

Active Reading

Section 1: Understanding Our Environment

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

The agricultural revolution allowed human populations to grow at an unprecedented rate. An area of land can support up to 100 times as many people by farming as it can by hunting and gathering. As populations grew, they began to concentrate in smaller areas. These changes placed increased pressure on local environments.

The agricultural revolution also changed the food we eat. The plants we grow and eat today are descended from wild plants. During harvest season, farmers collected seeds from plants that exhibited the qualities they desired. The seeds of plants with large kernels or sweet and nutritious flesh were planted and harvested again. Over the course of many generations, the domesticated plants became very different from their wild ancestors.

IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS

One reading skill is the ability to identify the main idea of a passage. The main idea is the main focus or key idea. Frequently a main idea is accompanied by supporting information that offers detailed facts about main ideas.

Read the question and write the answer in the space provided.

1. Why did populations concentrate in smaller areas during the agricultural revolution?

In the space provided, write the letter of the term or phrase that best answers the question.

- _____ 2. Which of the following best describes the theme of the passage?
 - a. The agricultural revolution changed human food preferences.
 - b. Some plants today are similar to their ancestors.
 - c. Farming replaced hunting and gathering.
 - d. Agricultural communities developed from hunter-gatherer communities, and the practice of agriculture introduced new environmental problems.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Read the question and write the answer in the space provided.

3. The root word *ager* means “field,” and *cultivation* means “the act of tilling.” Using this information, define *agriculture*.

SEQUENCING INFORMATION

One reading skill is the ability to sequence information, or to logically place items or events in the order in which they occur.

In the space provided, write the term that best completes each sentence in the sequence of statements showing how the food we eat today has changed over time.

4. Step 1: Farmers collected _____ from plants they liked.
5. Step 2: The farmers’ preferred plants were planted and _____ .
6. Step 3: _____ plants became very different from their ancestors.

RECOGNIZING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

One reading skill is the ability to recognize similarities and differences between two phrases, ideas, or things. This is sometimes known as comparing and contrasting.

In the space provided, write the letter of the phrase that best completes the statement.

- _____ 7. Farms are to hunting and gathering as
a. cars are to airplanes. c. fish hatcheries are to fishing.
b. anchors are to ships. d. compact discs are to vinyl records.

RECOGNIZING CAUSE AND EFFECT

One reading skill is the ability to recognize cause and effect.

Read each question and write your answer in the space provided.

8. In what two ways did the human population change as a result of the agricultural revolution?

9. What changes did humans make that affected local environments?
