The Neolithic Age

**Key Terms:** Define each term from the readings on the next few pages

domesticated -

population -

specialization –

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**Making A Connection**

What interests do you have? What interests do you think might lead to a career in the future? Would people be able to think of having careers if they had to provide for their own food, shelter, and clothing? Why?

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**Organizing Your Thoughts**

*Use the diagram below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the changes brought about by having a steady food supply.*

![Diagram](image)
**Farmers and Herders**

The Neolithic Age, or New Stone Age, started around 8000 B.C. At this time, people changed from being food gatherers to food producers. They began getting most of their food from farming. This brought about great changes in the way the people lived. For this reason the beginning of farming is called the Neolithic Revolution.

The Neolithic Revolution came about because of two discoveries. One was learning to grow food. The other was learning to herd animals. Farming probably started when people discovered that seed from wild grains, such as wheat, could be planted and harvested. Scientists believe that farming started independently in different parts of the world.

People probably learned they could herd animals when a hunting band built fences to enclose a herd of wild animals they had chased. The hunters killed one animal at a time and saved the rest for later. Soon they found that the captured animals lost their fear of people and became domesticated, or tamed. Then the hunters became herders. People then began using certain animals such as donkeys and camels as pack animals.

The Neolithic Revolution greatly increased the world's food supply. With a greater food supply, the population, or number of people, began to grow.

**What two discoveries led to the Neolithic Revolution?**

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**How did early people probably learn these two discoveries?**

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**Early Villages**

After people began to produce food, they were able to settle in one place. They built permanent shelters. They built villages in places with a good soil and water supply.

The earliest known villages in the world have been found in southwestern Asia. Jericho, found in present-day Israel, dates back to about 8000 B.C. Catal Hüyük was located in present-day Turkey. People lived there from about 6500 to 5700 B.C.

Archaeologists know a great deal about Catal Hüyük because wooden and cloth objects there were blackened rather than destroyed by a fire. The blackening helped to preserve the objects. The houses there were made of sun-dried brick. For protection, the houses in the village had two or three rooms and no doors. People went in and out of a house through a hole in the roof by using a ladder. Among the houses stood open courtyards with large ovens for baking bread. Beyond the houses were vegetable gardens, fields of grain, and pastures where animals grazed.
Where did early people build villages?
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Describe an example of early housing.
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**Specialization**

Another result of a steady food supply was **specialization**, or the development of occupations. With enough food available, fewer people were needed to produce food. So other people were able to do other jobs, such as becoming weavers or potters. They exchanged what they made for food.

Specialization was aided by several developments. First, people learned to make pottery by baking clay. They used pots for storing food and for cooking. Once they began using them for cooking, they could add different things to what they ate, such as soups.

Neolithic people also learned to weave cloth. They took wool from sheep and spun it into thread. They then wove the thread into cloth. Neolithic people also learned to work metals. They picked up metals such as gold and silver and hammered them into jewelry. Soon they were using the metals to make weapons.

**What contributed to the start of specialization?**
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**What were some of the things that early people learned to do?**
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**Government**

Another development during Neolithic times was village government. Once people's lives depended on having a piece of land, people began to protect what they had. But disputes arose over land ownership, so a chief was chosen. The chief settled disputes and, together with a small group of people, directed village activities.
What were the duties of a village chief in Neolithic times?

Why would a Neolithic village need a government?

Religion

Village chiefs were also village priests. They handled religious duties. They offered prayers for things people needed, such as water for crops. Neolithic people prayed to the forces of nature. They believed the world was full of spirits and forces that might reside in animals, objects, or dreams. Such beliefs are known as animism. Then the people created gods and goddesses to represent these forces. The most important god was the Earth Mother.

What kinds of things did the village priests pray for?

Why do you think a village chief was also a village priest?

Do you think the government or religion had more influence on Neolithic people? Why? Explain.

Explain how the Neolithic Age is similar to our modern age. Are we still influenced by the developments made during that time? Why or why not?