

Cultural Hearths

Mini-Lesson—cut this out and glue to the right hand page of your notebook.

During the Neolithic Age, certain places were a hot spot for ideas, technology, practices, and inventions that made everyday life easier. These places enjoyed many people coming to trade. Artisans had much to share and products they traded for more exotic (uncommon) items. Archaeologists call these places a cultural hearth. With many people traveling in and out of these places ideas became as much a commodity (desired item) as products. Some of the things people developed were kilns. A kiln is an outdoor oven that gets hotter than your average kitchen oven. It was used to bake pottery and doing so made the pottery pieces tougher and less likely to break. A new specialty developed too, blacksmithing. A blacksmith is someone who specializes in metals and how to cast and shape it. They discovered certain certain rocks contained ore (metals within a rock). Copper was one of the first metals they discovered. Later they found tin. By learning about these two metals, the discipline of metallurgy was born. Metallurgy is basically the study of metals and their unique behaviors and properties. After tin, blacksmiths tried mixing copper and tin and discovered bronze. Last of all, iron was discovered, and this metal was tougher than any they had discovered before. These metals have ages named after them based on which metal was most in use at the time. It didn't take long and people had a surplus or more than was needed of certain things. It was then that trade was born. It seemed to naturally follow that not everyone could do everything, so people traded to get what they needed, which saved everyone time. Staples began to appear on the scene. Staples are foods that everyone within a culture seems to eat and need. It is something consumed basically everyday, and even multiple times a day. Wheat, corn also known as maize, rice, millet, and barley are examples of grains that became staples.

The way people were organized also changed. Clans, which were a small family group, developed into villages, where people might join a clan that had settled, even though they were unrelated. Some clans were matrilineal, which means that families were traced through the mother. Women would also take more of a leadership role in matrilineal societies. Patrilineal societies traced their families through the fathers. Yep, you guessed it, men were in the leadership roles in patrilineal societies. Ideas about how to establish leadership in the villages and cities that were springing up became important and were discussed and shared. All this sharing of thoughts and ideas and the subsequent spread of those things into other cultures is what is known as cultural diffusion. It is a system of adopting those things that work to make lives better. People would incorporate those things and ideas that worked into their own culture, and the coolest thing about it is that they chose what worked.

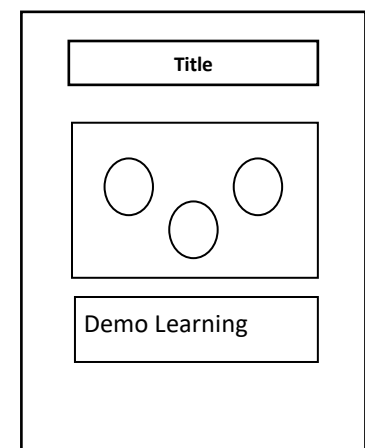
Directions to complete left hand notebook page.

Step 1—Color the title box, circles and their background, and the Demonstrate your Learning box.

Step 2—Cut out the title box, box containing the circles, and the Demonstrate your learning box. Glue them as the graphic to the right shows using a glue stick or tape.

Step 3—Use the mini-lesson to make three word webs that define and include related items to each word or phrase.

Step 4—Complete the Demonstrate your learning activity and site evidence from the mini-lesson.



Demonstrate your learning.

In this mini-lesson you learned what a staple is and what items were staples for Neolithic peoples. Do we still have staples today? Write about the staples in your family and how they are used (cuisine names).