

Summary: Ancient Americans

People Arrive in the Americas

During the Ice Age much of the world's water was frozen in glaciers. The ocean floor between Alaska and Asia was a grassy land bridge. Many scientists think people followed migrating animal herds across it. Migration stopped about 10,000 years ago when the glaciers melted and the seas rose. People who had crossed from Asia, called Paleo-Indians, spread out over North and South America. They are the ancestors of modern American Indians.

Civilizations Develop

Early Paleo-Indians hunted big animals. About 11,000 years ago the big animals began to die out. People learned new ways to get food. They hunted smaller animals, fished, and gathered wild plants.

About 9,000 years ago some Paleo-Indians began to use agriculture. Scientists think people in present-day Mexico grew the first crops of corn, beans, and squash. People's lives changed as they stopped migrating to grow crops. More people survived because of the supply of food.

Paleo-Indians farmed and built villages and cities. The Adena, Hopewell, and Mississippians were Mound Builders. They built giant earth mounds and large villages in North America. Their civilization lasted for about 2,500 years.

The Ancient Pueblo civilization lived in the Southwest region for about 800 years. The Ancient Pueblo built big buildings made of stone with many rooms. The Ancient Pueblo also built underground rooms, called kivas, used for religious ceremonies. Around 1300, the Ancient Pueblo left their villages. No one knows why they left.

The Aztec civilization controlled Central Mexico around 1300 and was strong for 200 years. American Indian groups developed civilizations in almost every region of North America.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

glacier *noun*, a huge, thick sheet of slowly moving ice

migration *noun*, movement from one region to another

agriculture *noun*, farming, or growing plants

civilization *noun*, a group of people living together with organized systems of government, religion, and culture

pueblo *noun*, the Spanish word for town



After You Read

REVIEW According to scientists, how did people first come to North America? Circle the sentences that tell how scientists think people came to North America.

REVIEW Where did the mound building civilizations live? Underline the sentence that tells you the answer.

REVIEW What were kivas? Highlight the sentence that tells how kivas were used.