

# Chapter

# 6

# The Ancient Americas

▼ The ancient Mayan city of Chichén Itzá

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

## Where & When?

1100 B.C.

● c. 1200 B.C.  
Olmec build an empire

400 B.C.

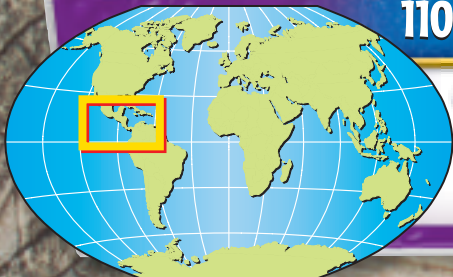
● c. A.D. 100  
Moche civilization begins

A.D. 300

● c. A.D. 500  
Mayan civilization reaches its peak

A.D. 1000

● c. A.D. 950  
Mayan cities abandoned



# The Big Ideas

## Section

## 1

## The First Americans

**Physical geography plays a role in how civilizations develop and**

**decline.** The first people in the Americas arrived thousands of years ago. Farming led to the growth of civilizations in what is now Mexico, Central America, and Peru.

## Section

## 2

## The Mayan People

**Civilizations are strengthened by a variety of advances.** The Maya built a complex culture in Mesoamerica with great temples and made advances in science and writing.



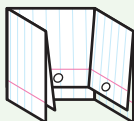
View the Chapter 6 video in the Glencoe Video Program.

### FOLDABLES™ Study Organizer

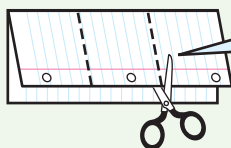
**Compare-Contrast** Make this foldable to help you compare and contrast what you learn about the ancient Americas.

**Step 1** Fold a sheet of paper in half from side to side.

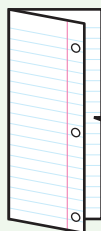
**Step 2** Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.



**Step 3** Unfold and cut only the top layer along both folds.

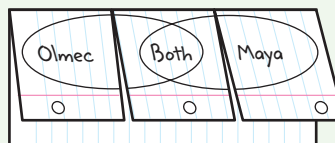


This will make three tabs.



Fold it so the left edge lies about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the right edge.

**Step 4** Label as shown.



### Reading and Writing

As you read the sections on the ancient Americas, record important concepts and events under the appropriate tabs. Then record ideas similar to both under the middle tab.

# Get Ready to Read

## Taking Notes



Reading  
Skill

### 1 Learn It!

When you do research for a report or study for a test, it helps to write down information so that you can refer to it later. By taking notes, you can:

- phrase the information in your own words
- learn to restate ideas in short, memorable phrases
- stay focused on main ideas and only the most important supporting details.

As the ice froze and the seas fell, an area of dry land was exposed between Asia and Alaska. Scientists call this land bridge Beringia (buh • RIHN • jee • uh), after Vitus Bering, a famous European explorer. They think that people in Asia followed the animals they were hunting across this land bridge into the Americas. By testing the age of bones and tools at ancient campsites, scientists estimate that the first people arrived between 15,000 and 40,000 years ago.

—from page 313

B

A

C

### Reading Tip

Read first and take notes afterwards. You are likely to take down too much information if you take notes as you read.

These notes were recorded for the paragraph above.

- Asians followed animals across Beringia to the Americas
- Beringia—named after European explorer Vitus Bering
- People came to Americas about 15,000 to 40,000 years ago

## 2 Practice It!

Using a two-column chart can make note-taking easier. Write main ideas in the left column. In the right column, write at least two supporting details for each main idea. Read the text from this chapter under the heading **Mayan Culture** on pages 320–321. Then take notes using a two-column chart, such as the one below.

| Main Idea                  | Supporting Details   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Life in Mayan Cities       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol> |
| Mayan Science and Writing  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol> |
| What Happened to the Maya? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol> |

### Read to Write

Choose an important person or place from the chapter. Then do research using at least three sources and take notes using the two-column method. Use your notes to write a brief paragraph summarizing your topic.



▲ Mayan ballplayer

## 3 Apply It!

As you read one of the sections, make a chart with important dates, names, places, and events as main ideas. Under each main idea, list at least two details from your reading.

# Section

# 1

# The First Americans

## Guide to Reading



### History Social Science Standards

**WH.7.7** Students compare and contrast the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Meso-American and Andean civilizations.

### Looking Back, Looking Ahead

While civilization flourished in Mesopotamia, India, and China, thousands of miles away in the Americas, new civilizations began to develop.

### Focusing on the Main Ideas

- People came to the Americas during the Ice Age, and about 10,000 years ago, farming began in Mesoamerica. (page 313)
- The first civilizations in America were based on farming and trade. (page 315)

### Locating Places

**Mesoamerica**  
(MEH•zoh•uh•MEHR•ih•kuh)

**Teotihuacán**  
(TAY•oh•TEE•wuh•KAHN)

### Meeting People

**Olmec** (OHL•mehk)

**Maya** (MY•uh)

**Moche** (MOH•cheh)

### Content Vocabulary

**glacier** (GLAY•shuhr)

### Academic Vocabulary

**expose** (ihk•SPOHZ)

**estimate** (EHS•tuh•MAYT)

### Reading Strategy

**Summarizing Information** Create a chart to show the characteristics of the Olmec and Moche.

|           | Olmec | Moche |
|-----------|-------|-------|
| Location  |       |       |
| Dates     |       |       |
| Lifestyle |       |       |



## Where & When?



1500 B.C.

c. 1200 B.C.  
Olmec build an empire

A.D. 1

c. A.D. 100  
Moche civilization begins

A.D. 500

c. A.D. 400  
Teotihuacán prospers



## Farming in Mesoamerica

**Main Idea** People came to the Americas during the Ice Age, and about 10,000 years ago, farming began in Mesoamerica.

**Reading Connection** What would our lives be like if people never learned to farm? Read to learn how farming made civilization possible in Mesoamerica.

We know people came to America a long time ago, but how did they get here? Today, America is not connected by land to the rest of the world, but in the past it was. Scientists have studied the earth's geography during the Ice Age—a period when temperatures dropped sharply. At that time, much of the earth's water froze into huge sheets of ice, or **glaciers** (GLAY • shuhrz).

As the ice froze and the seas fell, an area of dry land was **exposed** between Asia and Alaska. Scientists call this land bridge Beringia (buh • RIHN • jee • uh), after Vitus Bering, a famous European explorer. They think that people in Asia followed the animals they were hunting across this land bridge into the Americas. By testing the age of bones and tools at ancient campsites, scientists **estimate** that the first people arrived between 15,000 and 40,000 years ago.



◀ Stone arrowhead

When the Ice Age ended about 10,000 years ago, the glaciers melted and released water back into the seas. The land bridge to America disappeared beneath the waves.

**Hunting and Gathering** Hunters in the Americas were constantly on the move in search of food. They fished and gathered nuts, fruits, or roots. They also hunted massive prey, such as the woolly mammoth, antelope, caribou, and bison.

It took several hunters to kill a woolly mammoth, which could weigh as much as 9 tons. These big animals provided meat, hides for clothing, and bones for tools.

As the Ice Age ended, some animals became extinct, or disappeared from the earth. Other animals found ways to survive

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC** **Migration to America**

**Using Geography Skills**

- Movement** How did prehistoric people get to America from Asia?
- Human/Environment Interaction** Why do you think prehistoric people spread throughout the Americas?

Find NGS online map resources @ [www.nationalgeographic.com/maps](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps)

**KEY**

- Extent of ice sheet
- Land now under water
- Possible migration routes

the change in environment. The warm weather, however, opened new opportunities to early Americans.

## The Agricultural Revolution in America

The first Americans were hunter-gatherers, but as the Ice Age ended and the climate warmed, people in America made an amazing discovery. They learned that seeds could be planted and they would grow into crops that people could eat.

Farming began in **Mesoamerica** (MEH•zoh•uh•MEHR•ih•kuh) 9,000 to 10,000 years ago. *Meso* comes from the Greek word for “middle.” This region includes lands stretching from the Valley of Mexico to Costa Rica in Central America.

The region’s geography was ideal for farming. Much of the area had a rich, volcanic soil and a mild climate. Rains fell in

the spring, helping seeds to sprout. They decreased in the summer, allowing crops to ripen for harvest. Then, in the autumn, the rains returned, soaking the soil for the next year’s crop.


The first crops grown in the Americas included pumpkins, peppers, squash, gourds, and beans. It took longer to develop corn, which grew as a wild grass. Early plants produced a single, one-inch cob. By about 2000 B.C., early Americans had learned the technique of crossing corn with other grasses to get bigger cobs and more cobs per plant. This increased the food supply and allowed Mesoamerican populations to grow. Corn, also known as maize, became the most important food in the Americas.

**Reading Check Summarize** How did the agricultural revolution begin in America?


**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

## Ancient American Civilizations

▼ An Olmec stone head



Moche pottery in the shape of a llama ▼



**Using Geography Skills**

1. **Region** What geographical trait did all three civilizations share?
2. **Location** How far apart were the Mayan and Moche civilizations?



**WH7.7.1** Study the locations, landforms, and climates of Mexico, Central America, and South America and their effects on Mayan, Aztec, and Incan economies, trade, and development of urban societies.

American Museum of Natural History

## Early American Civilizations

**Main Idea** The first civilizations in America were based on farming and trade.

**Reading Connection** Have you ever traded something with your friend for something you wanted? Read to find out how early American civilizations traded goods to get what they needed.

Growing corn and other crops allowed Mesoamericans to form more complex societies. Starting around 1500 B.C., the first American civilizations appeared.

**Who Were the Olmec?** Near present-day Vera Cruz, Mexico, a people called the **Olmec** (OHL•mehk) built a far-reaching trading empire. It started around 1200 B.C. and lasted about 800 years.

The Olmec enjoyed rich farming resources. For example, they received abundant

rainfall and crops grew well. Instead of building irrigation systems, they built drainage systems to divert water to protect their crops.

The Olmec lacked important raw materials. They traded salt and beans with inland peoples to get jade for jewelry and obsidian, or volcanic glass, to make sharp-edged knives. They used other trade goods such as hematite, a shiny volcanic stone, to make polished mirrors and basalt to carve gigantic stone heads.

The Olmec used the region's many rivers as highways for trade, but eventually, the inland peoples seized control of the trade. One of these groups built the first planned city in the Americas. It became known as **Teotihuacán** (TAY•oh•TEE•wuh•KAHN), or "Place of the Gods." The city reached its height around A.D. 400. It had a population of between 120,000 to 200,000 people.



▲ The Pyramid of the Sun is located in the Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacán. At over 200 feet tall, this pyramid is the tallest in present-day Mexico.

▼ This pyramid was in the Mayan city of Tikal, which was located in present-day Guatemala. **What caused the downfall of the Mayan civilization?**





**Who Were the Maya?** As Teotihuacán's power spread, a people called the **Maya** (MY•uh) built a civilization in the steamy rain forests of the Yucatán Peninsula (yoo•kuh•TAN). They, too, traded throughout Mesoamerica. The Maya used their central location to reach into what is now southern Mexico and Central America. Mayan traders in seagoing canoes paddled along the coast, perhaps reaching as far as the present-day United States. You will read about the Maya in Section 2.

**The Moche** South of Mesoamerica, a civilization developed on the west coast of South America. The **Moche** (MOH•chuh) people lived in the dry coastal desert where Peru is today.

The Moche civilization lasted from about A.D. 100 to A.D. 700. They dug canals that

carried water from rivers in the Andes to their desert homeland. Because of this irrigation, the Moche suffered no shortage of food. They ate corn, squash, beans, and peanuts. They also hunted llamas and guinea pigs and fished in the Pacific Ocean. Llamas also served as pack animals and provided wool for weaving.

This surplus of food freed the Moche to do other things. Moche engineers built huge pyramids, and Moche traders exchanged goods with people as far away as the Amazon River valley. These goods included pottery, cloth, and jewelry.

For all their achievements, the Moche never expanded much beyond their homeland. They were eventually replaced by a civilization called the Inca.

**Reading Check Describe** What was America's first civilization? Where did it develop?

**History Online**  
**Study Central** Need help understanding the rise of civilization in the Americas? Visit [ca.hss.glencoe.com](http://ca.hss.glencoe.com) and click on Study Central.

## Section 1 Review

### Reading Summary

#### Review the Main Ideas

- The first Americans were most likely hunter-gatherers who came from Asia across a land bridge. The first civilization appeared in Mesoamerica when people learned to farm.
- A number of civilizations developed in the Americas, including the Olmec and Maya in Central America and Mexico, and the Moche in South America. All were dependent on farming.

### What Did You Learn?

1. Why was Mesoamerica's geography ideal for farming?
2. How did the first Americans develop corn?

#### Critical Thinking

3. **Summarizing Information** Draw a chart like the one below. Add details about the early peoples of Mesoamerica and South America. **CA 6RC2.4**

|                      |
|----------------------|
| <b>Mesoamerica</b>   |
|                      |
|                      |
| <b>South America</b> |
|                      |
|                      |

4. **Summarize** How did the first people come to the Americas, and how did they live once they were here? **CA 6RC2.0**
5. **The Big Ideas** How did geography shape Moche civilization? **CA CS3.**
6. **Expository Writing** Write a short essay comparing the civilizations that developed in Mesoamerica and South America. **CA 6WS1.3**
7. **Reading Taking Notes** Review Section 1 and take notes. Create an outline of the section from your notes. Use this outline to review the section. **CA 6RC2.4**