# From Fields to Cities

Trace how farming changed life in Mesopotamia

**AWH.C.1.5** "Describe how the development of agriculture (the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals) related to settlement, population growth, and the emergence of civilization."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline a farming practice, circle an effect on settlement or population, and number three linked details that trace a path from food production to city institutions.

### Growing a City

1. Along the lower Tigris and Euphrates rivers, people faced a choice: move often to find food or stay near fields that needed care. Thousands of years before the first cities, farming communities in the region grew crops such as barley and kept sheep and goats. Fields needed planting, watering, and harvesting at different times. Animals needed shelter and access to grazing land. These repeated tasks made it practical for many families to live near their fields year after year. Permanent villages grew, though farming was not the only reason people settled in one place.

2. When fields produced more food than families needed right away, people could store grain for lean months. This extra food could help support more children and newcomers. In southern Mesopotamia, however, rainfall was often too low for crops. Villagers dug canals to bring river water to fields. Watered fields produced food for growing communities, and stored grain helped some people survive poor seasons. As the population grew, people needed more farmland and more work to maintain canals. Farming supported population growth, but growth also increased the demand for land, water, and cooperation.

3. By about 3500 BCE, Uruk had become a large city in southern Mesopotamia. Its food supply depended on farmers working nearby fields, while some residents made pottery, traded goods, or organized building projects instead of farming full time. Managing canals and supplies required decisions across many households. Leaders and institutions gained influence as they organized work and collected food. Record keepers eventually used early writing to track goods. Such specialized jobs, shared rules, and urban institutions are features of civilization. Agriculture helped make them possible, but a harvest alone did not create a city: people also had to coordinate labor and resources.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did growing crops and keeping animals encourage families to settle near their fields?

2. How could stored grain help a farming community grow, and what new demands could growth create?

3. How did food from nearby farms make full-time work other than farming possible in Uruk?

4. Why did the growth of cities require more than a successful harvest?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Suppose a village's canal stops bringing water for two growing seasons. In four or five sentences, predict how this could affect its food supply, settlement, population, and specialized work, then describe one choice villagers could make.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.1.5

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a farming practice, circle an effect on settlement or population, and number three linked details that trace a path from food production to city institutions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did growing crops and keeping animals encourage families to settle near their fields? | **Crops needed repeated care, and animals needed shelter and grazing land, so living near fields made those tasks easier.** |
| 2 | How could stored grain help a farming community grow, and what new demands could growth create? | **Stored grain could feed people during lean months and help support more children and newcomers. More people needed farmland, water, and canal maintenance.** |
| 3 | How did food from nearby farms make full-time work other than farming possible in Uruk? | **Farmers supplied food, allowing some residents to make pottery, trade, or organize projects instead of farming full time.** |
| 4 | Why did the growth of cities require more than a successful harvest? | **People had to coordinate work and resources across many households, including the management of canals and food supplies.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If the canal stopped bringing water, barley harvests would likely shrink. Stored grain might feed families for a while, but two poor seasons could force some people to move closer to a dependable water source. With fewer residents and less food, the village might support fewer full-time potters or record keepers. Villagers could work together to repair the canal before the next planting. Whether they stayed would depend on how much grain remained and whether the repair succeeded.

Accept other supported cause-and-effect chains that connect farming to settlement, population, and specialized work. For the marking task, students may choose different details if their numbered steps form a logical sequence.