Essential Questions

The purpose of this unit is to teach you the answer to the following essential questions:

- What physical and human features make Sub-Saharan Africa a unique region?
- How did the technology of farming change humankind during the Agricultural Revolution?

Lesson A: The Geography of Sub-Saharan Africa

1. What is the political geography of Sub-Saharan Africa? You need to know where the following nations lie in Sub-Saharan Africa: Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Liberia, Côte D’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, São Tome and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Zambia Tanzania, Malawi, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Madagascar.

2. What human and physical features make Sub-Saharan Africa a unique region? You need to know the following facts and ideas about Sub-Saharan Africa:
   a. About 70% of Africa’s 1,000,000,000 people live in Sub-Saharan Africa.
   b. There are three physical zones in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the north, there are grasslands. In the central region, there is a broad strip of tropical rainforest. And in the south, there are more grasslands and deserts.
   c. The Great Rift Valley is an ever-widening crack in the earth. It is in Eastern Africa, running from Ethiopia to Mozambique:
      i. There are volcanoes along the line of the Great Rift Valley. Among them is the famous peak of Mount Kilimanjaro.
      ii. There are a number of large lakes along the line of the Great Rift Valley. Among them are Lake Victoria, Lake Nyasa, and Lake Tanganyika.
   d. Two major river systems flow through Sub-Saharan Africa. They are in the western side of the continent. They are the Congo and the Niger.
   e. The land of Sub-Saharan Africa is rich in mineral wealth. Great deposits of diamonds, gold, oil, uranium, and many other minerals can be found there.
   f. The land of Sub-Saharan Africa is rich in wildlife. This is rapidly vanishing as humans destroy habitat and poachers take a toll on the animal population.
   g. The region of Sub-Saharan Africa has a long history of exploitation by Europe:
      i. For thousands of years, the Sahara Desert isolated Sub-Saharan Africa from the rest of the world. Finally, around 1000 CE, the Arabs crossed the Sahara and began trading with the natives there for gold, salt, and slaves. As they traded with them, the Arabs brought Islam to the region, which is an important religion there to this day.
      ii. Many kingdoms sprang up because of the trade with the Arabs. These include Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Benin, Great Zimbabwe, and the Kingdom of the Kongo.
      iii. Europeans began arriving in 1400 CE. They began to exploit the region for slaves. This trade destroyed home-grown industry in Sub-Saharan Africa and swept away families, villages, and entire cultures.
      iv. In the late 19th century CE, the Europeans began carving up Africa into colonies. They wanted to pull all of the wealth they could out of Africa, giving as little back to the people of Africa as they could. They wanted to take raw materials out of the land to feed their industries in Europe and wanted a place to sell finished goods. This left the land of Sub-Saharan Africa very poor by the time the European powers pulled their colonies out of the region.
v. The European powers pulled their colonies out of Africa in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s because the devastation of World War I and World War II had so weakened them that they could not hold on to them.

vi. From 1947 to 1990, the United States and the Soviet Union fought a proxy war in Sub-Saharan Africa during a period called the Cold War. They encouraged people to rebel against countries that they did not like in the region. This caused a great deal of war and violence in the region for decades.

vii. The slave trade, colonization, and the Cold War left the region very poor and politically unstable. This has caused violence in the region, and has made efforts to control disease there very difficult.

h. Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region on earth. On average, the nations of this region only generate $2,500.00 in wealth per person per year.

i. Sub-Saharan Africa is a land rich in cultural diversity:
   i. Hundreds of different ethnic groups coexist there, often uneasily.
   ii. Many hundreds of languages are spoken there. Many nations use a European lingua franca to communicate between ethnic groups.
   iii. Many religions exist there: 50% are Christian, 30% are Muslim, 15% cling to native African religions, 2.5% follow other religions, and 2.5% follow no religion whatsoever.

j. Cultural diversity and poverty have led to fighting among different ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. Notably, the Hutus of Rwanda murdered 1,000,000 Tutsis in one of the worst genocides of the 20th century in 1994.

k. Governments are often hit-and-miss in this region. They rule often by violence and can be swayed by bribery. They often do not consider the needs of the people they govern.

l. From 1948 to 1990, the government of South Africa ruled by a system called apartheid. Under this system, South Africa’s whites and blacks were separated from one another. Whites received all of the benefits of this uneven system, receiving most of the land and wealth of the country. Blacks, however, lived in grinding poverty from which there was no hope of escape. Because of this system, many black Africans live in grinding poverty to this day. Violence, unemployment, and disease plague the country because of this.

m. AIDS is a large problem in Sub-Saharan Africa. About 6% of the total population suffers from the virus; in some nations about 25% of the population is infected. This is causing many problems for the region. The young who work and bear children are dying from the disease, and many children are being orphaned to it. This may have great impacts on the people of the region.

**Lesson B: The Chronology of the Agricultural Revolution**

3. **What is a hunter-gatherer society?**  A hunter-gatherer society is a group of people who support themselves by hunting wild animals and collecting wild plants. They do not engage in any form of agriculture whatsoever.

4. **Who are the Hadza people?**  The Hadza people are a modern group of people who live in the Great Rift Valley around Lake Eyasi in Tanzania.
   a. They live as hunter-gatherers, and show us how people lived before agriculture.
   b. The Hadza people move their camps often, about every 30 days. They do this when food runs scarce in the area that they have set up camp. They also move when someone in their camp dies or suffers a serious illness. Finally, they move their camp to the kill site of a large animal, rather than try to haul the heavy carcass back to camp.
   c. The sexes have very specific roles. Men hunt and gather wild honey. The women gather wild fruits, seeds, and tubers from the countryside.
   d. The Hadza people believe strongly in equality. Although a senior male leads each camp, no adult can tell another adult what to do. This is true even among the sexes; men cannot tell women what to do. Also, sharing is very important to the Hadza people. If a hunter, for example brings in an antelope into the camp after a day of hunting, the entire camp gets a share of the meat.
5. What is the chronology of the Agricultural Revolution?
   a. 8000 BCE – Humans begin growing crops in the Levant.
   b. 7000 BCE – Humans begin growing rice in China.
   c. 6000 BCE – Humans fire pottery in the village of Yarim Tepe in Iraq.
   d. 5000 BCE – Humans build the city of Catal Huyuk in Turkey.
   e. 3100 BCE – King Narmer unifies Upper and Lower Egypt

Lesson C: The Agricultural Revolution

6. How do people in hunter-gatherer bands live? Hunter-gatherers are people who live by hunting animals and gathering wild plants. Little of their food comes from agriculture. These people live in small bands of 25 to 150 people. They move often, searching for new sources of plants and animals to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves when local sources run out. In these bands, people are more or less equal to one another in power and wealth, and sharing is a necessity in these groups.

7. What is agriculture? Agriculture is the technology of farming. People who work in this field grow crops and raise animals for food and other uses.

8. What is pastoralism? Pastoralism is the lifestyle of herding animals from one place to another.

9. What was the Agricultural Revolution? Starting about 10,000 years ago, the people of the world changed. They stopped living as hunter-gatherers. They started to engage in agriculture. They grew crops such as wheat and lentils. They began raising animals like cows, goats, and pigs for their meat, hides, and milk. The Agricultural Revolution utterly changed the way humankind lived.

   a. Humans tended to stay put after they learned how to farm. They had to settle down to tend their fields. No longer could they roam in search of herds of animals to hunt. They had to build permanent settlements, which grew into cities, towns, and villages. Some examples of these are:
      a. Catal Huyuk, a city in Turkey built about seven to eight thousand years ago. It had no walls to protect it, but it also had no exterior doors. People entered its buildings through the roofs.
      b. Jericho, a city in the Jordan River Valley, where built around 10,000 years ago. A wall was built around the city to protect it.
      c. Skara Brae, a village in Scotland. People there made much of the furniture out of stone, like beds and cupboards.
   b. With farming, humans began to specialize their labor. Agriculture gave humans a surplus of food. People did not have to spend all of their time looking for food. While most people produced food for the community, some became fulltime rulers, soldiers, priests, soldiers, merchants, and craftspeople. They traded their skills for food, becoming specialists in their work.
   c. A class system began to form based on what people did for a living. Rulers, soldiers and priests were on top. Merchants and craftspeople were in the middle. Farmers were at the bottom.
   d. The first kingdoms begin to form. With agriculture, leaders became more important. They made sure that surplus food was stored safely for the winter or bad times. They also led soldiers and built city walls to guard the surplus food. They organized labor to build irrigation canals to water crops. They also had to manage conflict in their communities. Leaders served as the go-betweens between the gods and humans. As they engaged in these activities, they became more and more wealthy and powerful. In time, these leaders became the first kings.