scarce when people stayed in one area for too long. And hunting was dangerous. Hunters were often injured or killed.

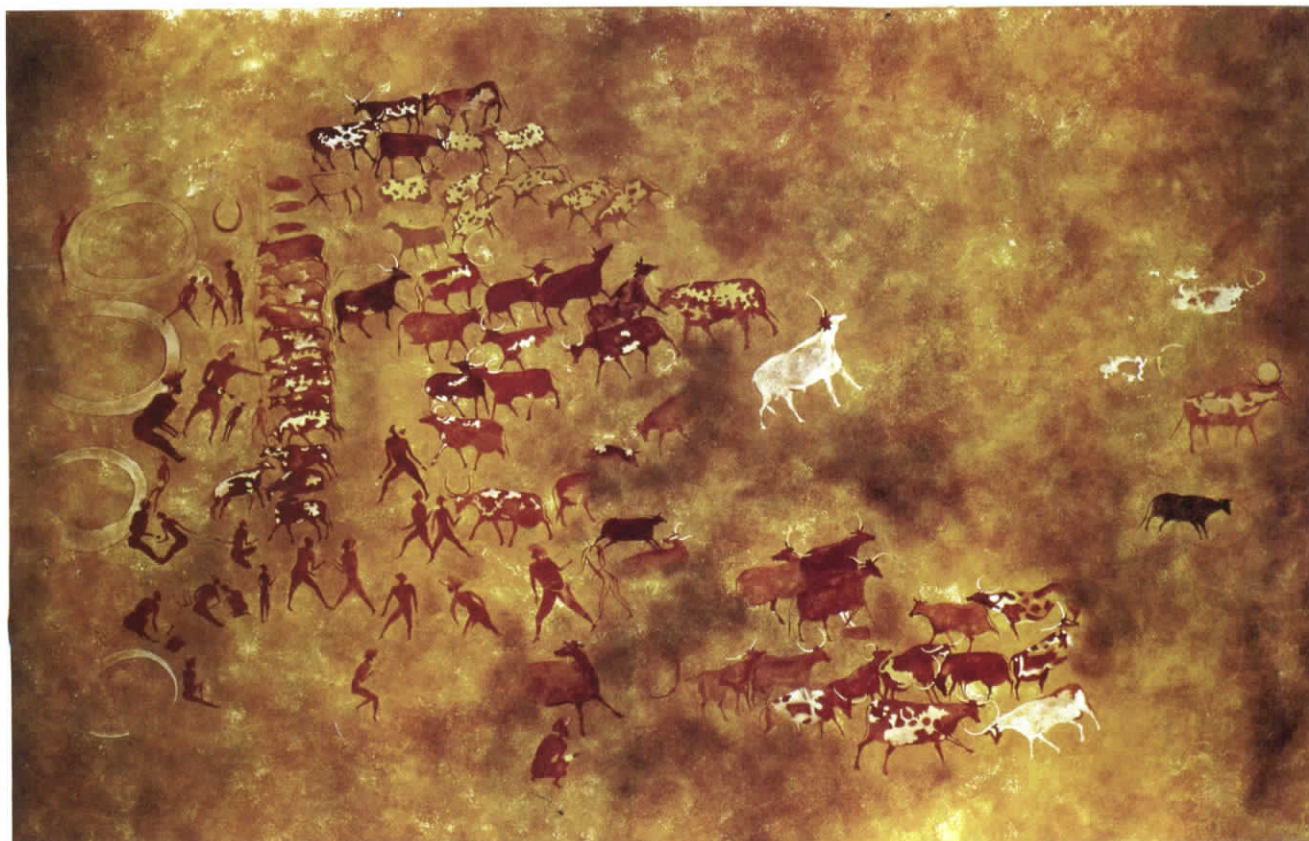
Gradually, people discovered they didn't have to depend on hunting and gathering. Instead of gathering wild plants, they could plant seeds and harvest crops. Over time, they learned which seeds produced the most crops in the areas where they lived.

Early farmers also learned how to **domesticate** animals, raising and using them for their own purposes. They raised sheep, goats, and cattle for their meat. They got milk from both goats and cattle. They used mules to carry heavy loads and pull plows.

Together, the growing of crops and the domestication of animals are called **agriculture**. The Neolithic Age began with the invention of agriculture. For the first time, people had a stable food supply. Let's explore why this change was one of the most important advances in all of history.

domesticate to train a wild animal to be useful to humans
agriculture the business of farming

In this Neolithic painting, herdsmen are shown with cattle.



3.4 Making Permanent Shelters

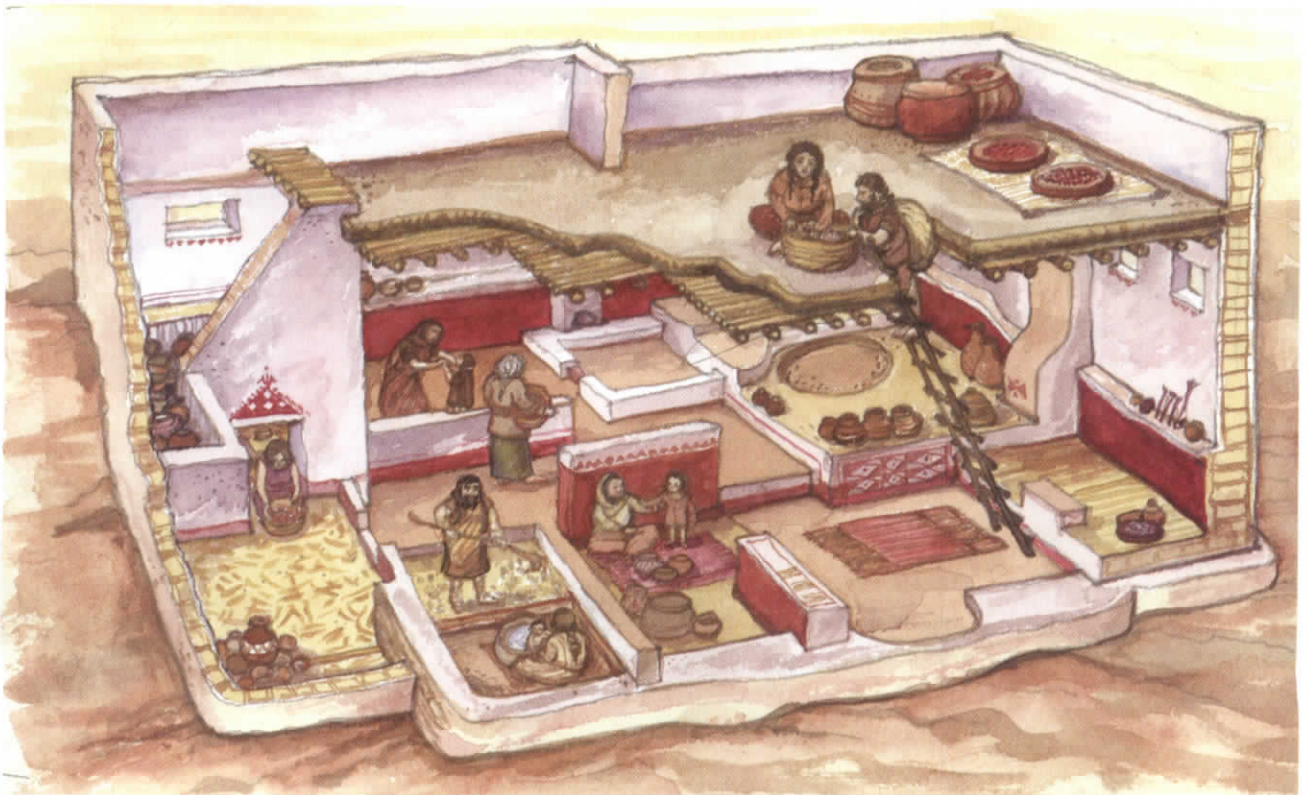
The first great change brought about by agriculture was the development of permanent shelters. During the Paleolithic Age, people had lived in caves or rough, tentlike structures. These shelters were temporary because hunter-gatherers often moved to follow wild animals or find new plants to eat. As people settled down to farm during the Neolithic Age, they built more permanent shelters.

In many areas, people packed mud bricks together to build round or rectangular houses. Sometimes they added stones and tree branches to strengthen the walls and roof. The houses had openings high in the walls. People probably climbed a ladder to reach the openings and enter the house.

Inside were several rooms. Places to store food were built into the floor. Pits for cooking were dug into the floor and lined with clay. People may have filled the pits with water and dropped in hot stones to make the water boil for cooking.

The development of permanent shelters was important in several ways. Houses gave people protection from harsh weather and wild animals. They made life more comfortable. They allowed new ways of cooking food. And living in permanent shelters allowed people to form larger communities.

Neolithic houses were made of packed mud, which helped keep people warm in winter and cool in summer.



3.5 Establishing Communities

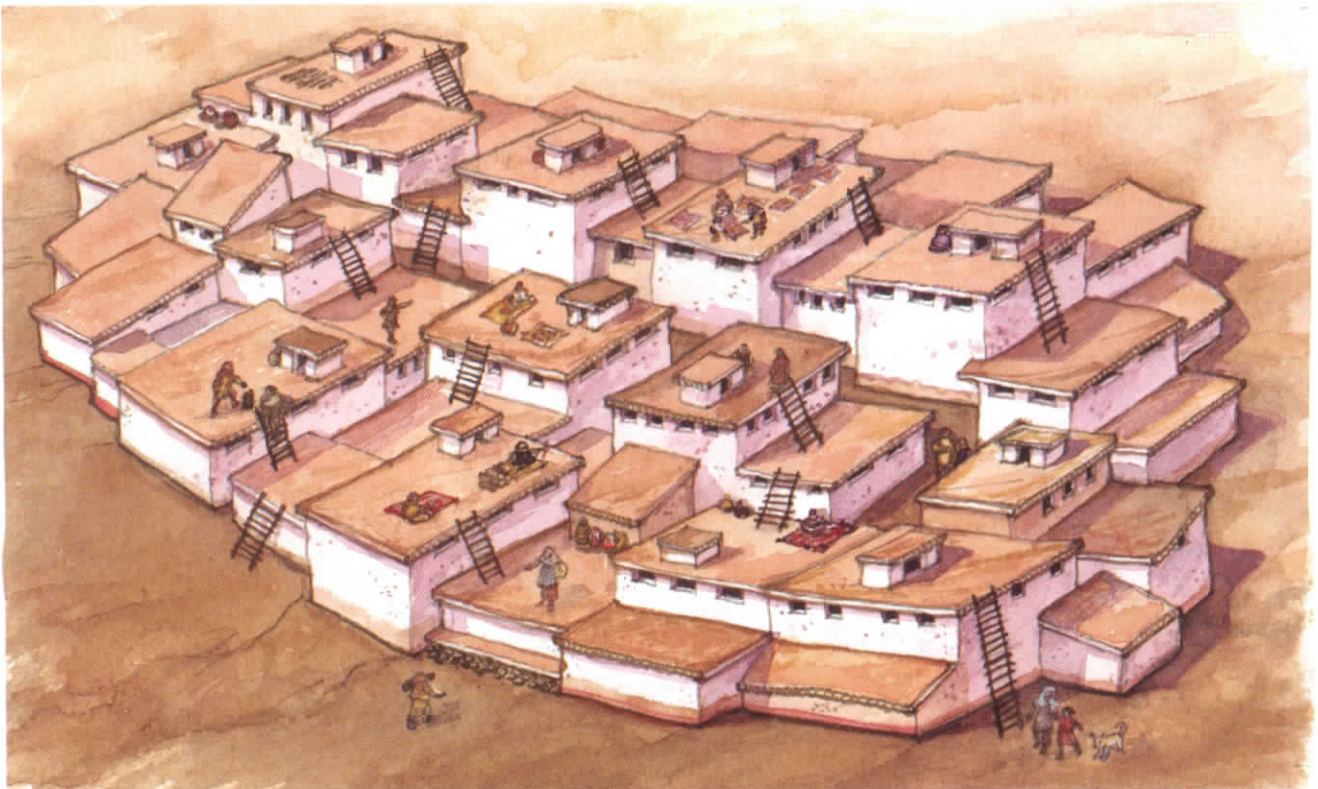
Along with permanent shelters, farming allowed people to form larger communities. In Paleolithic times, small bands of 20 to 60 people wandered from place to place in search of food. Once people began farming, they could settle down near their farms. As a result, towns and villages grew up, like those at Jericho (in present-day Israel) and Catal Hoyuk (Iraq).

Living in communities allowed people to organize themselves more efficiently. They could divide up the work of producing food and other things they needed. While some workers grew crops, others built new houses and made tools.

Village dwellers also learned to work together to do a task faster. For example, toolmakers could share the work of making stone axes and knife blades. By working together, they could make more tools in the same amount of time.

With their basic needs met, people had more time and energy for other activities. They could invent new ways of making their lives safer and more comfortable. Larger communities could also defend themselves more easily against enemies. The Neolithic town of Jericho, for example, was protected by strong stone walls. All these changes helped populations to grow where farming villages developed.

Neolithic villages were the first real communities.



People in Neolithic communities had time and tools to create works of art.



3.6 Developing New Jobs

Having a stable food supply allowed people to develop new kinds of jobs. In Paleolithic times, people's main job was finding enough food to survive. With farms to provide their food, Neolithic people could develop more specialized skills.

A good example is the town of Catal Hoyuk, which dates back to about 6000 B.C.E. Historians believe that the town's people worked in a number of different jobs. Besides farmers, there were weavers, basket makers, toolmakers, and traders.

Focusing on one job allowed people to get better at their work. In Catal Hoyuk, farmers learned how to grow more than 14 kinds of food plants. Clothing makers developed a way to spin and weave. They wove natural fibers such as wool and linen into comfortable cloth. In some regions, people mined flint so that stoneworkers could create sharper tools.

Neolithic people didn't just want to survive. They wanted to make themselves, and their surroundings, more beautiful. They decorated their pottery and baskets with geometric shapes. Stoneworkers learned to polish stones to make shiny jewelry and mirrors. House builders added special rooms to honor the gods and goddesses they believed in.

The development of different jobs encouraged people to become highly skilled at their crafts. This led to new and better ways of doing things. And different jobs created much more variety in community life.

3.7 Beginning to Trade

Another major change in Neolithic times was the growth of **trade**. Paleolithic hunter-gatherers rarely traded with other groups. They usually used only the plants, animals, and other resources they found nearby. Once people settled in towns and villages, trade became much more common.

People trade to get resources they don't have in their own area. As Neolithic people became more skilled in their crafts, they wanted materials to improve the strength and beauty of the things they made. Getting those resources became the job of traders.

Traders often traveled hundreds of miles to find what they wanted. They crossed mountains on foot, rode donkeys across deserts, and sailed the Mediterranean Sea on ships.

What were the traders looking for? Popular items included flint and obsidian. Obsidian is a black glass from volcanic mountains. Craftspeople used it to make knife blades, arrowheads, and mirrors. People also traded for “beauty products” like shell ornaments and a red **ore** called *hematite*. Women rubbed hematite on their lips and cheeks to make them redder.

The growth of trade allowed people to make use of more resources. It also brought them into contact with people from distant places. These contacts helped spread ideas and knowledge around the ancient world.

trade the business of buying and selling or exchanging items

ore a mineral mined for its valuable uses



This arrowhead is made from obsidian. Neolithic traders all around the Mediterranean region prized this resource. It was found mostly in the area that is now Turkey.

3.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned how the development of farming changed people's lives. For the first time, people had a stable supply of food. As a result, they could build permanent shelters and communities. They created new jobs and traded for the resources they needed. In the next chapter, you'll explore another dramatic change: the building of large cities.