

# Early People



Chapter 2, Lesson 1

# Lesson Objectives

- ✓ Identify possible explanations of how people came to live in the Americas.
- ✓ Explain how early peoples in the Americas lived, hunted, and farmed.
- ✓ Understand how changes in the environment affected early peoples' lives.

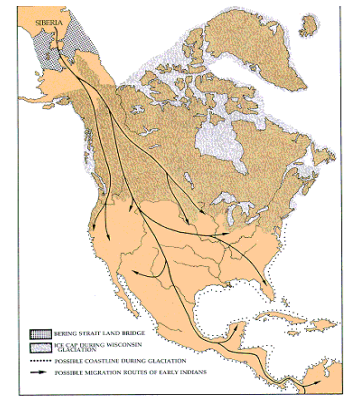
# Vocabulary



- Ancestor
- Theory
- Migration
- Artifact
- Civilization
- Tradition
- Class

# The Land Bridge Theory

- The first people in North America arrived thousands of years ago. These people are the ancestors of present-day Native Americans, or American Indians.
- An ancestor is an early family member.
- Scientists have many theories about how these people first arrived in North America.
- A theory is an idea based on study and research.
- Scientists believed the first people in American entered by crossing the Bering Strait Land Bridge, known as *Beringia*.



1.1 THE BERING STRAIT LAND BRIDGE AND THE MIGRATION OF EARLY INDIANS

# The Bering Strait Land Bridge

- Today, the Bering Strait Land Bridge is completely covered by water.
- When the first visitors to America crossed the Land Bridge, it was not covered by water because the lower sea levels created by frozen glaciers.
- You can compare this process to ice cubes in a glass. When the ice cubes melt, the water level rises.
- These early Americans migrated to what is today the United States.
- Migration means movement of people.



# Other Theories

- Today, scientists have more information about Early Americans than ever before.
- Some scientists still disagree about when and how people arrived.
- Native Americans believe their people have always lived in the Americas and use stories to pass down this information to their children.



# Early Ways of Life

- Early people led nomadic ways of life, meaning they moved from place to place. They usually moved wherever their food source moved in order to hunt.
- Scientists have found artifacts such as spear points near the bones of ancient animals. Artifacts are objects made by people.
- Early people would hunt giant animals such as the woolly mammoth and also gather wild foods, nuts, and plants. These people were known as *hunter-gatherers*.



# A Changing Way of Life

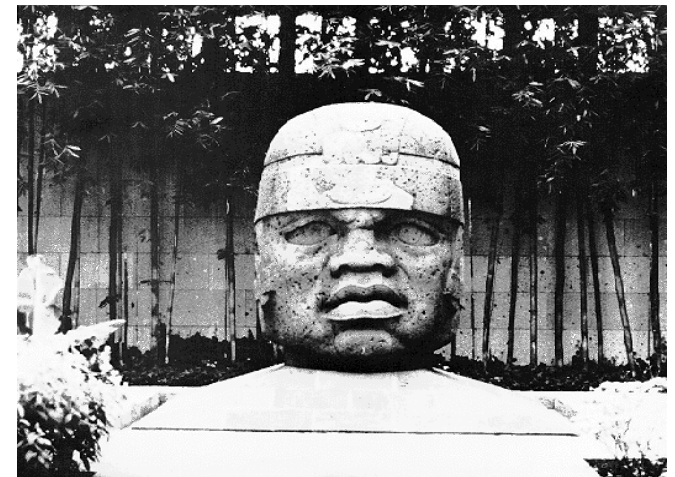
- Slowly, the climate changed, and the world became warmer and drier. The giant animals people had hunted in the past became extinct, or died out.
- People had to find new food sources, so they began to fish and hunt smaller animals.
- About 3,000 B.C., some people in the Americas began planting seeds and growing crops such as corn and beans.
- Agriculture, or farming, gave people a reason to settle in one place. They no longer had to move around following their food source.
- As people began living in one place, the population grew. Groups of people formed tribes who shared the same language, land, and leaders.





# The Olmec Civilization

- Over time, groups began to form civilizations. A civilization is a group of people with ways of life, religion, and learning.
- The Olmec civilization was one of the earliest in the Americas, and was located in Southern Mexico.
- Many Olmec cities were built near rivers, which they used to for trading and to travel between cities.
- The Olmec developed systems of trading, writing, and counting and they had their own 365 day calendar.



# The Mayan Civilization

- The Mayan civilization was influenced by Olmec traditions. A tradition is a way of life or an idea that has been handed down from the past.
- The Maya also developed a system of writing and counting.
- The Maya were divided into social classes. A class is a group of people in a society who have something in common.
- At the top of the Mayan society were the religious leaders.
- Powerful kings ruled the Mayan cities and surrounding areas.
- Some scientists blame the fall of the Maya on a series of droughts, or long periods with little or no rain.



# The Mayan Ruins

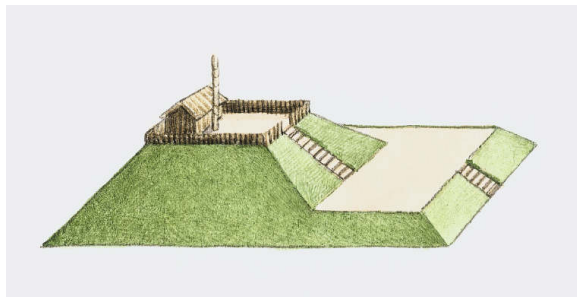
- The Mayan Ruins, what is left of the Mayan civilization, are located in Southern Mexico and are a popular tourist attraction.



- To further explore the Mayan Ruins, visit [www.mayaruins.com](http://www.mayaruins.com).

# Other Civilizations

- The Mound Builders build large earth mounds. Each group of mound builders had different reasons for building mounds.
- The Adena were Mound Builders in the Ohio River Valley. They used mounds for burials. As more people died, the mounds got bigger!
- The largest Mound Building civilization was the Mississippian, who built large cities such as Spiro and Cahokia.



# The Mound Builders



# Other Civilizations

- The Ancient Puebloans lived in Southwest Region of what is now the United States, near Four Corners where the states of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico meet.
- The Ancient Puebloans lived in houses that had many levels and the houses were often build against canyon walls or in caves.
- When the Spanish arrived many years later, they called this type of home a *pueblo*, meaning village.

