Before History

1. (In the period before the simulation) - Humans evolved special traits that allowed them to easily populate the world and create tools to adapt environments to their needs
   1. As humans began to spread, they also altered the earth’s climate (through fires and deforestation and other stuff) and caused the extinction of several large mammal species (think mammoths and giant kangaroos)
2. Hunting and Gathering Societies
   1. What characteristics of these societies did we learn?
   2. Creativity
      1. Despite appearances, hunter gatherer societies had a lot of leisure time (consider that once you’ve collected your food, the rest of the day is yours - for experts this might only take 4-6 hours)
      2. Cave paintings, like those seen at Lascaux, or the Venus of Willendorf (a fertility figurine) show that H/G people had spare time
         1. We don’t know much about the rationale for these works, but it does show an affinity for fertility and possibly the cool stories about hunting
3. The Agricultural Revolution
   1. Prior to 15,000 years ago, agriculture was impossible due to the Ice Age
      1. Following the Ice Age, the climate became more predictable (as we see it now) and more temperate
   2. Agriculture also seemed to spring up independently in different parts of the world, with different crops and domesticated animals. We’ll talk more about this next week.
   3. What characteristics of agricultural societies did we learn?
   4. Jericho
      1. One of the first towns - built on a freshwater oasis, in what is now Israel.
      2. 2,000 people, based on wheat and barley farming
         1. Trade in salt and obsidian (black volcanic glass)
         2. Also built a wall around the city to protect it from thieves
   5. Another important early settlement was Catal Huyuk in what is now Turkey
      1. Evidence here of three early craft industries
         1. Pottery - necessary to store food and eventually a means for artistic expression
         2. Metallurgy - turning metal into jewlery and tools
            1. At first, copper was used because it was easy to get and easy to work with
            2. Eventually, gold, iron and bronze (mixture of copper and tin) were also used.
         3. Textiles - cultivation of plants that produce long fibers that are easy to work with (think cotton)
            1. This was primarily thought be women’s work, as spinning thread could also be done while nursing children at home.
4. Urban Life
   1. As more people congregated in towns and specialized labor became more prevalent, cities emerged.
   2. Cities were more complex and larger than towns
      1. This involved the creation of professional craft workers (people that were not involved in food production at all)
      2. It also created a class of professional managers (administrators, tax collectors, military and security specialists) necessary to the running of the city.
      3. Cultural specialists, like priests, also arose to transmit the traditions and values of the people
         1. Early religious beliefs generally followed two general guidelines
            1. First, religious belief was designed to explain the unexplainable - why does the rain fall? why does the wind blow? why do my crops fail?
            2. Second, these unexplainable aspects of life were controlled by gods - sometimes unpredictable and petty - that needed worship and reverence.
   3. Cities became centers of long distance trade
   4. Cities also began to control the areas around cities (called hinterlands) to ensure that enough food for the city was grown
   5. In other words, cities became self-perpetuating centers of innovation.