

Early Peoples of Mexico 5.1.2 5.1.3

Around 10,000 B.C., the climate began to grow warmer. Mammoths and other large Ice Age mammals did not survive this climate change. Early people then had to eat more plants to survive.

Around 7000 B.C., however, Indians in Central America began to deliberately plant seeds. They grew sunflowers, tomatoes, and three crops so important to their survival that some Native Americans called them the Three Sisters. They were corn (also called maize), beans, and squash.

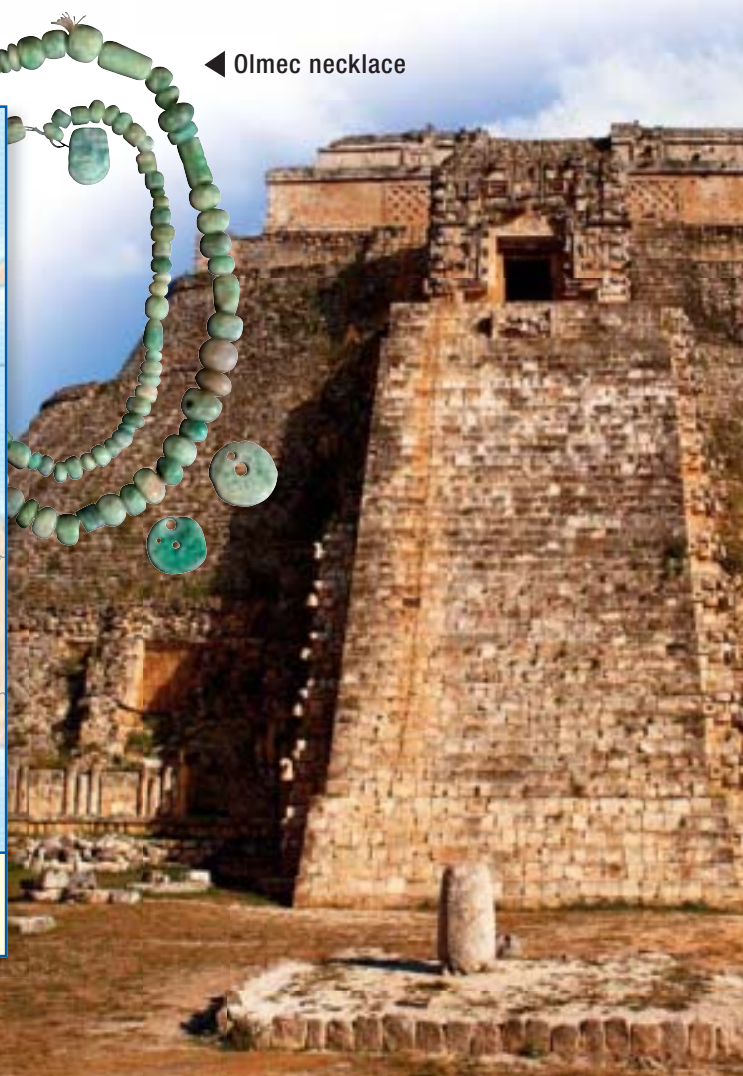
In time, Indians in this area began to settle and grow crops. Soon people in farming communities **specialized**, or spent time doing only one job. For example, some villagers traded goods, while others made pottery. They also began to place power in the hands of one leader.

Farming communities were able to specialize because they produced **surpluses**, or more food than they needed. Some communities formed **civilizations**, or a people who have systems of specialization, learning, art, and religion.

The Olmec

One of the earliest cultures in the Americas was the Olmec in southeastern Mexico. In about 1200 B.C., the Olmec began to clear the land and plant corn, beans, and squash along riverbanks.

The Olmec carved huge stone statues, played ball games, and created a calendar. Trade made the Olmec civilization strong and powerful. The Olmec traded with people who lived hundreds of miles away. Olmec culture spread along trade routes to



other parts of Mexico and Central America. In 300 B.C. the Olmec civilization ended.

The Maya

One group that traded with the Olmec was the Maya. From about A.D. 300 to A.D. 900, the Maya grew strong through trade. They created an accurate calendar and wrote histories, poems, prayers, songs, and stories. Pyramids, used to worship Maya gods, were built in large cities such as Uxmal, Tikal, and Copán. The Maya were ruled by both men and women, including K'inich Yax K'uk Mo' and the Queen of Waka'.

Maya civilization lasted until about 1,100 years ago. The Maya people did not disappear, however. Today their **descendants** live in Mexico and Guatemala. Descendants are those who follow after.

REVIEW What effect did trade have on the Olmec civilization? *Cause and Effect*

◀ It took millions of hours of human power to build Mayan pyramids like this one at Uxmal, Mexico.

California

At the Same Time

At the same time that farming developed in Mexico, people in California's Coso Mountains, west of Death Valley, were chipping pictures into the walls of canyons. No one knows why these carvings were made. The bighorn sheep, an animal thought to have the power to bring rain, appears in many of the pictures.

What You Learned

- 5.1.1 Many scientists believe that Asian hunter-gatherers began moving to North America 15,000 to 30,000 years ago.
- 5.1.2 The Olmec and Maya were the first to develop civilizations in North America.
- 5.1.3

Lesson Review

1. **Focus Question** What led to the start of early civilizations?

5.1.3

2. **Vocabulary** Write two paragraphs on ideas about early Americans. Use these words in your writing.

5.1.1

5.1.2 **archaeologist** **surplus**
specialize

3. **Geography** Why did Beringia appear?

5.1.1

4. **Critical Thinking Draw Conclusions** What conclusions can you draw about hunter-gatherer groups?

5.1.1

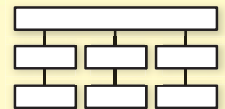
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5. **Reading Strategy Identify**

5.1.2 **Main Idea and Details** List the main idea and details about the Maya.

ELA

R2.2



6. **Write about** **THE BIG IDEA** Write about how the first Americans survived the climate changes that occurred during the last Ice Age.

5.1.1

ELA

W1.2

7. **Link to Science** Many of the plants eaten in the world today were first grown by early Native Americans. These include corn, potatoes, tomatoes, and cacao. With a group, research the plants first grown in the Americas. Plan a menu for a three-course meal based only on these foods.

5.1.1