



2 Lesson Two

The Culture of Food

Enduring Understanding

Cultures change when there is a shift in food production or consumption.

Essential Questions

How does food production or consumption change? What happens to cultural elements such as shelter or social organization when there is a shift in food production?

What Students Will Learn

- Cultural elements may change when there is a change in food production.
- Cultures did change when people shifted from foraging to agriculture.
- Human diets have changed over time.

What Students Will Do

- Complete a chart comparing the cultures of foragers, early farmers, and urban dwellers.

Assessment

Students write an essay describing how American culture might change if all fast-food restaurants disappeared.

Materials

For Each Student

- “Changes in Food over Time” (pages 40–42)
- “Changing Cultures Chart” data collection sheet, one copy for each team of students (page 43)

For the Teacher

- Transparency or PowerPoint of the “Changing Cultures Chart” data collection sheet (page 43)

SUBJECTS: social studies, language arts, science
CCSS: RI.1, W.1, W.4, SL.1, L.6, RH.1, RH.2, RH.4, WHST.4

SKILLS:

- **Bloom’s Taxonomy:** Remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate
- **Facets of Understanding:** Explanation, interpretation, application, self-knowledge

DURATION: 45 to 60 minutes

CLASS SIZE: Any; groups of two

Background Information

We are what we eat—not only physically, but also culturally. In Lesson One, we discovered that humans have nutritional requirements that must be met. In Lesson Two, students will explore the relationship between food and culture. How do subsistence practices affect culture? If subsistence practices change, do cultures change? If so, how?

Misconception Alert! **Archaeologists Study Past Cultures**

Many people mistake archaeology for a swashbuckling “Indiana Jones” adventure. Archaeologists often are thought of as questing after rare and beautiful artifacts. Although it is true that at times archaeologists do find rare and beautiful things, they could more accurately be compared to Sherlock Holmes, a detective of the past, gradually piecing together the culture of a people to understand more about them. A single artifact removed from its context discloses very little about a culture. By studying many sites and artifacts and their relationship to each other and the environment, one discovers the way people lived. Archaeologists study a people’s culture by studying the things they left behind.



Culture is the way people think and act and is reflected in the objects they make and use. Cultures meet basic needs in different ways. The ways in which people satisfy basic human needs, such as the need for food or protection from the elements, differs from group to group, and often changes over time. The different ways that people meet these basic human needs has resulted in the world's rich cultural diversity.

Archaeologists study how past cultures met basic needs by analyzing and interpreting the objects and sites those cultures left behind. A basic assumption of archaeological study is that people who lived in the past had the same basic needs for existence as do people living in the present.

Preparing to Teach

1. Make copies of “Changes in Food over Time” for each student.
2. Make copies of the “Changing Cultures” data collection sheet for each team of students.
3. Make a transparency of the “Changing Cultures” data collection sheet.
4. Post the essential questions: “How does food production or consumption change?” “What happens to cultural elements such as shelter or social organization when there is a shift in food production?”
5. Post the Word Bank words.

Word Bank

agriculture: the science, activity, and business of cultivating the soil, growing crops, and raising livestock; farming

culture: the customs, beliefs, laws, ways of living, and all other results of human work and thought that people of the same society share

farming: the business of growing crops or livestock; agriculture

foragers: people who make a living by hunting and fishing wild animals and by gathering wild plants

foraging: making a living by hunting and fishing wild animals and by gathering wild plants

nomadic: movement throughout the year to obtain resources

subsistence: the food and the work required to maintain one's health and well-being

urban: of, or relating to, a city

Uncover Prior Knowledge

Ask students: How would you define the word culture? What are examples of culture today? What are examples of culture from the past? Do cultures change and, if so, how and why?

Discover New Knowledge

What happens to cultural elements such as shelter or social organization when there is a shift in food production? Inform students that this question will guide their learning.

1. Discuss and define **culture** and add it to the Word Bank.
2. Briefly review the terms **agriculture, farming, foraging, nomadic, and urban.**
3. Ask students: Who has a more diverse diet, foragers or early farmers? Record predictions for future reference.
4. Distribute the “Changes in Food over Time” to each student.
5. In teams of two or as a whole class, students read the “Changes in Food over Time” and list the key points for each section. As a whole class, share some of the key points to check for understanding.
6. Distribute the “Changing Cultures” data collection sheet and divide students into groups of two or three.
7. Using the transparency or PowerPoint slide as a guide for instruction, explain to students that they will describe how foragers, farmers, and urban/modern people respectively met their basic needs for food, shelter, and social organization.
8. The students construct the chart.
9. Assist students with defining **agriculture, foragers, nomadic, farming, and urban** and adding them to their Word Banks.
10. Ask students: Have cultures changed through time? If so, how? What caused the changes?

Assessment

1. Tell students to imagine that most of their food comes from food grown in their own yards or in their neighborhood rather than shipped in from long distances to grocery stores. Ask: How might this change their culture?

2. Have students write a short essay describing how their culture would change if most of their food was grown and sold locally in their community.

2. Ask students to describe what they learned about the change in culture. Record the changes on the timeline.
3. Give students a few minutes to write what “The Culture of Food” means to them. You may want to collect the sheets to check for understanding. Students should keep this document in their folders.

Reflect on New Knowledge

1. Draw a timeline on the classroom board. Ask students to record this timeline on their own paper and fill it in throughout this discussion.

ANSWER KEY

POTENTIAL EVIDENCE-BASED ANSWERS FOR THE TIMELINE

Foraging Societies

9000 BC-----

- Nomadic, Seasonal
- Hunting and Gathering
- Followed herds of wild animals: gazelle, deer, sheep
- Gathered nuts, seeds, and roots of wild plants
- No large food storage
- Temporary shelters

Farming Societies

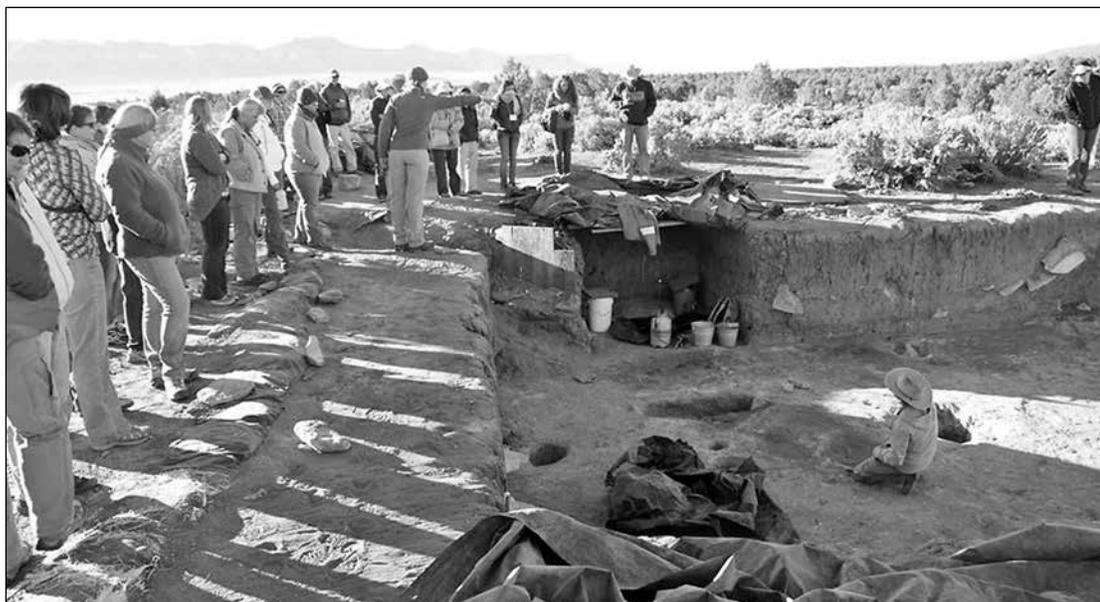
8000 BC-----

- Climate change, hotter and drier
- Decrease in wild foods
- Growing food from the seeds of wild plants
- Herds of animals
- Decreased food diversity
- Permanent shelters
- Food storage
- Increase in population

Urban Societies

4000 BC-----

- Cities, towns, and villages
- Trade
- Manufacture food and other products
- Specialization
- Did not live near fields or grow their own food
- More processed food, less diversity

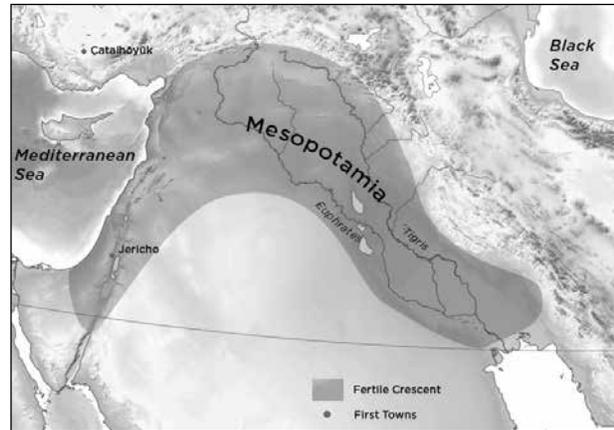


Visiting an archaeological excavation in progress can enhance student learning outcomes.

Changes in Food over Time

Introduction

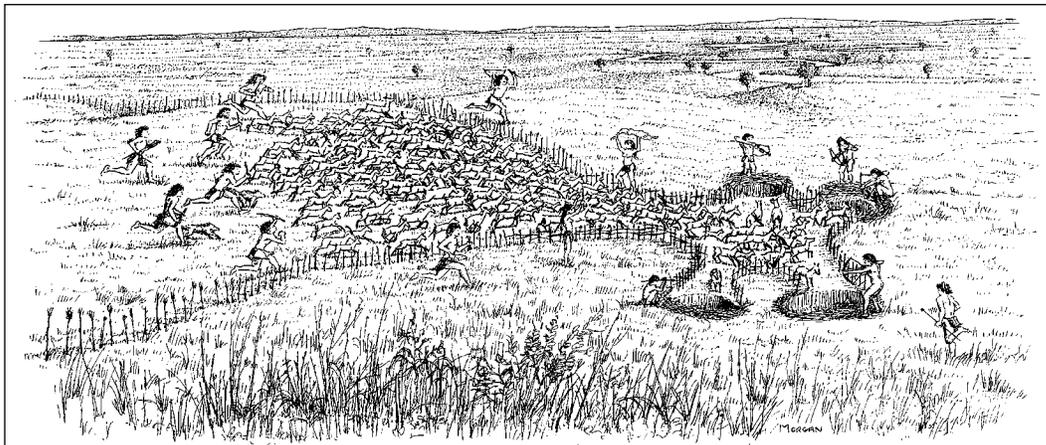
Archaeology is a science that investigates how people lived (culture) in the past—sometimes the past of thousands of years ago or sometimes the more recent past. Archaeologists investigate the objects and food remains people left behind and the places where they lived. They have a number of techniques that help them determine the age of a culture. Archaeologists have learned about people who lived in Mesopotamia as foragers (around 11,000 to 7,000 years ago) and as farmers (around 10,000 to 7,000 years ago). They have also learned about the people who lived in some of the first urban cities in Mesopotamia starting 5,000 to 6,000 years ago.



Map of Mesopotamia.

Foraging Societies

Archaeologists call the people who lived about 11,000 years ago foragers. These people lived a mostly nomadic way of life, hunting and gathering food in areas where they knew it would be available. As the seasons changed, they moved in small family or tribal groups following the herds of wild animals they hunted, such as gazelle, deer, and sheep. They gathered many different kinds of nuts and the seeds and roots of wild plants. They did dry or preserve some foods, such as meats, so they could eat them at a later time or while moving camps. Moving often required that they take only what they could carry, so they did not store large quantities of food nor did they spend time and effort building permanent shelters. Instead, they moved to where the food was, taking their shelters with them or building new temporary shelters each time they moved.



A gazelle hunt illustrating the use of a pole and pitfall animal trap (Moore et al. 2000, 450). Copyright © 2000 by Oxford University Press

Imagine yourself living during this time. What do you think it would have been like? What would you have enjoyed? What would you have found difficult? How much energy did a person have to use to obtain food? What might be positive about this expenditure of energy? What might be negative about this expenditure of energy?

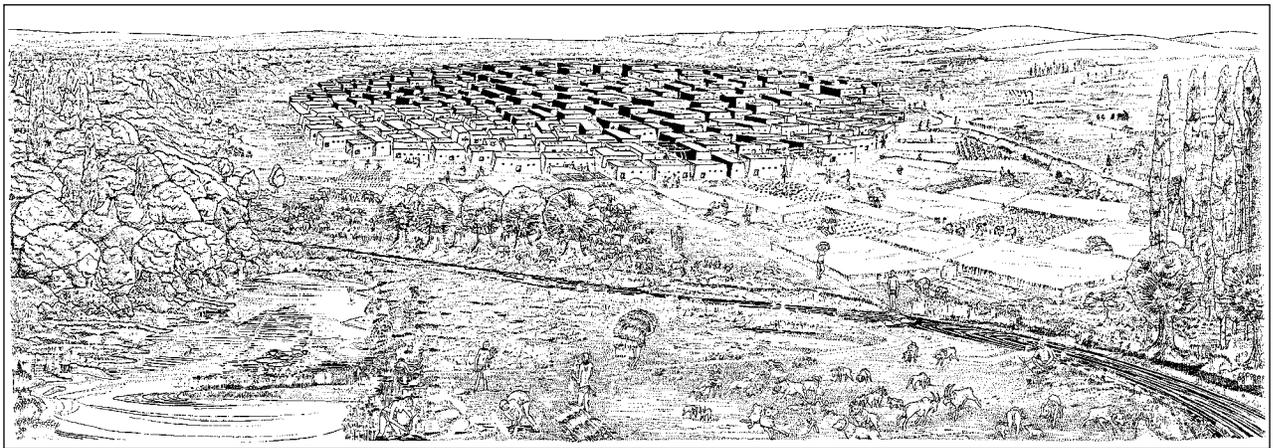


Farming Societies

Archaeologists have discovered that about 10,000 years ago there was both a change in climate and in culture in Mesopotamia. The climate became hotter and drier, reducing the numbers and kinds of wild plants and animals that were available to foragers. The change in climate and the decrease in wild foods inspired these people to experiment with growing their own food from the seeds of a few wild plants and maintaining herds of animals for food such as goats and sheep. Growing plants and maintaining animals decreased food diversity because people could not grow as many different plants as those found in the wild. Similarly, only a few animals could be maintained in close contact with humans and successfully raised in smaller areas. This new way to meet subsistence needs is known as agriculture or farming.

As humans became more dependent on agriculture (food that they grew) than foraging (gathered foods), they began to build small communities or villages with permanent shelters. They continued to hunt and gather wild foods, but used their villages as bases rather than traveling with the change in seasons. Living in one place made it necessary to store harvested food in caches dug into the earth and covered to protect it from predators and pests (insects and rodents). They also dried their food, especially meat, for later use. Because people were staying in one place, it became very important to save and store enough food for winter and early spring when there would be no crops to harvest. Extra food would also need to be saved in case of drought. In these farming villages, families had more babies, increasing the population of humans more quickly.

Imagine yourself living during this time. What do you think it would have been like? What would you have enjoyed? What would you have found difficult? How might this life be better than and/or worse than a forager's life? How much energy did a person have to use to obtain food? What might be positive about this expenditure of energy? What might be negative about this expenditure of energy?



A farming society in Mesopotamia (Moore et al. 2000, xviii). Copyright © 2000 by Oxford University Press

Urban Societies and Modern Life

Archaeologists have discovered that the very first cities appeared 6,000 years ago in Mesopotamia. These early cities may have housed up to 40,000 people in an area of 2.5 square kilometers. During this time there were also many smaller cities, towns, and villages. However, all of these settlements were involved in trade and manufacture of food (bread, oil, beer) and other products, such as pottery, cloth, jewelry, precious stones, and metals. People began to specialize in a particular trade and no longer lived near fields or grew their own foods.

Today many people live in urban societies in much larger groups and very few people hunt, gather, or grow their own food. Instead, they depend on food shipped into grocery stores from far away. Urban life



can be very busy, as people today work at jobs eight or more hours a day and have little time to prepare foods, much less grow and harvest them. As a result, many people do not give much thought to what they eat and rely on readily available pre-cooked and processed foods. Others do not have the resources to purchase healthy foods, resulting in people eating fewer fresh foods, eating the same foods every week, consuming more processed foods, and getting less exercise.

Historically, more than 7,000 plant species have been collected or cultivated for food. About 200 plant species have been domesticated. But in today's world, humans get 75% of their calories from only 12 starchy plant species: bananas, beans, cassava, corn, millet, potatoes, rice, soy, sorghum, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, and wheat. Three plant species (wheat, rice, and corn) now account for 60% of all human calories. This lack of diversity in modern diets often leads to poor health, despite the consumption of an adequate amount of calories.

How is your life different from the hunter-gather and the farming societies of long ago? What is better about your way of life? What is more challenging about your way of life?



Archaeological excavation of Tell al-Raqa'i, one of the first cities in Mesopotamia (photo courtesy of Glenn M. Schwartz).

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Changing Cultures Chart



Need	Foragers	Farmers	Urban/Modern People