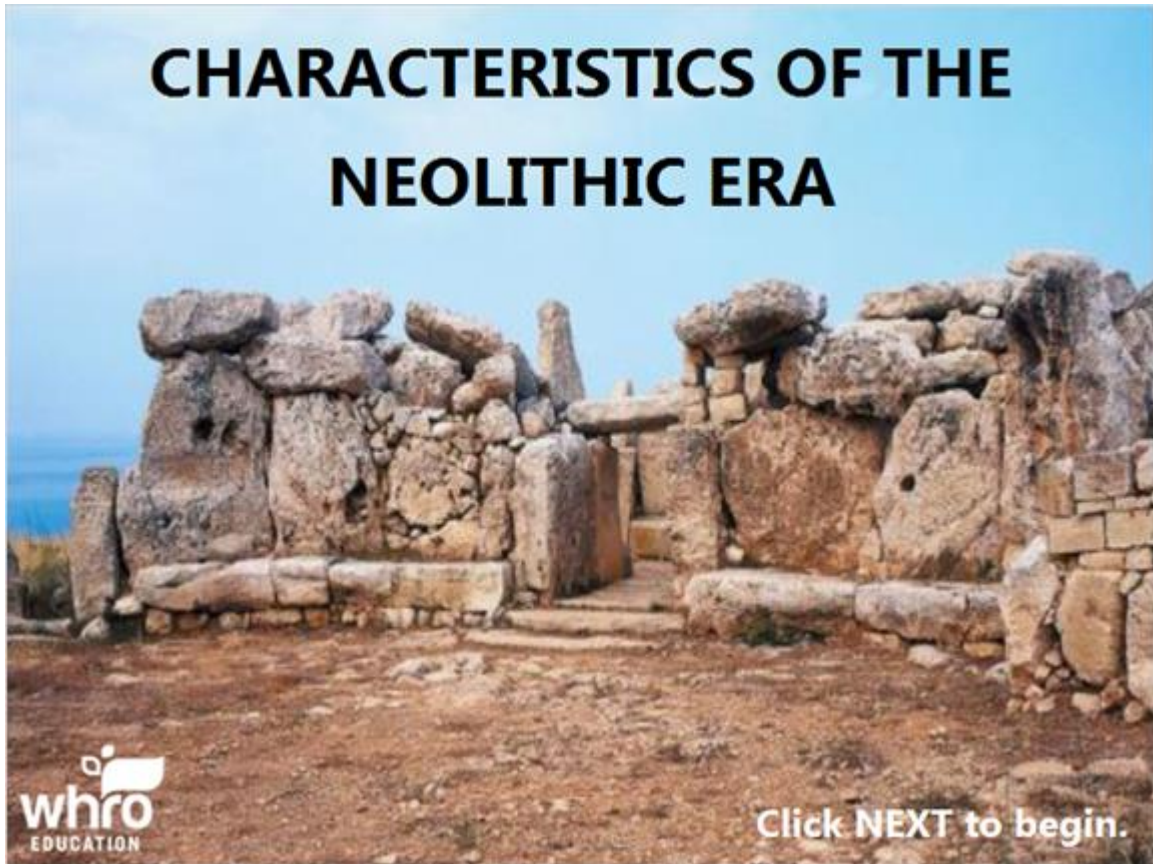


Module 1: Early Humans – The Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras

Topic 2 Content: Characteristics of the Neolithic Era

Introduction



Click NEXT to begin.

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Agricultural Revolution



During the Neolithic Era, or New Stone Age, from 8000 to 4000 B.C. (B.C.E.), there was a dramatic shift in the lifestyle and culture of early humans. During this time period, humans shifted from hunting and gathering for food to growing their own crops through a movement known as the agricultural revolution. These crops, including varieties of grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables, provided a steady supply of food.

This change in practice allowed early humans to overcome some of the limitations of their physical environment. The drastic change in lifestyle meant that early humans no longer needed to move from one place to another seeking food. They could permanently settle in an area and support a population's food needs.

Image: Native vegetation of the Wallachian Plain

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Animal Domestication



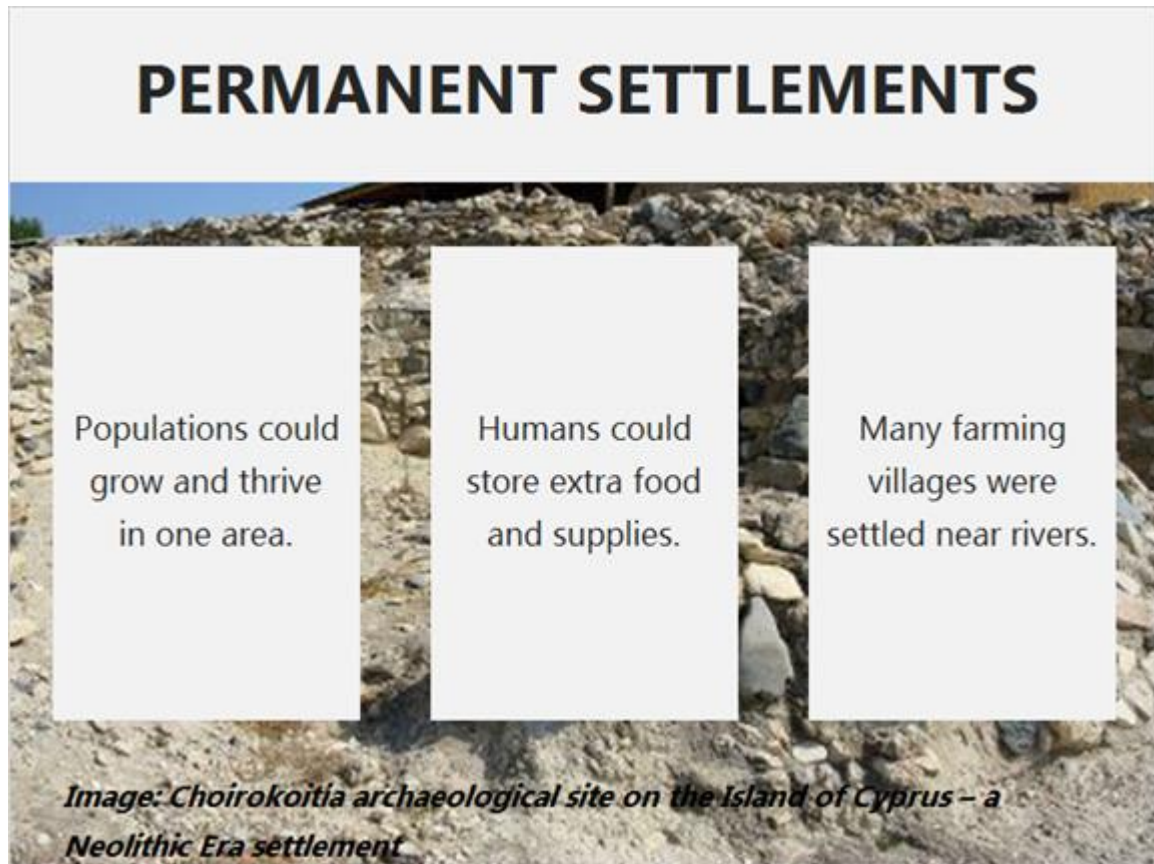
In addition, humans succeeded in domesticating animals. Domestication is the process through which animals are bred to have traits that make them valuable for human use. Domesticated animals provided another set of resources through food, milk, and hides. Sheep, cows, and pigs were some of the first animals to be domesticated.

Image: Sheep were some of the first animals to be domesticated.

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Permanent Settlements



The agricultural revolution brought about an end to the nomadic lifestyle of earlier humans, and permanent settlements began to form. A more dependable food source meant that populations could grow and thrive in one area, rather than having to move from place to place. In these early farming villages, humans could store extra food and supplies.

Many of these early farming villages were settled near rivers. Rivers offered water to drink, water for irrigating crops, fish for food, and protection from invaders. Also, the land near rivers offered rich soil for farming.

Image: Choirokoitia archaeological site on the island of Cyprus-a Neolithic Era settlement

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Tools and Pottery



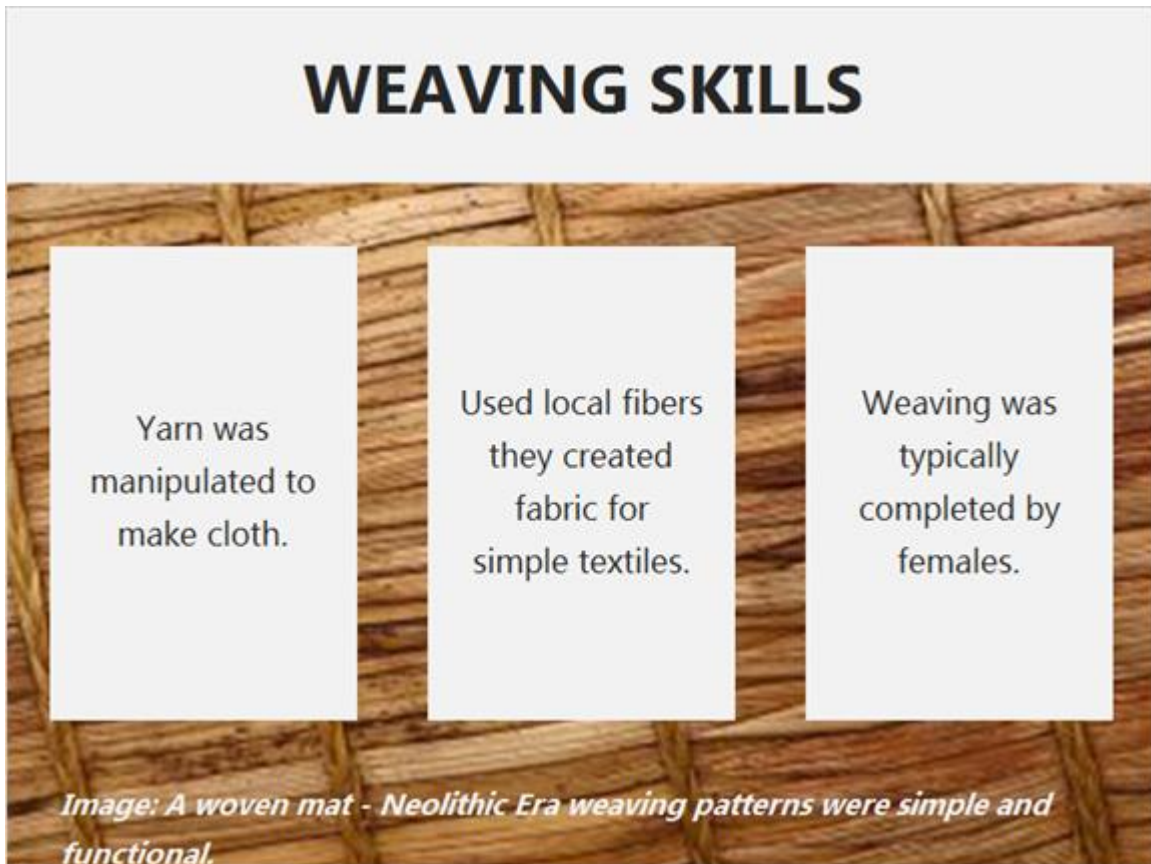
During the Neolithic Era, early humans developed more advanced tools to accommodate the needs of farming and living in permanent settlements. Farming tools, like sickles and axe-like implements, helped clear and prepare the land to be farmed, and assisted with the harvesting of crops. Neolithic Era humans created and used pottery for food preparation, cooking, and storage.

Image: Neolithic pottery in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional de España

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Weaving Skills



While spinning plants into yarn was prevalent during the Paleolithic Era, later humans manipulated the yarn to make cloth. Using fibers found locally, humans during the Neolithic Era wove this yarn into fabric to create simple textiles. As farming and animal care became more male-dominated, tasks like weaving were completed by females who typically did jobs that kept them at home.

Image: A woven mat-Neolithic Era weaving patterns were simple and functional.

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Into the Bronze Age

INTO THE BRONZE AGE

Defined by the agricultural revolution, an end to the nomadic way of life, and the emergence of permanent settlements.

This age would give rise to more complex civilizations.

Discovered the ability to melt and manipulate metal, and make stronger materials.

Image: Bronze castings from the Bronze Age

The Neolithic Era was defined by the agricultural revolution, an end to the nomadic way of life, and the emergence of permanent settlements. The stability provided by the permanent settlements of these early humans would give rise to more complex civilizations in which individuals could specialize in a given trade. Around 4000 B.C. (B.C.E.), humans discovered that they could melt and manipulate metal found in nature and even combine metals to make stronger materials, like bronze. This marked the close of the Neolithic Era and the beginning of the Bronze Age.

Image: Bronze castings from the Bronze Age

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Conclusion



You have reached the end of this interactivity.