

CHAPTER
1
SECTION 2

Section Summary

TURNING POINT: THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION

READING CHECK

Into what two eras do scholars divide prehistory?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *transition* mean in the underlined sentence? What clues can you find in the surrounding words, phrases, or sentences? Circle the word below that is a synonym for *transition*.

1. remain
2. change

READING SKILL

Summarize In your own words, summarize how the Neolithic Revolution changed the way people lived.

Scholars have divided prehistory into eras called the **Old Stone Age**, or **Paleolithic Period**, and the **New Stone Age**, or **Neolithic Period**. During both, people made stone tools. However, during the New Stone Age, people began to develop new skills and technologies that led to dramatic changes.

Early modern humans lived toward the end of the Paleolithic Period. They were **nomads** who moved around in small groups, hunting and gathering food. These people made simple tools and weapons, built fires for cooking, and used animal skins for clothing. They also developed spoken language, which helped them cooperate during the hunt. Some people also began to bury their dead. This suggests belief in a spiritual world or life after death. Cave paintings around the world depict animals and humans. Many scholars think that our ancestors believed the world was full of spirits and forces that might reside in animals, objects, or dreams. Such beliefs are known as **animism**.

The New Stone Age began about 12,000 years ago (or about 10,000 B.C.), when nomadic people made a great breakthrough—they learned to farm. By producing their own food, people no longer needed to roam in search of it. As a result, early farmers settled the first permanent villages. This transition from nomadic life to settled farming brought about such dramatic changes in way of life that it is often called the **Neolithic Revolution**. No greater change in human history took place until the Industrial Revolution of the late 1700s. These early farmers were the first to **domesticate** plants and animals.

Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of some early Neolithic villages, including **Çatalhöyük** in modern-day Turkey, and **Jericho**, which exists today in the West Bank. In these settled communities, people accumulated personal property. A council of male elders or elite warriors made the important decisions for all the villagers. To farm successfully, people developed new technologies, such as ways to protect their crops, calendars, and the use of animals for plowing. However, not all technologies were invented everywhere at the same time.

Review Questions

1. What religious beliefs did early modern humans develop during the Old Stone Age?

2. What led to the establishment of the first permanent villages?
