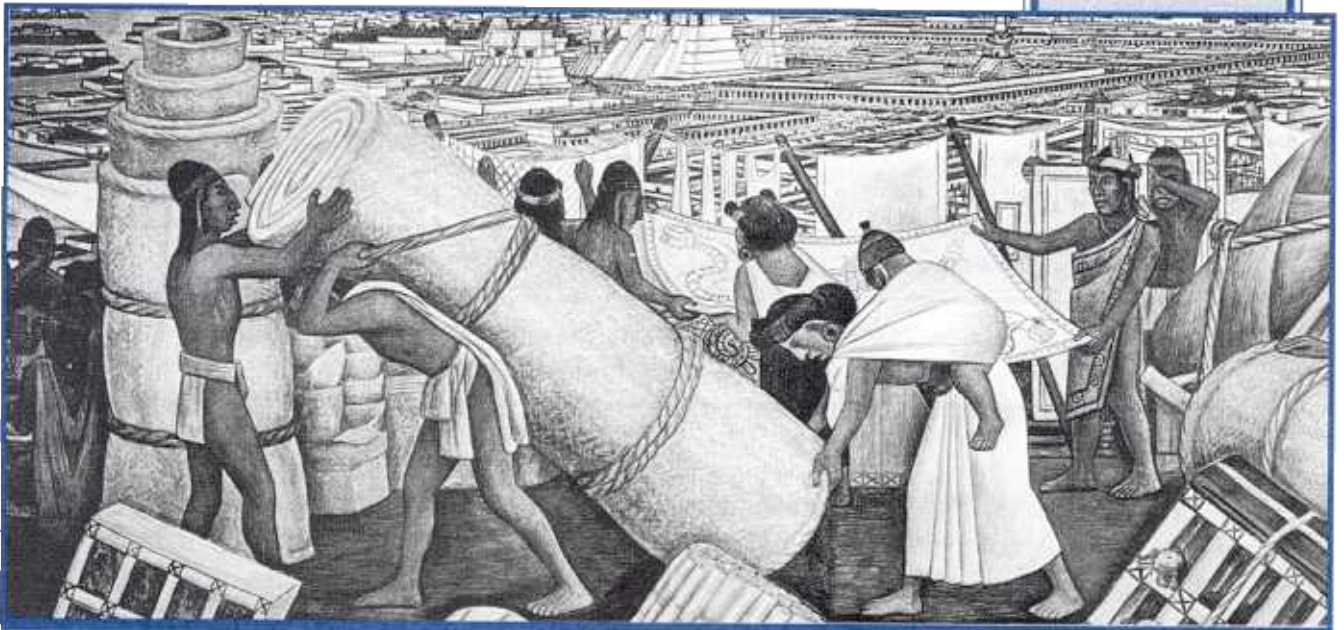


THE FIRST AMERICANS DEVELOP GREAT CULTURES. (12,000 B.C.-A.D. 1519)

CHAPTER 2

Who were the first Americans, and how did they live?



This modern-day painting shows what the market at Tenochtitlán looked like. It was painted by the famous Mexican painter, Diego Rivera.

Looking at Key Terms

- Ice Age • Pueblo • *kiva* • League of Five Nations

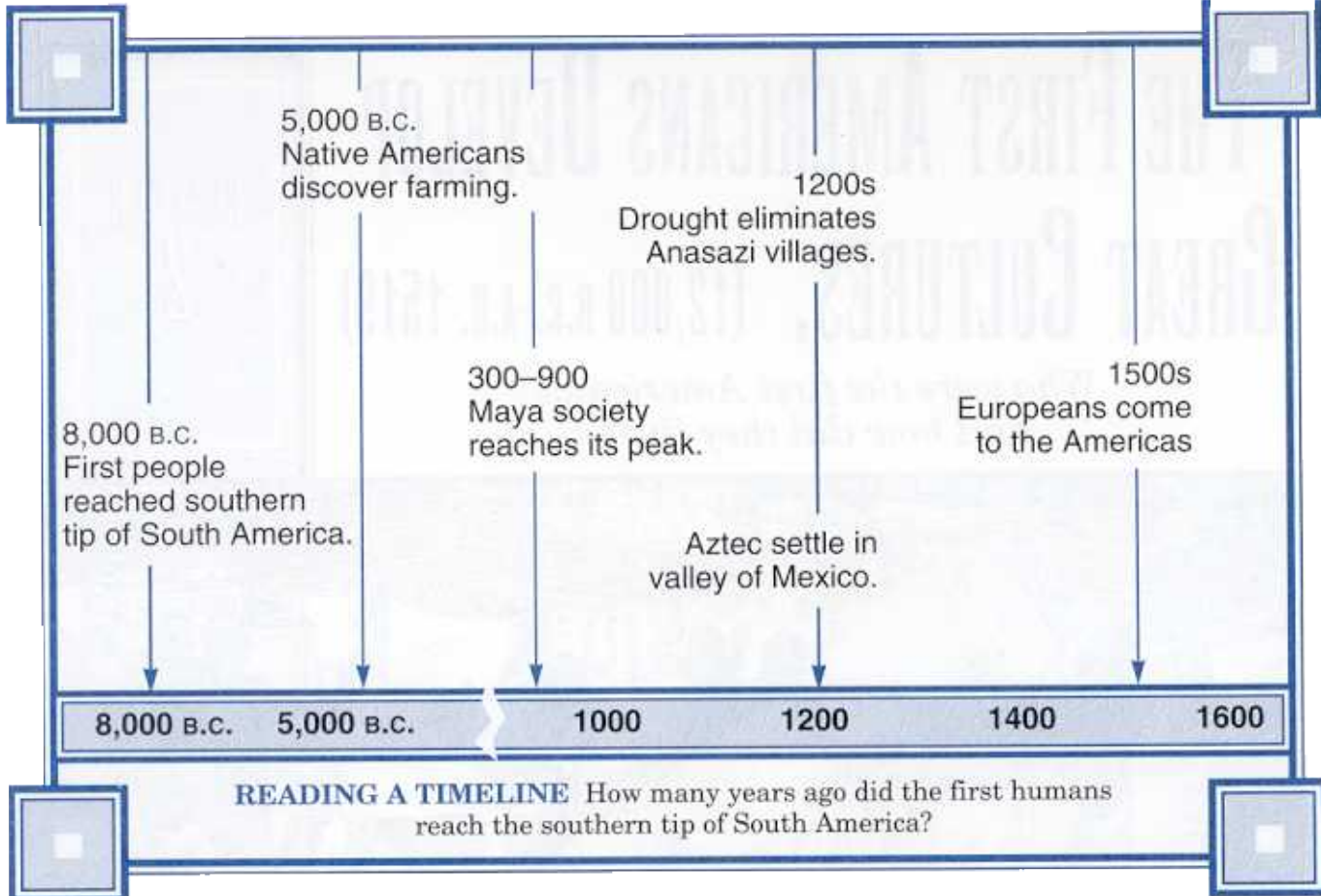
Looking at Key Words

- **glaciers:** giant sheets of ice
- **migration:** movement of people from one place to another
- **nomads:** people who move from place to place while searching for food
- **adobe:** bricks made of clay dried in the sun
- **drought:** a long period of dry weather
- **environment:** the surroundings of a people
- **pyramid:** a building with a square base and sloping sides shaped like triangles
- **tribute:** payments that a powerful nation forces people it conquers to make

STUDY

On a map of the United States, place each Native American group where it lived. Draw pictures of the important things that the people needed in order to survive.





The hunters carefully crept across the frozen ground. A cold wind blew in icy blasts from the north. The snow pelted through their fur wraps. Still they traveled east, following the tracks of deer and giant mammoths.

The people were hungry. Hunting had been bad for many days. They pushed on, hoping to find a herd of mammoths. They needed to bring down just one of the giant animals to feed the band for many days.

1 The First Americans Arrive.

How did the first Americans come to North America?

This scene took place perhaps 30,000 years ago. The time was the **Ice Age**. It was a time when much of North America was covered by giant sheets of ice called **glaciers** (glay-shuhrz). The

hunters were following the herds across a land bridge. This was a narrow strip of land connecting the continents of North America and Asia.

The hunters did not know that they were part of a great movement of people. They knew only that they had to make a kill or starve to death. Still, these people and others like them were the beginning of a huge turning point in history.

These hunters were part of the first **migration** of people to the Americas. To migrate means to move from one place to another. Before the migration, there were no humans in the Americas. The migration took thousand of years. When it ended, the Americas were peopled from the northern end to the southern tip.

These first Americans traveled in small groups. For thousands of years, groups of hunters crossed the land bridge from Asia. Their children and grandchildren pushed farther out. They

tracked animals deep into North America. Some groups wandered onto the Great Plains. Others moved east and scattered through dense woodlands. Some moved along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Others traveled west to the Pacific coast. Wherever they went, they were searching for new places to hunt and gather plants.

Meanwhile, over many centuries, the glaciers melted. The water level of the oceans went up. The land bridge was flooded.

Over many thousands of years, hunting bands migrated across all of North America. Later, other groups pushed into Central America. Still later, others moved into South America. About 10,000 years ago, the first people reached the southern tip of South America. These small bands of people were the first Americans. We call these people Native Americans.

Living as nomads The first Native Americans were **nomads**, or people who do not live in one place. Nomads move their homes as they search for food. Early Native Americans did not farm. They hunted, fished, and gathered wild plants. They used simple tools made of stone and wood to hunt. Other tools helped them to cut meat or to skin animals.

As the centuries passed, the groups started to change. They spoke different languages. They ate different foods. They made medicines from different wild plants. They developed different beliefs. Slowly, they began to form different cultures.

About 7,000 years ago, a group of Native Americans made a key discovery. They learned that seeds of wild plants placed in the ground will grow into new plants. This was the discovery of farming. It changed the way many Native Americans lived.

The Anasazi Native Americans lived in these Arizona cliff dwellings for about 300 years. Then they had to abandon it because of drought. Today, the only way into the dwellings is by a series of very tall ladders.





Native Americans of the north invented the game of lacrosse. Whole villages played other villages. Games could take a week to finish. Here a village of Iroquois test their skills against a neighboring Iroquois village.

With food from crops, many groups could stop being nomads. They could settle down in villages. Over many centuries, Native American farming villages grew up all over North and South America.

zon was a huge herd. “There was nothing but buffalo,” said one scout.

A Lakota leader picked out the best hunters. “Today you shall feed the helpless,” said the leader. “Whatever you kill shall be theirs.” The young hunters chosen for the hunt swelled with pride. It was a great honor to be chosen to help other Lakota.

1. Why did the first Americans cross the land bridge from Asia?
2. What caused Native American groups to develop different cultures?

2 The First Americans Build Cultures.

How were the cultures of Native American groups different from each other?

On the Great Plains of North America, three scouts from the Lakota (Sioux) rode into their camp. They carried important news. They had climbed a hill and looked out to the south over the vast plains. In the distance was a small herd of buffalo. Beyond that herd was a larger herd. Far out at the hori-

The Plains people The buffalo was the key to life for most Native Americans who lived on the Great Plains. The buffalo supplied the Plains people with most of their needs. It gave them food. It gave them skins for shelter and clothing. It gave them bones for tools and weapons. From spring to autumn, Plains groups were nomads. They followed the herds of buffalo and other animals. In winter, the Plains people moved to sheltered river valleys.

People of the Southwest In the hot, dry Southwest, there were different cultures. Many of the people lived in villages. They farmed beans, corn, and squash. Often they had to dig canals to bring river water to their fields.

Some of the groups were great builders. The Anasazi, for example, built villages into the sides of steep cliffs. They lived in buildings made of mud brick, called **adobe** (ah-DOH-bee), that looked something like a modern-day apartment house. Some buildings had 800 rooms.

High above the river valleys, these people were safe from attack. They cut holes in the rock and used them to climb to the tops of the cliffs. There, they farmed and gathered water.

Life was hard in the villages on cliffs. Sometimes, there was a **drought** (drowt), or a period of dry weather. Often, the rain did not fall. Then the crops died. During a drought, many people would also die.

A terrible drought hit in the late 1200s. The Anasazi were forced to leave their villages. No one knows where they went or what happened to them.

Later Native Americans called the **Pueblo** (PWEB-loh) followed the ways of the Anasazi. *Pueblo* is a Spanish word for “town.” It refers to the villages in which the Pueblo people lived.

Like the Anasazi, the Pueblo molded their way of life to the land around them. Pueblo buildings were made of adobe. The Pueblo grew corn, beans, and squash. These grow well in the heat and sandy soil. They made pottery from the clay that they found in the earth. Then they painted their pots and cups with dyes from plants and minerals.

The **environment**, or surroundings, shaped the beliefs of the Pueblo. In fact, the environment was an important part of their religion. They had key ceremonies to ask for successful crops. Pueblo villages had a special underground room called a *kiva*. There, Pueblo men said prayers to the spirits of rain, wind, and lightning.

People of the eastern woodlands
The woodlands of the East were home to

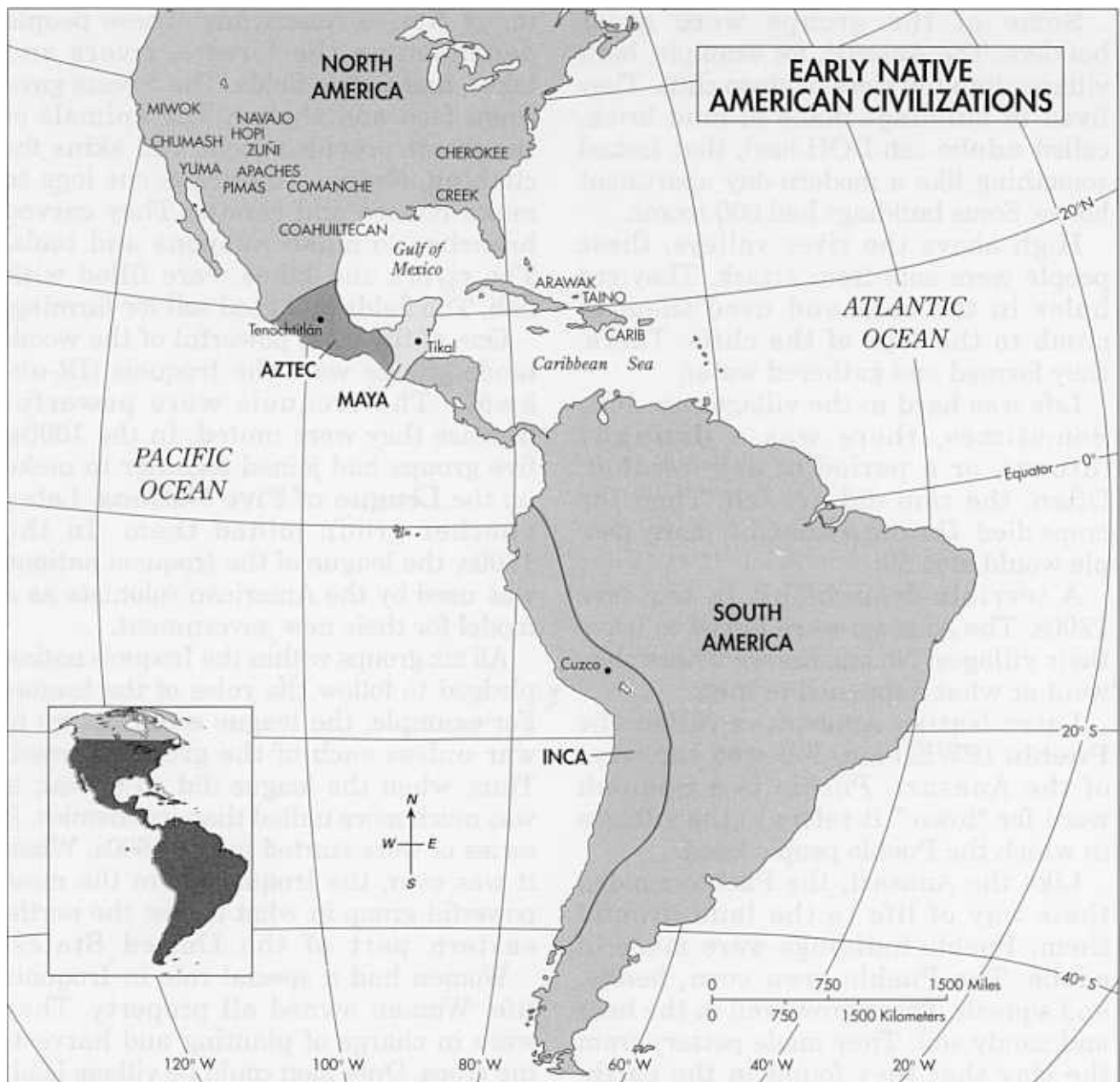
many Native Americans. These people depended on the forests, rivers and lakes, and fertile fields. The forests gave them food and shelter. The animals of the forest provided meat and skins for clothing. Native Americans cut logs to make houses and canoes. They carved branches to make weapons and tools. The rivers and lakes were filled with fish. The fields had good soil for farming.

One of the most powerful of the woodlands groups were the Iroquois (IR-uh-kwoi). The Iroquois were powerful because they were united. In the 1600s, five groups had joined together to make up the **League of Five Nations**. Later, another group joined them. In the 1700s, the league of the Iroquois nations was used by the American colonists as a model for their new government.

All six groups within the Iroquois nation pledged to follow the rules of the league. For example, the league could not go to war unless each of the groups agreed. Thus, when the league did go to war, it was much more united than its enemies. A series of wars started in the 1600s. When it was over, the Iroquois were the most powerful group in what is now the north-eastern part of the United States.

Women had a special role in Iroquois life. Women owned all property. They were in charge of planting and harvesting crops. Only men could be village leaders, but only women could elect them.

People of the Northwest The lives of the Native American people of the Pacific Northwest were closely tied to the environment. The people of the Pacific coast lived in a land where great forests grew and rivers rushed down to the sea. Giant trees grew in the forests. The rivers were alive with salmon and other fish. “You can walk across the rivers on the backs of the salmon,” was a Native American saying. Whales and seals filled the nearby ocean.



Reading a Map. What were the three major early Native American civilizations? What were the important cities of each of the civilizations? Name some important groups located in today's United States.

The Native Americans used the local resources that they found to make life easier for themselves. They cut down the trees and floated them down rivers to their villages. They carved huge canoes. Some were as long as 60 feet! They took these canoes way out into the ocean to hunt whales and seals. Other parts of the tree were used to build

houses. From the bark, the people made rope and baskets.

The people of the Northwest took what they needed to live from the land. The men fished with wooden weapons, tipped with sharpened stone points. The women wove blankets from dog hair. They made summer clothes from the bark of trees. Like other Native

American groups, the people of the Northwest found ways for the environment to support what they needed in order to live.

1. Name three Native American cultural groups
2. Why was the League of Five Nations important?

3 Native Americans Build Great Empires.

What were the great Native American empires like?

In Mexico and Central America, Native Americans developed a number of great civilizations. Among them were the Mayan and Aztec civilizations.

The Maya built one of the first empires. They were one of the earliest people to raise crops. In the dense forests of the Yucatan (YOU-kah-tan) Peninsula, the Maya built large cities. These cities were religious centers. At the heart of each city stood a stone **pyramid**. A pyramid is a huge building with a square base and sloping sides. At the top of each pyramid was a temple. Here, priests worshiped many gods and goddesses.

The Maya were great scientists. They created their own system of numbers. They developed a way of writing using picture symbols. They also invented a 365-day calendar that followed the movement of the stars and the sun. This calendar was more accurate than the one then used by people in Europe.

Mayan society reached its peak between A.D. 300 and 900. Then, for some unknown reason, this society began to decline.

More than 1,000 years ago, the Mayans built the soaring pyramids of Paplanta. These busy cities were religious centers. At the top of the pyramids were temples. The Mayans were one of the first people to raise crops.



The Aztec Another great early American civilization, north of the Maya, was the Aztec. Sometime in the 1200s, the Aztec settled in the valley of Mexico. From there, they sent out powerful armies and conquered their neighbors. They soon ruled an empire covering most of Mexico.

The Aztec built a remarkable city, called Tenochtitlan (tay-nahch-tee-TLAN) on islands in a lake. Nearly 100,000 people lived in Tenochtitlan. That made it one of the largest cities in the world at the time. One of the first Europeans to see the Aztec capital said, "It was a wonderful thing to behold."

The Aztec empire was rich. Some Aztec wealth came from trade. Aztec craftspeople wove cloth decorated with feathers. Goldsmiths made jewelry, masks, and religious objects. Merchants brought foreign goods to Aztec markets. Much of the empire's wealth came from **tribute**, or payments that the Aztec forced whomever they conquered to pay. With these riches, the Aztec built great stone temples like those of the Maya.

The Aztec government was well organized. At its head was the emperor, who was also considered a god. However, the Aztec were harsh rulers. They even made human sacrifices to please the sun god. On special days, prisoners were lined up and sent to the tops of the temples. There, their hearts were cut out by Aztec priests using sharp knives.

Because of this harshness, the Aztec were hated by the people they conquered. As you will read in the next chapter, Europeans first came to Mexico in the 1500s. They found that the people whom the Aztec had conquered were eager to join them and try to topple the mighty Aztec empire.

1. What Native American civilization created a calendar more accurate than the European calendar?
2. Why were Europeans amazed by Tenochtitlan?

CHAPTER 2 KEY IDEAS

- The first Americans were hunters who migrated to America. They were following animals that they were hunting.
- As Native Americans spread out, they began to develop different cultures. These cultures were shaped by the environment in which people lived.
- Native American groups were expert at using the resources of the area in which they lived without waste.
- Native American peoples, such as the Aztec and Maya, developed great civilizations.