The Americans: A Separate World, 40,000 B.C. – A.D. 700

Although early American civilizations remain mysterious, we know that the earliest Americans most likely migrated from Asia and that complex cultures arose in Mesoamerica and in the Andes.
The Americans: A Separate World, 40,000 B.C. – A.D. 700

SECTION 1
The Earliest Americans

SECTION 2
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Early Civilizations of the Andes
The Earliest Americans

The cultures of the first Americans, including social organization, develop in ways similar to other early cultures.
The Earliest Americans

A Land Bridge

The American Continents

- American continents of North and South America stretch 9,000 miles
- The first Americans come from Asia over Beringia—a land bridge

Peopling the Americas

- During Ice Ages, glaciers extend over much of North America
- Sea levels drop; a land corridor is created between Asia and Alaska
- First Americans arrive in last Ice Age, 1.9 million to 10,000 B.C.
- Siberian hunters follow animals from Asia to Americas
A Land Bridge \{{continued}\}

Peopling the Americas

- Date of first crossing might be from 40,000 to 10,000 B.C.
- Recent findings suggest it happened earlier than previously thought
- Most experts believe first Americans used land bridge
- Others believe people came by boat
Hunters and Gatherers

Chief Prey

- The mammoth is the largest prey of early Americans
- The mammoth provides materials for food, clothing, shelter, tools

Following the Game

- Hunters turn to smaller animals when mammoths die out
- People also fish and gather plants and fruits
- At end of last Ice Age, glaciers melt and seas cover the land bridge
- By 10,000–12,000 years ago people had spread across the Americas
Agriculture Creates a New Way of Life

The Development of Farming
  - Around 7000 B.C. people in Mexico begin to raise crops from seeds
  - By 3400 B.C. maize—corn—becomes the staple crop there
  - People in the Tehuacan Valley develop advanced farming methods
  - Agriculture spreads throughout Americas

Farming Brings Great Change
  - Agriculture increases food supply, leads to population growth
  - Larger communities develop, specialized skills in arts, trades
Early Mesoamerican Civilizations

The Olmec create the Americas’ first civilization, which in turn influence later civilizations.
Early Mesoamerican Civilizations

The Olmec

Olmec Beginnings

- Civilization begins in Mesoamerica around 1200 B.C.
- **Mesoamerica**—central Mexico to northern Honduras
- Olmecs are the “mother culture” of Mesoamerica
- **Olmecs**—people who create earliest civilization in southern Mexico

The Rise of Olmec Civilization

- First sign of Olmec culture: massive sculpture of head found in 1860
- Olmec live along the Gulf Coast of Mexico until 400 B.C.
The Olmec {continued}

Gulf Coast Geography

- Area hot and humid, with swamps, jungles, thick vegetation
- Heavy rainfalls lead to flooding
- Area has resources: salt, tar, clay for pottery, wood, rubber, stone
- Rivers provide transportation, fertile land for farming
- San Lorenzo, oldest Olmec site, dates to 1150 B.C.
The Olmec {continued}

Olmec Society
- San Lorenzo has earthen mounds, pyramids, sculptures
- La Venta has 100-foot-high mound of clay and earth, possibly a tomb
- Olmec probably worship nature gods, including jaguar spirit

Trade and Commerce
- Olmec trade spans north and south
- Trade spreads Olmec influence

Decline of the Olmec
- Reasons for Olmec collapse—by 400 B.C.—not known
Zapotec Civilization Arises

Peoples of the Oaxaca Valley

- The Oaxaca Valley of southern Mexico is hub for many civilizations
- **Zapotes**—people who build a new civilization in Oaxaca Valley
- Unique Zapotec culture shows some Olmec influence
- For centuries Zapotec live in many scattered settlements
- By 1000 B.C., Zapotec build San José Mogote
- By 500 B.C., Zapotec develop writing and calendar
Zapotec Civilization Arises {continued}

The Zapotec Flourish at Monte Albán

- Around 500 B.C. Zapotecs build Monte Albán—first city in America
- Population of Monte Albán about 25,000 people
- City has impressive stone buildings, plaza, observatory
- Stone sculptures there show Olmec influence
- Zapotec decline shortly after A.D. 600 for unknown reasons
The Early Mesoamericans’ Legacy

The Olmec Leave Their Mark

- Olmec art and construction affect future cultures like the Maya
- Olmec develop ceremonial centers, ritual ball games, and ruling class
- Later cultures in Mesoamerica adopt Olmec ways

Zapotec Contributions

- Zapotec legacy: writing and calendar systems, first city builders
- Monte Albán inspires other cities in America
In the Andes Mountains, various groups create flourishing civilizations.
Early Civilizations of the Andes

Societies Arise in the Andes

Settlements on the Coastal Plain

- Andes Mountains climate, environment make travel, farming difficult
- Harsh deserts lie along Pacific coast
- Coastal areas with rivers have good soil; are settled 3600–2500 B.C.
- Around 3000 B.C. agriculture starts; by 1800 B.C., communities arise
Societies Arise in the Andes \textit{(continued)}

The Chavín Period

- \textbf{Chavín}—first influential culture in South America, religion important
- Arises in mountains; flourishes from 900 B.C. to 200 B.C.
- Named for major ruin, Chavín de Huántar
- City has pyramids, plazas, and massive earth mounds
- Chavín culture spreads over north and central Peru
- “Mother culture” in Peru— Influences later cultures
Other Andean Civilizations Flourish

**Nazca Achievements**

- **Nazca**—culture on southern coast of Peru
- Flourishes from 200 B.C. to A.D. 600
- They build irrigation systems; create puzzling designs on land
- Nazca also make beautiful pottery and textiles
Other Andean Civilizations Flourish {continued}

Moche Culture

- Moche—culture that thrives on northern coast of Peru
- Flourishes from A.D. 100 to 700
- Moche build large irrigation systems to water wide range of crops
- Images on Moche tombs and pottery reveal how they lived
- Neither Moche religion nor fall of culture are understood
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