Crops Cross Borders

Trace how farming and crop exchange shaped cultural centers.

GHW.1.2 "Analyze agricultural hearths and exchanges of crops among regions. Evaluate the impact of agriculture on the subsequent development of cultural hearths in various regions of the world."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each crop's place of origin, circle places it later reached, and number two statements that link farming to changes in community life.

From Fields to Cultural Centers

1. About 10,000 years ago, people in Southwest Asia began cultivating wheat and barley in the Fertile Crescent. These grains could be stored, so farmers could support people who did not grow food themselves. Along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, irrigation helped communities raise crops in a dry climate. Over time, cities such as Ur became centers of trade, government, and religious life. Farming did not create cities by itself: river access, labor, and decisions about sharing water mattered. Wheat later moved beyond its original hearth into parts of Europe and South Asia, where people adapted it to local conditions.

2. In the Yangtze River basin of China, people domesticated rice thousands of years ago. In many places, growing rice in flooded fields required steady water and coordinated work to build and maintain channels. Reliable harvests helped support larger settlements and specialists, including craftspeople and officials. Rice farming also shaped calendars and shared labor practices, though political power depended on more than food supply. Over many centuries, rice cultivation spread to places such as Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Farmers in those regions adjusted methods to suit local rainfall and terrain rather than simply copying one way of farming.

3. In southern Mexico, farmers domesticated maize, which spread north and south through exchange and migration. Communities that adopted it changed their diets and, in some places, supported larger villages. Much later, after 1500, ships carried another American crop, the potato, from the Andes to Europe. Potatoes could grow in cool regions and eventually helped feed growing populations there. These exchanges did not produce identical results everywhere: climate, land access, and local choices shaped each crop's impact. They also show that a crop can move far beyond its agricultural hearth and influence cultural life in a new region.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could wheat and barley farming help a city such as Ur become a cultural center? Name one other factor that mattered.

2. Compare the role of water management in farming communities near the Tigris and Euphrates and in the Yangtze River basin.

3. How did the spread of maize and the potato affect places beyond their agricultural hearths? Give one effect for each crop.

4. Would moving a crop to a new region guarantee the same cultural changes as in its hearth? Support your judgment with two details from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a crop in the passage and imagine farmers begin growing it in an unnamed region the passage does not discuss. In four sentences, predict one change in community life, explain it using a fact from the passage, and identify a local condition that could limit the change.

Crops Cross Borders

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each crop's place of origin, circle places it later reached, and number two statements that link farming to changes in community life. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could wheat and barley farming help a city such as Ur become a cultural center? Name one other factor that mattered.	**Stored grain could support people who worked in trade, government, or religious life instead of growing food. River access, irrigation, labor, or decisions about sharing water also mattered.**
2	Compare the role of water management in farming communities near the Tigris and Euphrates and in the Yangtze River basin.	**Irrigation helped communities near the Tigris and Euphrates grow crops in a dry climate. In the Yangtze basin, flooded rice fields often required steady water and coordinated work on channels.**
3	How did the spread of maize and the potato affect places beyond their agricultural hearths? Give one effect for each crop.	**Maize changed diets and supported larger villages in some places. In Europe, potatoes eventually helped feed growing populations.**
4	Would moving a crop to a new region guarantee the same cultural changes as in its hearth? Support your judgment with two details from the passage.	**No. Rice farmers adjusted their methods to local rainfall and terrain, and the passage says climate, land access, and local choices shaped the effects of exchanged crops.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Imagine farmers growing rice in a dry inland valley. To bring water to fields, neighbors might organize groups to dig and maintain channels. The passage explains that flooded rice fields need steady water and coordinated work, so those groups could become part of community life. If the valley lacks a dependable water source, rice farming may remain small and cause little change.

Accept other passage-supported links between farming, crop movement, and cultural life. For Part 3, look for a plausible prediction grounded in a crop's needs and a condition that limits its impact.