

# Contents

Becoming Human .....	3
The Stone Age in Art.....	6
The Great Breakthrough .....	8
History Begins .....	10
Voyage to Punt .....	12
Mystery of the Indus Valley .....	14
Confucius .....	16
The Greeks and Their Gifts .....	18
Democracy in Athens .....	20
How King Asoka Gave Up War .....	22
The One-Generation Dynasty .....	24
Rome.....	26
Building an Empire.....	28
Kush .....	30
The Celts .....	32
The Maya .....	34
Games.....	36
Barbarians .....	38
China in Its Golden Age .....	40
Facing Mecca .....	42
The Crusades.....	44
Chivalry .....	46
Chivalry, Japanese Style .....	48
Kingdoms of Gold and Salt .....	50
The Oral Tradition .....	52
West Meets East .....	54
Music in Stone.....	56
The Black Death .....	58
Great Zimbabwe .....	60
In the Americas .....	62
Glossary.....	64



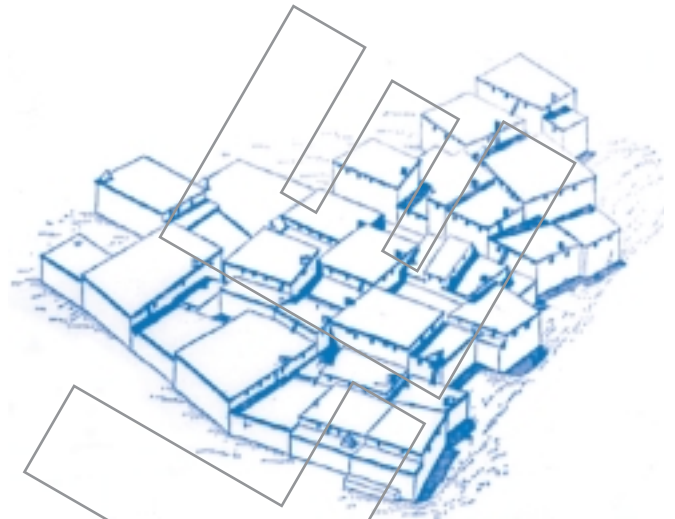
# The Great Breakthrough

**T**welve thousand years ago, the last Ice Age was ending. Climates were growing milder. Plants and animals began to return to areas that had long been covered by glaciers. Humans moved into new habitats, following the food supply. They roamed from place to place, hunting animals for their meat and skins and gathering edible plants. People naturally sought plants that were rich in food value. Where such plants grew, humans did not need to roam so much. Hunters still had to wander in search of game, but no one starved if they knew where food plants grew.

Then around 11,000 years ago, someone got an idea that would change human life. She realized that instead of gathering plants where you found them, you could make them grow where you wanted. (It probably was a “she,” because in hunter-gatherer cultures, men were usually the hunters and women the gatherers.)

This breakthrough marks the beginning of the New Stone Age, or Neolithic. Tools were still made of stone, but Neolithic people had a huge advantage over cultures that were still in the Mesolithic. They produced their own food. This meant that they could feed more people—ten to 100 times more than hunter-gatherers in an area of equal size. Food could be stored in times of plenty for use in the lean years. With food-growing came the domestication of animals—sheep and goats, and later pigs and cattle. They were raised for their meat and their milk, their wool and their hides. Their manure fertilized the fields. The larger animals served as beasts of burden.

The Neolithic breakthrough happened first in southwest Asia. This was the original home of wheat and barley, two plants especially rich in food value. The culture spread wherever these plants could grow—eastward into Asia, south and west into Egypt, north and west into Europe. It arose later in places that would become China and Mexico. Neolithic people lived in permanent villages. They built sturdier shelters than the skin



tents and stick huts of hunter-gatherers. Just a few food producers could feed a whole community. That meant others were now free to learn and perfect new skills. They learned to make clothing and rope from plants. They discovered how to shape and bake clay to make pottery for storing and cooking food. And they traded for things they did not have or could not make.

For thousands of years, Neolithic and Mesolithic cultures lived side by side. Perhaps inevitably, there was conflict between them. Hunters raided Neolithic villages for the food they knew would be there. Farm communities fought each other over land or water. Some well-organized communities built walls for protection. There may have been a wall at Jericho, an oasis in the desert east of the Mediterranean Sea, as early as 8000 B.C.

A much larger Neolithic community grew at Çatal Hüyük (CHAT•ul HOO•yook) in what is now southern Turkey. As many as 6,000 people may have lived there by 6500 B.C. The people of Çatal Hüyük worshiped the Great Mother goddess, who probably represented the earth. They built houses with common walls for protection. These were built on stilts and platforms with entrances at roof level. The people used ladders to climb in and out. Wonderful paintings decorated the walls of the houses. Çatal Hüyük was a wealthy center of trade and culture in Neolithic times.

**Put an X in the square beside the best answer.**

1. Which of these words is the title of a ruler, like *queen* or *emperor*?  
 Mbunda                       Jaga                       Angola                       ngola
2. Paragraphs 3 and 4 are mostly about \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Portuguese traders                       how people became enslaved  
 the slave trade in Africa                       Columbus's discovery of America
3. The passage suggests that Nzinga came to Luanda to \_\_\_\_\_.  
 negotiate a treaty for her brother                       trade with the Portuguese  
 protest against the slave trade                       make war against the Portuguese
4. Which of these events happened *second*?  
 Columbus landed in the New World.  
 The slave trade in Africa began.  
 Nzinga ruled the Mbunda people.  
 Nzinga's brother ruled the Mbunda people.
5. Nzinga fought the Portuguese because \_\_\_\_\_.  
 she wanted to stop the slave trade  
 she made an alliance with the Dutch  
 they would not treat her nation as an equal  
 her husband had been sold into slavery
6. In paragraph 3, the word traffic means \_\_\_\_\_.  
 moving cars                       evil                       trade                       to make war



**Write your answer to the following question on the lines below.**

How did the incident described in paragraph 2 help Nzinga gain an advantage over the Portuguese governor? What would be the equivalent in today's world?

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