Section 3: The Beginnings of Civilization
Objectives

In this section you will:

1. Find out about the advantages people gained from settling down in one place.

2. Learn about the growth of early cities.

3. Understand how the first civilizations formed and spread.
Vocabulary

- Irrigation – supplying land with water through a network of canals
- Surplus – more than is needed
- Artisan – worker who is especially skilled at crafting items by hand
- Civilization – a society with cities, a central government, job specialization, and social classes
- Social class – a group of people with similar backgrounds, incomes, and ways of living
Irrigation, supplying the land with water through a network of canals, was important because it provided a steady supply of water for the crops.
Farming was harder work than hunting and gathering. However, it had far greater rewards. People who produced their own food could have a steady supply of food year-round because the surplus food could be stored. This meant that they no longer had to travel from place to place.
Having surplus food also allowed more people to be fed, so the population of the world began to grow rapidly.

As the population increased, settlements grew into towns.
People did not have to spend all of their days producing food. They were able to switch to other kinds of work such as artisans, workers who are especially skilled in crafting items by hand, making items such as baskets, leather goods, tools, pottery, or cloth.
Populations grew; some people were able to do work other than producing food.

Reading Check: What effect did food surpluses have on people living in settlements?
Some farming settlements grew into cities, where rich soil created large surpluses of food. People also needed a dependable source of drinking water and materials to build shelters.
Some of the earliest cities grew up along large rivers, such as the Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq, the Huang in China, and the Indus in Pakistan.
Cities were larger than villages, had large public buildings, places to store surplus grain, buildings for the worship of gods, and places where people could buy and sell food.
In villages, most people were farmers. In cities, people had a wide variety of occupations.
Governments formed in cities to keep order and provide services. They also settled disputes, managed public buildings, and irrigation projects.
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Reading Check: Along which rivers did early cities grow?
Some New Stone Age societies grew into civilizations, a society that has cities, a central government run by official leaders, and workers who specialize in various jobs. Writing, art, and architecture also characterize a civilization.
By 6600 B.C., artisans in Europe and Asia had discovered that they could melt copper from its rock.
By 3000 B.C., they had learned to mix tin with copper to make bronze. This marked the beginning of the Bronze Age.
Because bronze is much harder than copper, it could be used to make longer-lasting items such as weapons, tools, helmets, and shields.
Traders took valuable items such as pottery, tools, weapons, baskets, cloth, and spices to far away cities where they traded these items for food and goods that people at home wanted.
By around 3500 B.C., the wheel and axle was invented. Now trade goods could be loaded into carts and pushed through the city to market.
Trade over water also developed. Merchant ships now carried goods across seas and rivers.
Due to the traveling traders, people of many different cultures came into contact with each other. Tools and ideas from one society spread to other societies as people traded information and ideas along with goods.
Trade links brought prosperity to the cities which led to the development of social classes.

A social class is a group of people having similar backgrounds, incomes, and way of living.
- King - the most powerful person

- Priests and nobles - served as government officials and military officers

- Artisans, small traders, and merchants

- Common workers and farmers - the lowest ranked free members of society

- Slaves - formed a separate social class, worked as household servants and laborers.
The ability to make valuable items and to trade these items were important in the growth and spread of early civilizations.

Reading Check:
What skills and practices were important in the growth and spread of early civilizations?
1. (a) Describe
   - How did people’s lives change when they began to produce their own food?
     - They settled in communities.

(b) Identify Effects
   - What effects did food surpluses have on peoples and populations?
     - Populations grew and people could focus on other jobs besides farming.
2. (a) Recall

What resources were necessary for villages to grow into cities?
- Rich soil, dependable drinking water, materials to build shelter

(b) Compare and Contrast

What were the similarities and differences between villages and cities?
- Cities were larger and had public buildings; people had a greater variety of occupations; they developed governments.
3. (a) Name

What development occurred as societies grew into civilizations?

- Artwork, writing, and social classes developed and trade expanded.

(b) Draw Conclusions

How did prosperity lead to the development of social classes?

- Some groups were more prosperous than others.