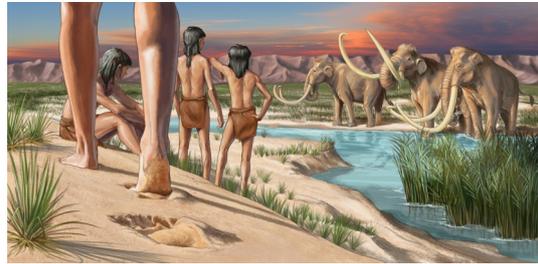


Early Cultures



Dr. Rania Khelifa Chelihi

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- Students must know that the earliest peoples were hunters, gatherers, and nomads.
- Students must know how humans started farming, which allowed them to settle in one place and build villages.



pre

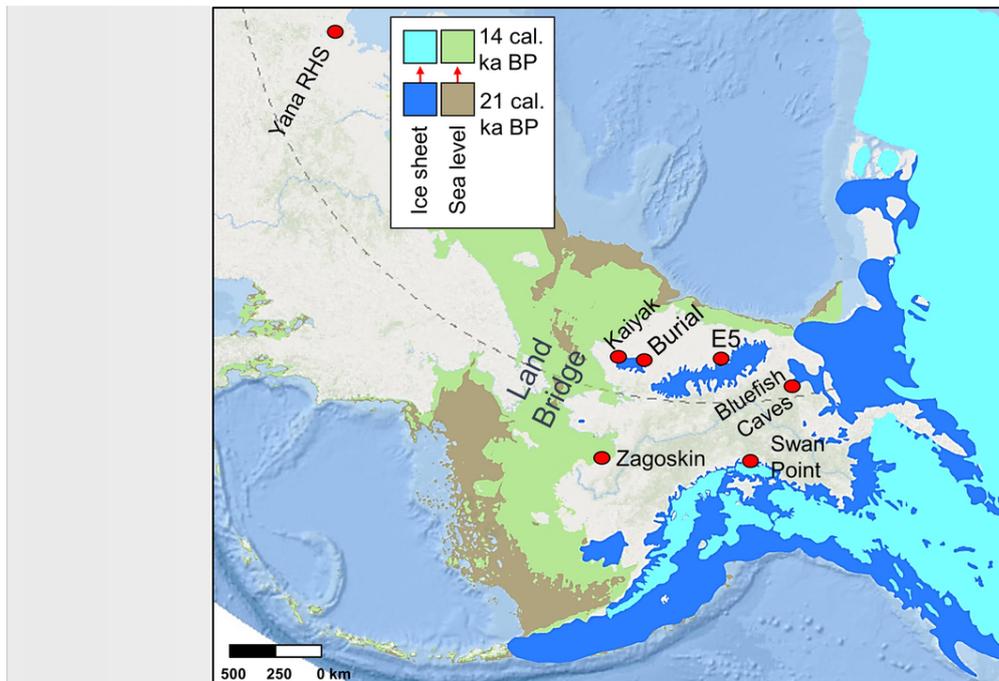
3. Warm up

1. Why do you think people migrated across this land bridge? What challenges might they have faced?
2. Discuss how climate, food sources, and survival needs influenced migration.
3. Which large Ice Age animal did early Americans hunt for food, clothing, and tools?

Why do you think people migrated across this land bridge? What challenges might they have faced?



4. Introduction



Land Bridge

More than fifteen thousand years ago, huge sheets of ice* covered much of **Canada** and **the northern United States**. In some places, the ice was thousands of feet thick. Scientists call this time **the Ice Age**. Much of the world's water was frozen into ice.

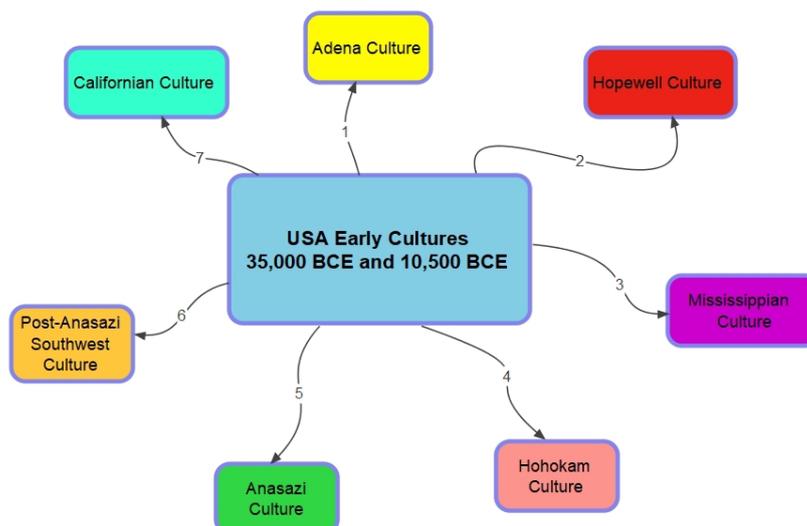
There was less water in the oceans than there is today. Some lands that are now under water were dry. That is why **dry land once connected Asia to North America**. During the Ice Age, this dry land formed an area that scientists today call **Beringia** (/buh*rin*ge) or **the land bridge***.

Although there were no ice sheets on Beringia, the weather was very cold. At that time, no one in the world knew how to farm. Even if they had known how, it was too cold in Beringia to raise anything. Only tiny plants grew there.

Extra

There were no towns, no stores, and no government, just a vast, cold wilderness. So how did people in Beringia live? They had to look for plants and animals to eat. Small groups of just a few families, perhaps twenty-five to fifty people, helped each other as they moved around in search of food. People who live this way are called **hunter-gatherers**.*

While the women and children of the Ice Age looked for plants and berries, the men and older boys hunted. They tracked herds of **mammoth*** and **musk ox** **back and forth** across Beringia.



Mind map of USA early Culture

6.1. Adena culture

From about **1000 BC** some groups began supplementing their hunter-gatherer way of life with small-scale farming. This allowed villages to grow, often semi-permanent in nature: they moved to new locations as local soils became exhausted. The people of **the Adena culture**, which flourished between **1000 BCE** and **200 CE**, and which originated in the Ohio Valley before spreading out into neighboring areas, carried on the tradition of mound building – but with a difference. Whereas previously these **earthworks** seem to have been **purely ceremonial**, they are now **burial mounds**.

*



Adena

Note

The Adena earthworks were larger and more complex than those of the Poverty Point culture, and this must reflect a more complex society. **The grave goods** show that some individuals enjoyed higher status and wealth than others.

6.2. Hopewell culture

As time went by farming became more important to the economy of the people of the eastern woodlands. The Adena culture was eventually displaced by the Hopewell culture, which emerged around 200 BCE and came to an end about 700 CE. This shared many features with the Adena, but on a larger and more sophisticated scale; it also covered a much larger area than the Adena had done.

*



Hopewell

6.3. Mississippian culture

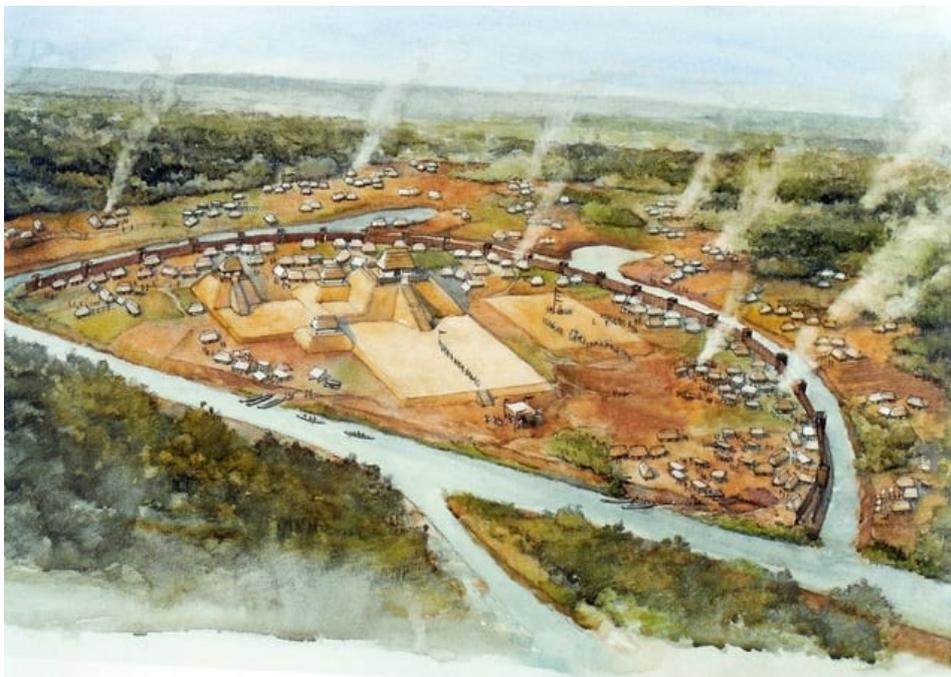
Eventually **the Hopewell culture** was succeeded by another, **the Mississippian**. And just as **the Hopewell had been more advanced than the Adena**, so the Mississippian was more advanced than the Hopewell.

Whilst **the Mississippian culture** carried on many of the traditions pioneered by the Adena and Hopewell, it also displayed new features, possibly derived from contact with **the Mesoamerican world** to the south. Most notably, the Mississippians constructed **not just burial mounds, but temple mounds** as well – a strikingly **Mesoamerican characteristic**.*

Extra

The Mississippian people's society was the most complex of all the “**mound-building**” cultures of the eastern woodlands, and was **moving towards urbanism**. Indeed, their larger settlements, the most famous example being **Cahokia**, on the banks of the Mississippi, were the size of major European cities of the time, though lacking the density of true urban settlements.

The Mississippian culture as a whole lasted until just before contact times, though remnants of it, for example amongst **the Natchez people**, endured into **the 18th century**.



Mississippi

 *Note*

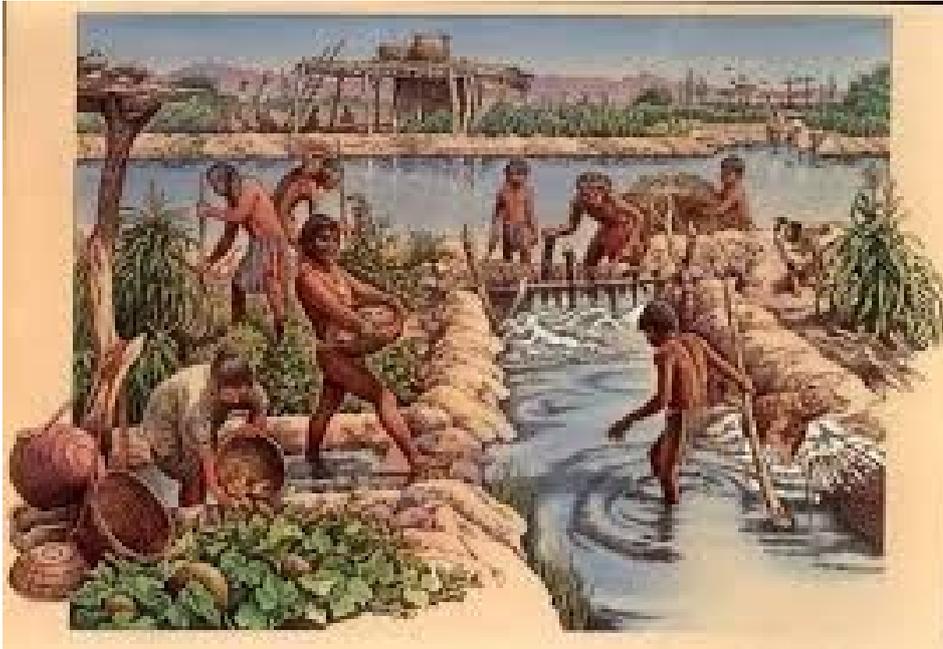
For further detail refer to the attached pdf

[cf. Mississippian Culture]

6.4. Hohokam culture

To the west of the Mogollon, **the Hohokam culture** developed around 100 BC, exhibiting many similarities to other regional cultures. A key aspect of Hohokam society was their reliance on **irrigation-based agriculture**.

The Hohokam culture abruptly declined around 1500 CE. Their descendants are typically identified as **the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Tohono O'odham (Papago) tribes**.



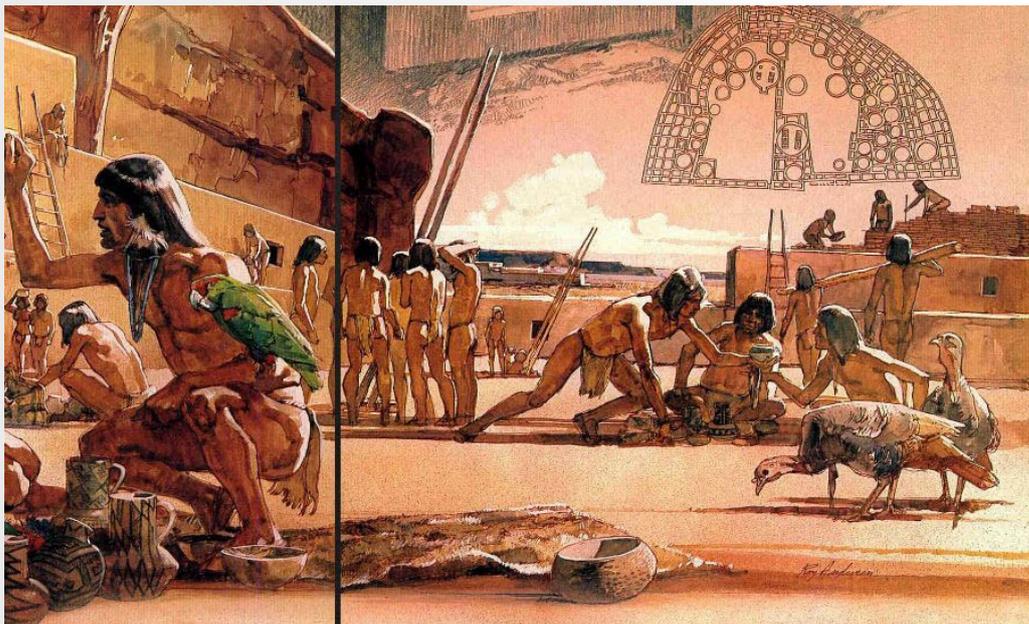
Hohokam

6.5. Anasazi Culture

The **Anasazi culture** was the most advanced of the southwestern cultures. It emerged to **the north east of the Hohokam culture**, and at about the same time as. It was from c. 750 CE, however, that **the Anasazi developed a new kind of architecture**, the pueblo, for which their descendants are still famous.

Fundamental

As the Anasazi people increasingly established their communities, the production of trade items expanded. **They crafted beautiful and practical baskets and sandals.** Eventually, they acquired skills to **produce and decorate pottery and jewelry.** They also discovered how to cultivate cotton and weave it. They also learned how to use **the bow and arrow.**

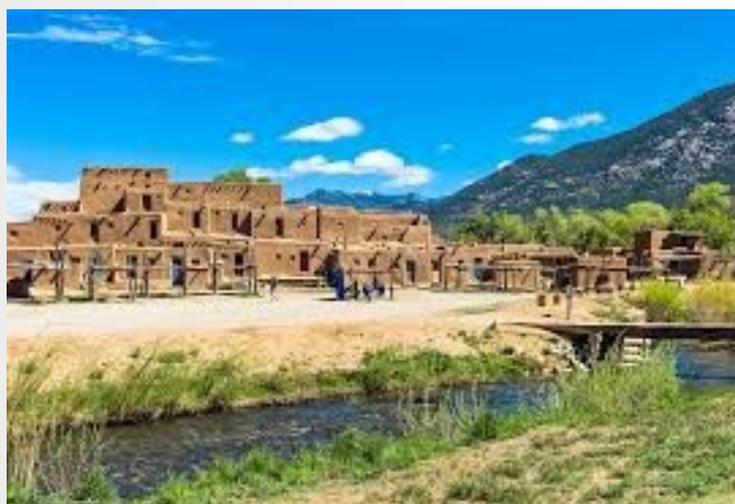


*Anasazi***6.6. Post-Anasazi Southwest**

The Anasazi culture began to go into decline from about **1300**. Many of the survivors moved south and settled in **the Rio Grande and Little Colorado valleys**. Here they maintained the cultural traditions of the Anasazi and became ancestral to present-day Pueblo peoples such as **the Zuni, Keres, Tiwa and Hopi**.

 *Fundamental*

Most modern pueblos are located on **mesa tops**. There are also some villages situated in the desert lowlands, or along rivers. These displayed other types of **houses – pole-framed huts** covered with **plant mats or earth**.

*Post-Anasazi*

 *Example*

Maize was the most important of all crops, probably providing more nutrition than all the other crops combined. After maize, **the most important food crops were beans and squash**. Other crops were not grown for food. **Fiber plants** such as **cotton** were a major source of fabrics – only in the southwest of North America were **true looms** in use. Also, **dye plants, ornamental plants, medicinal herbs and stimulants** (such as tobacco) were grown.



Maize

 *Extra*

Other groups have arrived in the region in more recent times, from c. 1000 CE onwards. These came in from the north, following a **nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle**. Later they took to raiding farming settlements to supplement their diets, and may have played an important part in the decline of the older, more settled cultures. These peoples included **the Apache and the Navajo (Dineh)**. The latter, after contact with the Spanish and their sheep, eventually took to a herding lifestyle.

6.7. Californian cultures

The Californian coast also gave rise to a **dense hunter-gatherer-fisher population**. This landscape was not as mountainous as the northwest, nor the tree cover as dense (and in the south almost disappears). This made wood resources less available. Though wood plank houses similar to those of the Northwest were by no means unknown, particularly in the north, the inhabitants constructed many other kinds of dwellings as well. Among the most common were **cone-shaped structures** made from **poles**, and covered with **brush**, grass and reeds. There were also **domed earth-covered pit-houses**.

*



California

[cf. Indians]

7. Conclusion

The story of early America is one of survival, adaptation, and innovation. Thousands of years ago, brave groups of people crossed into North America, facing harsh climates and unpredictable landscapes. They hunted **massive animals**, **gathered wild plants**, and slowly began to shape **the land around them**. Over time, they **built communities**, **developed farming techniques**, and **created rich cultural traditions** that still influence **Native American societies today**.

From the mound-building **Adena and Mississippians** to the irrigation masters of the Hohokam and the cliff-dwelling Ancestral Puebloans, these early civilizations proved their resilience. They not only survived but thrived, leaving behind remarkable structures and artifacts that tell their stories.

Though time has changed the world they once knew, **their legacies remain**. Their knowledge, traditions, and spirit of adaptation remind us of humanity's deep connection to the land and our ability to create and evolve. **The history of early America isn't just about the past—it's a story that still shapes who we are today.**

8. Exercice : What do you know about the American history?

[solution n°1 p.20]

What was Beringia?

- A large ice sheet that covered North America
- A land bridge connecting Asia and North America
- A prehistoric ocean between Europe and America
- A type of shelter used by early hunter-gatherers

9. Exercice

[solution n°2 p.20]

Which of the following best describes the lifestyle of Paleo-Indians?

- They were primarily farmers
- They built large cities and temples
- They were hunter-gatherers who relied on large game
- They established complex trade routes across continents

10. Exercice

[solution n°3 p.20]

What was a significant feature of the Adena culture?

- The development of written language
- The construction of burial mounds
- The creation of vast road networks
- The domestication of horses

11. Exercice

[solution n°4 p.20]

The Hopewell culture is known for:

- Being the first civilization to use irrigation
- Expanding the Adena culture's traditions on a larger scale
- Developing the first written Native American language
- Domesticating large animals for farming

12. Exercice

[solution n°5 p.21]

The Mississippian culture was unique because:

- It introduced democracy to North America
- It developed large urban settlements like Cahokia
- It relied solely on hunting and gathering
- It was the first culture to reach South America

13. Exercise

[solution n°6 p.21]

What was a key characteristic of the Anasazi culture?

- They built pueblo-style dwellings
- They primarily lived in teepees
- They developed written records on stone tablets
- They were known for their large-scale conquests

14. Exercise

[solution n°7 p.21]

The decline of the Hohokam culture is believed to have been caused by:

- European colonization
- A sudden shift in climate and environmental changes
- A large-scale war with the Mississippians
- The spread of disease from South America

15. Exercise

[solution n°8 p.21]

The term "Anasazi" is often replaced with "Ancestral Puebloans" because:

- The term "Anasazi" means enemy ancestors in Navajo
- "Anasazi" was a name given by European explorers
- The Anasazi never actually lived in North America
- It was a term originally used for a different culture

16. Exercise

[solution n°9 p.22]

Which of the following was NOT a primary crop cultivated by early Southwestern cultures?

- Maize
- Squash
- Potatoes
- Beans

17. Exercice

[solution n°10 p.22]

What was a significant factor in the decline of the Anasazi culture?

- Overpopulation and resource depletion
- Conquest by the Spanish
- A major volcanic eruption
- Dependence on imported food

18. Exercice

[solution n°11 p.22]

Was Beringia, and how did it help early humans migrate to North America?

19. Exercice

[solution n°12 p.22]

Who were the first known cultures to develop in early America, and what were their main characteristics?

20. Exercice

[solution n°13 p.22]

When did the first humans arrive in North America, and what evidence supports this timeline?

21. Exercice

[solution n°14 p.23]

Where did the Adena culture originate, and how did it influence later civilizations?

22. Exercice

[solution n°15 p.23]

Why did early hunter-gatherers move in small groups, and what survival strategies did they use?

23. Exercice

[solution n°16 p.23]

Where did the Hohokam culture thrive, and what was their most important innovation?

24. Exercice

[solution n°17 p.23]

Why did the Anasazi people build their homes in cliffs, and what advantages did this provide?

25. Exercise

[solution n°18 p.23]

How did agriculture change the way early American cultures lived and organized their societies?

26. Exercise

[solution n°19 p.23]

When did the Mississippian culture reach its peak, and what was its largest settlement?

27. Exercise

[solution n°20 p.23]

How did the arrival of new groups like the Apache and Navajo impact the older settled cultures?

Exercises solution



> **Solution n°1**

Exercice p. 15

What was Beringia?

- A large ice sheet that covered North America
- A land bridge connecting Asia and North America
- A prehistoric ocean between Europe and America
- A type of shelter used by early hunter-gatherers

> **Solution n°2**

Exercice p. 16

Which of the following best describes the lifestyle of Paleo-Indians?

- They were primarily farmers
- They built large cities and temples
- They were hunter-gatherers who relied on large game
- They established complex trade routes across continents

> **Solution n°3**

Exercice p. 16

What was a significant feature of the Adena culture?

- The development of written language
- The construction of burial mounds
- The creation of vast road networks
- The domestication of horses

> **Solution n°4**

Exercice p. 16

The Hopewell culture is known for:

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> **Solution n°5**

Exercice p. 16

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> **Solution n°6**

Exercice p. 17

What was a key characteristic of the Anasazi culture?

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> **Solution n°7**

Exercice p. 17

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- European colonization
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- A large-scale war with the Mississippians
- The spread of disease from South America

> **Solution n°8**

Exercice p. 17

The term "Anasazi" is often replaced with "Ancestral Puebloans" because:

> **Solution n°13**

Exercise p. 18

When did the first humans arrive in North America, and what evidence supports this timeline?

The first humans arrived in North America around 12,000–35,000 years ago. Evidence includes archaeological sites, stone tools, and genetic studies of Indigenous peoples.

> **Solution n°14**

Exercise p. 18

Where did the Adena culture originate, and how did it influence later civilizations?

The Adena culture originated in the Ohio Valley and influenced later cultures like the Hopewell and Mississippian by introducing mound-building for burials and ceremonies.

> **Solution n°15**

Exercise p. 18

Why did early hunter-gatherers move in small groups, and what survival strategies did they use?

They moved in small groups to follow food sources and avoid overhunting in one area. They hunted large animals like mammoths, gathered wild plants, and used stone tools for survival.

> **Solution n°16**

Exercise p. 18

Where did the Hohokam culture thrive, and what was their most important innovation?

The Hohokam culture thrived in present-day Arizona. Their most important innovation was irrigation-based farming, which allowed them to survive in the desert.

> **Solution n°17**

Exercise p. 18

Why did the Anasazi people build their homes in cliffs, and what advantages did this provide?

The Anasazi built cliff dwellings to protect themselves from invaders, extreme weather, and animals. These homes also provided better defense and insulation.

> **Solution n°18**

Exercise p. 19

How did agriculture change the way early American cultures lived and organized their societies?

Agriculture allowed societies to settle in one place, build permanent villages, support larger populations, and develop social hierarchies and trade.

> **Solution n°19**

Exercise p. 19

When did the Mississippian culture reach its peak, and what was its largest settlement?

The Mississippian culture peaked between 900–1400 CE, and its largest settlement was Cahokia, which had a population of about 20,000 people.

> **Solution n°20**

Exercice p. 19

How did the arrival of new groups like the Apache and Navajo impact the older settled cultures?

The Apache and Navajo were nomadic and often raided farming settlements, which contributed to the decline of older cultures like the Anasazi and Hohokam. Later, they adapted to herding after contact with the Spanish.

Glossary

**hunter-gatherers**

small groups of people who feed themselves by hunting animals and gathering plants.

Ice Age

A period in Earth's history when huge sheets of ice covered large parts of Earth's surface.

Ice sheet

a very thick piece of ice that covers a large area of land for an extended period of time.

land bridge

A small strip of land that connects two large land masses .

Mammoth

a large, prehistoric elephant-like animal covered with hair.



Abbreviation



USA: United States Of America

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- 
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