

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.

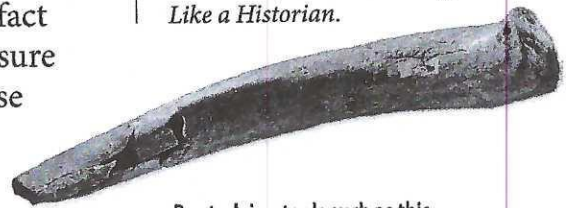
Scientists have a method of determining how old an artifact is. Using a process called **carbon dating**, scientists can measure the amount of radioactive carbon in an artifact. They can use this measurement to come up with an **estimate** of the artifact's age. Carbon dating has helped scientists to 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.

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.

PROGRESS CHECK

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

LESSON 1 REVIEW CCSS

Review Vocabulary

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

Answer the Guiding Questions

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