



Unit 2 Overview: Early Humans 250000 Years Before Present to 3000 BCE

In this unit, humans learned to share ideas and produce tools. These skills helped humans spread around the world. Eventually, a gradual shift to farming allowed for bigger populations. But was farming a good idea?





<p>0:03</p> <p><i>Photos of teenagers spending time together in various settings—at school, a drive-in movie theater, a roller-skating rink, and an outdoor court; image of clay figurines</i></p>	<p>What do you do in your free time?</p> <p>There are some things that seem universal to young adults across time. For example, most young people want to hang out with their friends. But what they do together has changed over time. Teenagers in the 1950s loved to go to drive-in movies. Teenagers in the '70s and '80s liked to roller skate and break dance. And Paleolithic teenagers thousands of years ago liked to make tiny animal figurines out of clay.</p>
<p><i>Map of Northern Sinagua located in present-day Arizona</i></p>	<p>Figurine-making was one of the big communal hobbies for young people in the Paleolithic Southwest. Or at least, that's what a study from Northern Sinagua, in modern Arizona, tells us.</p>
<p>0:46</p> <p><i>Painting of Paleolithic era peoples engaging in activities of daily living</i></p>	<p>For most of human history, everyone lived a Paleolithic lifestyle. In these communities, almost everyone knew each other, and resources were generally evenly distributed across the whole community.</p>
<p><i>Cave painting, rock engraving, world map highlighting the migration of Paleolithic communities across continents</i></p>	<p>Paleolithic communities developed arts, and cultures, and found ways to share ideas and pass them on to future generations. Communities like these traveled across Africa, migrated into Europe and Asia, built rafts to explore Southeast Asia and Oceania, and even made it to the Americas tens of thousands of years ago.</p>
<p><i>Drawing of paleolithic tools</i></p>	<p>Humans differed from other animals partly because of our ability to make and use large and diverse sets of tools. In fact, the term "Paleolithic", or "old stone", refers to the simple tool technology they used.</p>
<p>01:37</p> <p><i>Animation of foragers hunting deer, rock engravings, photos of commonly foraged foods and hunted animals, Paleolithic clay figurines and ceramics</i></p>	<p>Stone tools supported the Paleolithic lifestyle of foraging—also called "hunting and gathering." But while their tools were simple, young people in Paleolithic societies like Northern Sinagua still had to learn difficult skills. They started early, independently hunting small animals and collecting food for their family or community group. In the foraging communities of northern Arizona, this meant collecting prickly pears, pinyon nuts, and mesquite beans; as well as hunting deer, wild duck, and rabbit. And in their spare time, they practiced crafts and made these small clay objects. And then, something strange happened. Young people in this Arizona community appear to have stopped making ceramics altogether. All the small childlike pots and animal-shaped toys disappeared. What happened?</p>
<p>02:36</p> <p><i>Painting of Neolithic peoples farming, image of the Unit 2 Driving Question: What caused some humans to shift</i></p>	<p>This change was part of a larger transformation called the "Neolithic", or "new stone", revolution. These changes began with a transformation in food production. Over time, Sinagua people had become farmers, rather than foragers. And farming led to lots of other changes. They had to live close to the fields of high-calorie foods they grew—like corn, beans, and squash. So, formerly nomadic groups became sedentary. In other words, they started to stay in one place for longer and longer periods of time, rather</p>



<p>from foraging to farming and what were the effects of this change?, <i>stone dwellings, Neolithic jewelry</i></p>	<p>than moving around foraging for food. As they stayed in one place, they began to acquire more possessions... And some people acquired more possessions than others.</p>
<p>03:20 <i>Text bubble defining the term Egalitarian as “The idea that all people in society should be equal”, photos of a wicker basket, hunting arrow, and fortified dwellings built into the sides of cliffs</i></p>	<p>You see, farming societies tend to be less egalitarian than foraging societies. When people become farmers, they start to do things like choosing leaders, acquiring wealth, and making wars.</p> <p>During their transition to farming, the Sinagua and other inhabitants of northern Arizona don't seem to have lived very unequal lives, as far as farming societies go, but they did move into towns like this one, today called Montezuma Castle. Notice anything about this town? Like how it's nestled into a cave difficult to access? The towns of Sinagua farmers were fortified, and this indicates that they were seeking safety. It's likely, in fact, that their farming societies were more violent than those of their foraging ancestors.</p>
<p>04:13 <i>Drawing of Montezuma Castle, illustrations of the Neolithic communities of Catalhoyuk, Aksum, and Canaan, paintings of Neolithic farmers and artisans</i></p>	<p>So, the Northern Sinagua had traded safety in return for better access to food. This is just one trade-off humans made when they became farmers pretty much everywhere. For example, farming societies tend to have more diseases and less diverse diets. Farmers also work longer hours than their foraging ancestors, with less time for leisure activities, like making figurines. On the other hand, the availability of food meant people could specialize in new jobs, like priests, artists, or soldiers.</p> <p>But the changes also had an impact on young people.</p>
<p>04:54 <i>Photo of a stone cliff, the inside of a Neolithic dwelling featuring an unlit wooden fire and cloths hanging for clotheslines</i></p>	<p>In northern Arizona, it may have meant that going down a cliff and far away from the town to collect clay was too dangerous for kids, so they stopped being able to make their own clay toys. At the same time, the fact that they were now living in larger communities around more kids may have meant that they had the opportunity to make more friends and have a better social life.</p>
<p>05:15 <i>Paintings of foragers hunting birds and farmers building wooden dwellings, herding cattle, and cultivating land</i></p>	<p>This change illustrates the complexity of the Neolithic Revolution which turned foragers into farmers. The transition of farming eventually reshaped all aspects of human societies. It offered plenty of advantages, but also demanded some high costs. Which lifestyle would you have preferred?</p>



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