

## The Stone Ages and Early Cultures

### Section 3



#### MAIN IDEAS

1. The first farmers learned to grow plants and raise animals in the New Stone Age.
2. Farming changed societies and the way people lived.

### Key Terms and People

**Neolithic Era** the last Stone Age, lasting from about 10,000 years ago to about 5,000 years ago in Egypt and Southwest Asia and later elsewhere

**domestication** the process of changing plants or animals to make them more useful to humans

**agriculture** the development of farming from the domestication of plants

**megaliths** huge stones used as monuments or sites for religious gatherings

### Academic Vocabulary

**development** creation and growth

## Section Summary

### THE FIRST FARMERS

A warming trend brought an end to the ice ages, and new plants began to grow in some areas. As early as 10,000 years ago, in Egypt and Southwest Asia, people came to depend on wild barley and wheat for food. People soon learned that they could plant seeds to grow their own crops. This shift from food gathering to food producing defined the **Neolithic** (nee-uh-LI-thik) **Era**.

This **domestication** of plants led to the **development** of **agriculture**, or farming. The first farmers also learned to domesticate animals. Instead of following wild herds, they could now keep sheep and goats for milk, food, and wool. People could also use large animals like cattle to carry loads or to pull large tools used in farming. Domestication greatly improved people's chances of surviving.

What brought an end to the ice ages?

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What were three tasks for which early people used domesticated animals?

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With survival more certain, people could focus on activities other than finding food.

During this time, people also learned to polish stones to make specialized tools like saws and drills. People also learned how to make fire. Before learning that skill, people could use only fire that had been started by natural causes, such as lightning.

**What great discovery did Neolithic people make about fire?**

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**FARMING CHANGES SOCIETIES**

People began to make clothing from plant fibers and wool as well as from animal skins. As these early farmers learned to control their own food production and to make better shelters and clothing, populations grew. In some areas farming communities developed into towns.

Some groups gathered to perform religious ceremonies around huge stone monuments called **megaliths**. These people probably believed in gods and goddesses associated with the four elements—air, water, fire, and earth—or with animals. Some scholars believe that prehistoric people also prayed to their ancestors. Some societies today still hold these beliefs.

**What materials were first used by Neolithic people to make clothing?**

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**Who or what did early humans worship?**

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**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences** Use the Internet or a library to research theories about how the megaliths at Stonehenge in England were built. Then write your own theory.

Section 3, *continued*

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**DIRECTIONS** On the line provided before each statement, write **T** if a statement is true and **F** if a statement is false. If the statement is false, write the correct term on the line after each sentence that makes the sentence a true statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mammoths are large stones that were used in religious ceremonies as monuments.

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\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Domestication is the process of changing plants and animals to make them more useful to humans.

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\_\_\_\_\_ 3. During the Neolithic Era, or New Stone Age, people learned to polish stones to make tools like saws and drills, they learned to make fire, and they learned how to produce food.

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\_\_\_\_\_ 4. With the development of agriculture, or farming, people could produce their own food.

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