networks

There's More Online!

- GRAPHIC ORGANIZER Reasons Early Peoples Migrated
- MAP
- VIDEO

Lesson 1

Migration to the Americas

ESSENTIAL QUESTION *What are characteristics that make us human?*

Day 1

It Matters Because

Human history in the Americas began thousands of years ago.

The Migration Begins

GUIDING QUESTION *Who were the first Americans and how did they live?*

The written history of the Americas is several hundred years old, yet human beings have been living on these continents for thousands of years. Where did these people come from? How and when did they get here? How did the different corners of North and South America get settled?

Today, scientists are still seeking answers to these questions. Experts in **archaeology** (AHR•kee•ah•luh•jee), the study of ancient peoples, continue to piece together evidence that tells the story of the first Americans.

Archaeologists have learned a lot about the past from **artifacts** (AHR•tih•fakts)—the tools, weapons, and other objects that early people left behind. Based on this and other types of evidence, archaeologists have offered some possible answers to questions about the first Americans. A widely held theory of recent times is that the first humans might have come to the Americas perhaps 20,000 or more years ago. This theory maintains that early people traveled along a strip of land that once linked Asia and the Americas.

A Land Bridge Revealed

Throughout Earth's history, the climate has changed. Several periods of extreme cold have occurred. The most recent of these ice ages began 100,000 years ago and ended about 12,000 years

Reading HELPDESK CCSS

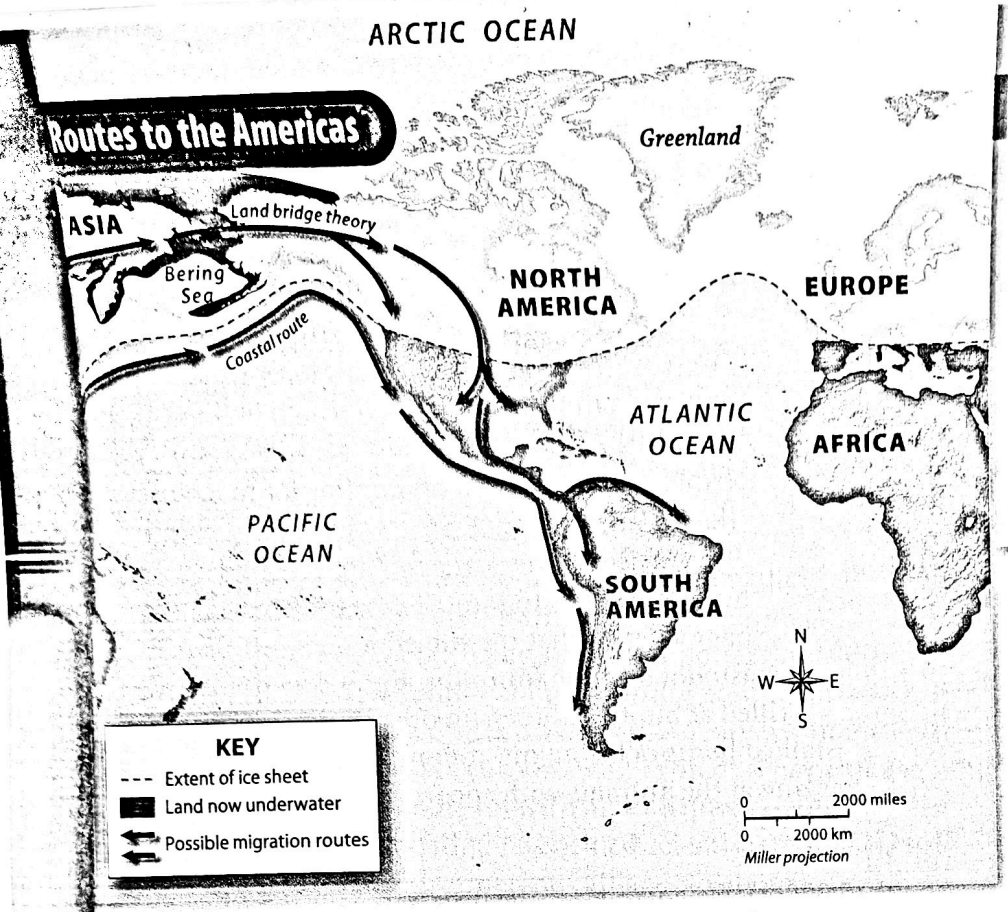
Taking Notes: *Identifying*

As you read, use a chart like this one to record reasons early peoples migrated from place to place.

Reasons Early Peoples Migrated
1.
2.

Content Vocabulary

- archaeology
- migration
- carbon dating
- artifact
- nomad
- culture
- strait
- maize



GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

Over thousands of years, prehistoric people migrated to and then throughout the Americas.

1. **MOVEMENT** Based on this map, how did prehistoric people get to North America from Asia?
2. **CRITICAL THINKING** ***Analyzing*** Why do you think prehistoric people moved from one place in the Americas to another?

ago. During these years, a large share of Earth's water formed huge sheets of ice, or glaciers. The glaciers held so much water that ocean levels were lower. The lower sea level exposed a strip of land—a "land bridge"—connecting northeastern Asia to what is now Alaska. Scientists today call this land bridge Beringia. It now lies beneath the Bering Strait, a body of water named for explorer Vitus Bering. A **strait** is a narrow body of water that connects two larger ones.

Many scientists believe early people traveled from Asia to North America across the land bridge. Yet not all scientists agree on how or when this might have happened. For example, some think people might have come to the Americas by boat. This might have allowed humans to spread faster throughout the Americas. As archaeologists discover new artifacts and evidence, new theories emerge to challenge old ones.

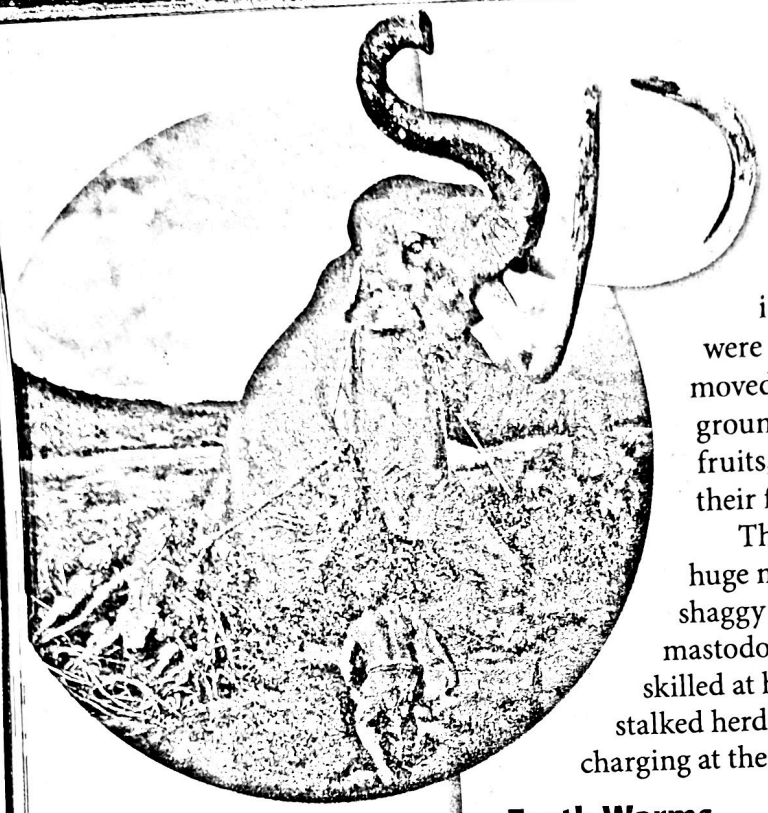
Searching for Hunting Grounds

It is clear, of course, that humans arrived in the Americas. Over centuries, they traveled throughout both continents. In time, settlements stretched as far east as the Atlantic Ocean and as far south as the tip of South America.

archaeology the study of the material remains of ancient peoples

artifact a tool, weapon, or other object left behind by early peoples

strait a narrow passage of water between two larger bodies of water



A single mammoth, which averaged 12 feet (3.7 m) tall, could provide tons of meat, enough to feed a group of people for months.

What is the reason for this **migration** (my•GRAY•shuhn), or movement of people from one area to another? Why did these early Americans travel such distances? The answer may lie in the search for food. Early peoples were **nomads** (NOH•madz), people who moved from place to place in search of hunting grounds. Although they also ate wild grains and fruits, they depended on hunting for much of their food.

The first Americans did, indeed, find huge mammals to hunt. These included giant, shaggy beasts that resembled modern elephants: mastodons and mammoths. Early Americans were skilled at hunting these and other animals. They stalked herds of bison, mastodons, or mammoths, charging at the animals with spears.

Earth Warms

About 15,000 years ago, the Ice Age began to end. Temperatures started to rise, and the glaciers began to melt. Ocean levels rose, and Beringia disappeared beneath the waves, cutting off the land route between Asia and the Americas.

Around the same time, the large mammals on which humans depended for food began to disappear. This might have been the result of overhunting or changes in the climate. The decline in game populations meant that early Americans had to find other **sources** of food.

PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining How did the Ice Age expose a land bridge between Asia and the Americas?

Settlement

GUIDING QUESTION ***How did agriculture change the way of life for early Americans?***

The constant search for food meant trying new methods. Early Americans caught fish and hunted smaller animals, while also gathering berries and grains. Farming was another new option that began to emerge. Its development would change the nomadic way of life of many groups.

Reading HELPDESK CCSS

migration the movement of people into a new area
nomad person who moves from place to place
maize a variety of corn
carbon dating a scientific method of determining the age of an artifact
culture a people's shared values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviors

Academic Vocabulary

source a supply
estimate a rough calculation of a number

Learning to Farm

Around 10,000 years ago, people in the area now known as Mexico learned to plant an early form of **maize** (MAYZ), which is a type of corn. These early farmers also planted pumpkins, beans, and squash. The crops provided a steady, reliable source of food. The farming people no longer had to move from place to place to find things to eat. Farming also allowed the people to spend time on activities other than finding food. This resulted in an improvement in the lives of early Americans.

Establishing Unique Cultures

Although some early Americans remained nomadic hunters, many others began to settle down. They built permanent shelters from clay, stone, or wood. They also made pottery and cloth.

Scientists have a method of determining how old an artifact is. Using a process called **carbon dating,** scientists can measure the amount of radioactive carbon in an artifact. They can use this measurement to come up with an **estimate** of the artifact's age. Carbon dating has helped scientists to date some settled North American villages to about 5,000 years ago.

Through the study and dating of artifacts from these villages, scientists know that agriculture changed the lives of early Americans. Common customs and beliefs also grew over time. Eventually, the groups of people living in the Americas developed their own **cultures** (KUHL•churz), or shared traditions and behaviors.

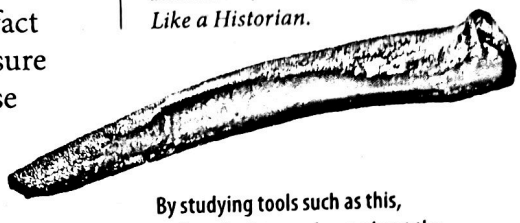
PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying What were some changes that affected the nomadic way of life?

Thinking Like a HISTORIAN

Drawing Inferences

Studying artifacts such as this antler or bone tool helps scientists learn about early cultures. Items like this give important clues about the way ancient people lived. For example, scientists may be able to use this tool to infer how early people worked, what foods they ate, and what other tools they may have used. To learn more about Drawing Inferences, review *Thinking Like a Historian.*



By studying tools such as this, archaeologists can learn about the skills and ways of living of the people who made it.

Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS

LESSON 1 REVIEW CCSS

Review Vocabulary

1. Examine the three terms below. Then write a sentence explaining what the terms have in common.
   - **a.** archaeology
   - **b.** artifact
   - **c.** carbon dating
2. Use the following terms in a sentence about the ancient history of the Americas.
   a. *nomad* **b.** *migration*

Answer the Guiding Questions

3. ***Explaining*** Why might people have migrated from Asia to the Americas?
4. ***Explaining*** What factors likely led some early Americans to change from hunting to farming?
5. ***Describing*** How does carbon dating help scientists learn about early cultures?
6. **INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY** Write a short essay describing how farming changed the lives of early people. Include examples of the types of food they grew.