The Rise of Agriculture

**Direction:** Read the following article on the Rise of Agriculture. When you are done, answer the questions which follow in one or more complete sentences. Remember to restate the question in the answer when you do. Please highlight the sections of the text where you find your answers.

Before they invented agriculture, modern humans lived as hunter-gatherers. They lived always on the move. They did this in the never-ending search for food. They hunted wild animals for their meat and hides. They also gathered wild plants for food, medicine, and other uses. When they used up all of the food around their camps, they moved on in search of more. That way of life ended 10,000 years ago.

Around this time, humans learned how to domesticate animals. Without doubt, the first animal they learned to tame was the dog. It helped humans hunt wild game. It also served as a backup food supply when no game could be found. They also caught animals like goats, cattle, camels, horses and sheep and learned how to tame them. Humans kept these animals for their meat, hides, and milk. They also learned that some of these animals could help them do work. These included animals like camels, donkeys, and horses. They herded these animals from place to place in search of better grazing and water. This lifestyle of herding animals from place to place is called pastoralism.

At the same time, humans also learned how seeds grow into plants. With this knowledge, humans learned how to plant fields with crops. At first, they planted their fields and moved on. They left them to follow herds of wild animals or drive their flocks to better grazing. When they returned seasons later, they hoped to find that their crops would be ready for harvest.

Later, humans began to stay near their fields through the growing season. They planted fields and built small villages near them. They stayed near the fields to tend them, removing weeds, watering them, and chasing away pests that fed on them. They continued to grow crops on the land until the soil became too poor to support good crop growth. Then, they picked up and moved to other lands with fresh fields. Often, these ancient farmers cleared forests to make room for their crops. They did this by cutting down the forest and burning away the stumps.

Finally, they began to settle down in permanent towns and villages. One of these villages was Catal Huyuk in modern-day Turkey. It was built seven to eight thousand years ago. Catal Huyuk was a large town that spread out over some thirty-two acres. The people there wove baskets. They also made pottery and wove cloth. It had no walls to protect it. But it had no outside gates or doors, either. People went into the town through trapdoors in the roofs. The city of Jericho stood in the valley of the Jordan River. It was another permanent town built at the dawn of the Agricultural Revolution in the Middle East. The city housed some 2,000 people by 8000 BC. Its people built a large wall with towers around the city. These defended the town from outside raiders. Archaeologists found clues that suggested they stored barley in storerooms there.

This time of change was known as the Agricultural Revolution. During this time, people ended their lives as hunter-gatherers. They no longer roamed from place to place in search of food. Rather, they fed themselves through farming and herding. They grew crops and raised animals to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves. For the first time in history, humans possessed the means to control their food supply. This knowledge would have profound effects on the human race. It made civilization possible.

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level 5.4

*For Further Reading*


1. For most of their history, how did humans live?  __________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. How does a hunter-gatherer band live?  __________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. What two discoveries did humans make around 10,000 years ago?  ________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

4. What is pastoralism?  ___________________________________________________________
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   ___________________________________________________________________________________

5. Humans began growing crops around 10,000 years ago. How did their lifestyle as
   hunter-gatherers change because of this development?  ___________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

6. Catal Huyuk and Jericho were towns built at the beginning of the Agricultural
   Revolution. How were they different?  __________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

7. What changes did humans go through during the Agricultural Revolution?  ______
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

8. What is agriculture?  ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

9. What did the technology of agriculture allow human beings to control for the first
   time in history?  ________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________