



Lesson Plan to accompany the story
“Origins Of Civilization” in the collection
“The Illustrated Ulysses S. Grant in China
and Other Stories.”

THE FIRST FARMER

The Importance of Early Agriculture in Early Civilizations

With modern emphasis on technology and urban environments, it can be easy to forget that until recently, civilizations and societies were heavily based around agriculture. Most people throughout history lived as farmers and laborers on those farms. With none of the machines or selective breeding of their crops and farming techniques, societies advanced or died on the base of their crop yields.

The first crops grown as such are the standbys of civilization: grains. Wheat, barley, millet, rice, and even peas have been cultivated for millennia. Livestock were also kept around this time, with sheep and goats some of the first domesticated animals. Essentially grass, wheat is easy to grow and produced impressive yields, though it can wear out the soil. Thus, areas with regular floods benefited from the reintroduction of nutrients to the soil. So it's not surprising that the first early civilizations settled along rivers.

The first civilization in the west, Mesopotamia, settled between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, utilizing the rich soil to grow crops. In Egypt, annual floods saturated the soil and allowed for impressive crop yields. The Chinese cultivated rice over 6,000 years ago, and 10,000 years ago the natives of the New World grew corn, beans, and squash.

ASSIGNMENT

Please visit these sites and answer two questions:

<https://www.pnas.org/content/106/16/6427>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/ancient-farming-concepts-techniques-171877>

<https://puregreensaz.com/history-agriculture/>

- 1) What methods of agriculture did different groups practice and why? For example, why did the Chinese grow rice instead of some other grain?
- 2) Why did some civilizations manage to utilize their crop yields to expand their reach, and others did not or could not?

Length: your essay should be roughly 300 words

