

The Agricultural Revolution

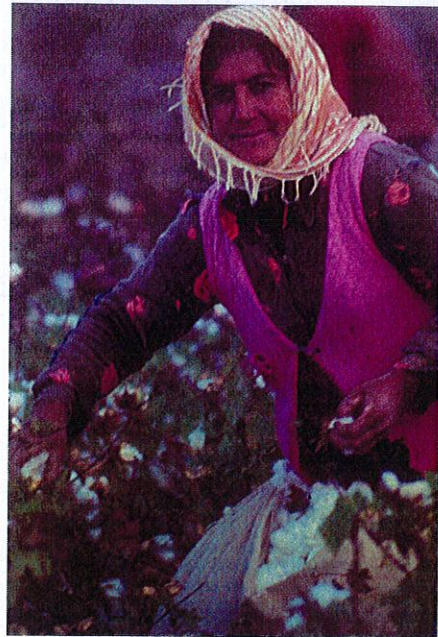
When people began to farm about 11,000 years ago, their lives changed. The change brought about by agriculture was very great. For this reason, the change is often called the Agricultural Revolution. Now people could settle in large groups, in one place. They chose areas with plenty of water and good soil. They built houses out of whatever materials were nearby. Often the houses were built of mud.

Now the people could plan on how much food to plant each year. They could decide on how many animals to raise in the herds. Now they had more control of their own lives.

Having a large enough food supply and staying in one place gave people spare time. Not everyone in the group was needed to raise food or care for the animals. People began to **specialize**. Some people farmed. Others took care of the animals.

Now there were also chances to do things they had never done before. People had time to work on their **crafts**. Weavers wove grass into fine baskets. Others made pottery from mud and clay and baked it in ovens. With wool from the sheep, some people learned to spin thread and to weave cloth.

As different jobs developed, so did trading. Weavers might trade their cloth for food from farmers. A goat might be traded for an ax from the toolmaker. First, trading was carried on within the village. Later people traded from one village to the next.



As people settled in large groups, they began to grow their own crops.

You Decide

There are still
craftworkers today.
Are craftworkers
needed as much
today as they were
long ago? Why or
why not?

With the Agricultural Revolution, people's most important needs—food, shelter, and clothing—were easier to meet. However, now people owned things. Potters had their jars and bowls. Herders had their animals. Now there were things to protect! New laws were needed. Most likely a group of the oldest, wisest people in the village would meet. They would decide on rules for the rest of the people.

People started to worry when their villages grew rich. Someone might attack them and try to steal some of their riches. Therefore, people formed armies to protect their villages.

As time went on, villages grew into cities. Later, cities joined together to form small kingdoms. Agriculture is what made this development possible.

The Fertile Crescent

The earliest known farming took place along the great rivers of the Middle East. These lands include what are now the countries of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Israel, and Turkey. This area is called the **Fertile Crescent**. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers provided plenty of water for the land. The soil was rich. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates was called Mesopotamia. That name means *land between two rivers*.

HISTORY FACT

By about 8000 B.C., Jericho had between 1,000 and 2,000 people. Archaeologists have found wheat and barley in the remains of the town.

Within the Fertile Crescent was the town of Jericho. It is one of the earliest known towns. By about 8000 B.C., Jericho was probably a farming village. Its people built rounded houses of mud and bricks. Archaeologists have found remains showing that the people of Jericho buried their dead right under their houses.

The land around Jericho was very fertile. The people grew many crops and became rich. The town grew. Jericho now had to protect itself. The people built a stone wall around their town.



The wall built to protect the town of Jericho was destroyed and the town was captured.

The wall was not enough protection. Around 7000 B.C., archaeologists say, Jericho was probably captured. The houses built after that time were no longer round but had square corners. This clue suggests that a new group of people must have taken over and settled there.

More is known about the early farming villages of the Fertile Crescent than anywhere else. However, farming was developing in other parts of the world, too. By 6000 B.C. farming had spread to Europe. By 4000 B.C. a culture of rice farmers had grown up in China. Between 5000 B.C. and 2000 B.C., agriculture spread across northern Africa.

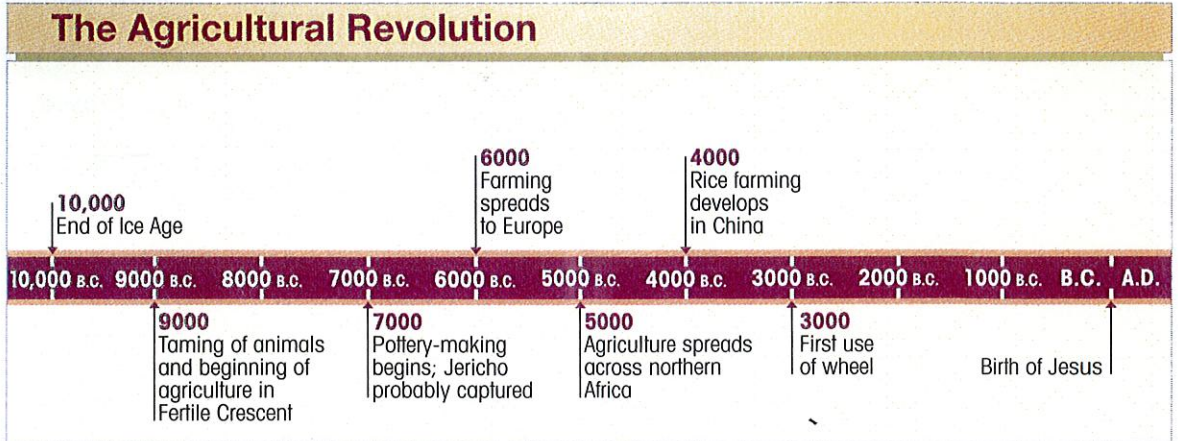
People began to settle wherever there was good soil and plenty of water. Now they had food and clothing. They had time to learn. Certain cities began to grow into great civilizations.

Compare the maps on the next page. Notice how the Middle East changed over time.



Timeline Study

How many years passed between the beginning of agriculture and the first use of the wheel?



The Middle East: Then



The Middle East: Now



Map Study

1. Which names of places are on both maps?
2. Look at both maps. In which present day country was Sumer located?