

Big Era 3 Comparing Farming, Pastoralism, and Hunters-Gatherers

A) READ "Was Farming a Good Idea?" (Handout 2.1)

What do you think "standard of living" means?

What do you think "quality of life" means?

Complete the following grid about hunters-gathers and farmers describing their standard of living and quality of life (give examples)

	HUNTER-GATHERERS	FARMERS
"Standard of Living"	i.e. had to search for food or starve	i.e. dependable food source
"Quality of Life"	i.e. time spent in search of food, means can't do other things	i.e. didn't have to worry (as much) about food) so could create art

Based on the reading (2.1) do the following:

What is the point of view of the author (in regards to life for hunter-gatherers versus farmers)?

What EVIDENCE in the reading supports this?

Lesson 2***Student Handout 2.1*****Was Farming a Good Idea?**

About 10,000 years ago, farming, an apparently minor blip on the vast time-line of history, put humans on the road to the complex societies that dominate contemporary life.

Most history books present the coming of farming as perhaps the single most positive event in human history. After all, are not we better off today than hunter-gatherers were, thanks to our clever agrarian ancestors? We do not have to hunt woolly mammoths for meat, forage for roots, chew hides to soften them for clothing, or build our houses from hides, bone, and sinew. Our diets are rich in quantity and variety. Many of us have an abundance of material goods and, in many places, life expectancies have soared. Surely, our lives today are a great improvement over the lives of hunter-gatherers

As farming provided humans with much greater quantities of food than hunting and gathering could, populations grew. Storage of surpluses made it unnecessary for every woman and man to farm for themselves and their family. Job specialization became possible, with different people specializing in different tasks. Increases in population resulted in increases in social and technical complexity, which in turn led to the first cities, central governments, writing systems, law codes, and monumental buildings. Humans were on their way to the moon!

As for hunter-gatherers, clearly they had been outclassed. Or had they? In trying to understand what hunting and gathering was like, anthropologists today study the few societies of that type that remain in various parts of the world. What they have found is that hunter-gatherers are not necessarily worse off than farmers. In fact, many of them have plenty of leisure time, get a good night's sleep, and do not work nearly as hard as people in farming societies, or, for that matter, in big American corporations. For example, in the United States today a full-time work week is from 35 to 40 hours. In many high-powered professions, work weeks are considerably longer.

For hunter-gatherers, however, 12 to 15 hours a week was likely enough on average to supply their food needs. In addition, their diets were considerably more varied and healthier than the diets of settled peoples, who generally relied on high carbohydrate diets of rice, wheat, or potatoes. Hunter-gatherers had a wide array of plants and animals to choose from, so when one species was not available, often many others were.

For farmers, who increasingly relied on a single crop, an attack by locusts or a drastic change in weather could result in famine. Also, while hunter-gatherers moved seasonally from camp to camp following animal herds and leaving their trash and germs behind, farmers remained in one place. Not only did they accumulate garbage, but they also shared housing and diseases with their domesticated animals. A densely populated agrarian community provided the perfect site for a new phenomenon, the disease epidemic.

In addition to the potential for illness and bad health, farming also set in motion forces that have resulted in the development of class divisions and gender inequality. Hunter-gatherers had little opportunity to accumulate possessions. They carried only what was necessary for their immediate needs. Settled peoples, however, could begin to accumulate possessions, and with possessions came the potential for class divisions. Suddenly there were the “haves” and the “have-nots,” with the “haves” generally believing themselves entitled to order the “have-nots” around.

As for social relations between men and women, hunter-gatherer women had only a few pregnancies, and children were spaced out by about four years. That was because at four years-old a child could walk on its own as the band moved from place to place. In farming communities where women stayed put, pregnancies usually came closer together so that family size increased. Recovering from a greater number of pregnancies and caring for the needs of a larger family, women became tied to the home in ways that hunter-gatherer women were not.

There is no question that the development of settled agrarian societies set us humans on a path that has brought us to the highly advanced and technologically sophisticated way of life we enjoy today. Yet, as we look back in history to the time when the hunter-gatherer way of life was common all around the globe, we may feel a bit wistful about a lost way of life.

B) Read the Student Handout 1.2 "Pastoralists' Values"

Answer the following questions based on the reading:

- 1. What kind of geographical challenges did pastoralists have with living in Inner Eurasia?**
- 2. How did the pastoralists adapt to their environment?**
- 3. Where were the settled areas compared to where the nomads lived?**
- 4. Why did people settle in these areas?**
- 5. How might towns be vulnerable to attacks?**
- 6. What could they do to protect themselves?**
- 7. Why were pastoralists strong warriors? How would their lifestyle make them more aggressive?**
- 8. Using the reading as evidence, how do we know that the pastoralists were warlike?**

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.2—Pastoralists' Values

For hundreds of thousands of years humans and their hominid ancestors survived in the Inner Eurasian grasslands by hunting and eating animals that consumed grass. In the grasslands hunting and gathering was a way of life that used the scarce food resources of a region of low rainfall and natural productivity.

Around 4000 BCE, however, horse-riding livestock herders appear on the Eurasian steppes. Men and women learned to use domesticated animals not just for their meat but also for their secondary products of milk, wool, and hides. People also used the traction power of domesticated animals, such as horses and oxen, to pull carts, wagons, or chariots. Eventually, this development transformed transportation and warfare.

Like hunting, pastoralism offered a technological solution to the ecological problems that the harsh environment of Inner Eurasia posed. Its success encouraged population growth, and as populations grew, Inner Eurasian communities faced new challenges. They had to find ways to mobilize scarce resources both to sustain themselves and to defend themselves against rival groups. The relatively flat landscape of Inner Eurasia offered a few natural resistances. Where geography offered no shield, societies had to rely on tactical and fighting skills.

Why were pastoralist societies so warlike? The pastoral way of life favored warrior cultures. Livestock was a less secure resource than agricultural crops. Disease could swiftly destroy a large herd, and rival nomad rustlers might steal an entire herd. Herders had to be vigilant and able to react quickly in a crisis. Controlling large animals also required the physical skills of a rodeo rider and the logistical skill of a cattle driver. This means that they had to have a system of military readiness both to protect their animals and to raid their neighbors. It requires physical strength, endurance, and a great tolerance for hardship. Pastoral societies had to be able to transform themselves easily into armies capable of fighting with skill, spirit, and ferocity. Military resources had to be concentrated in relatively sparse populations. Therefore, training in how to ride and shoot had to begin at an early age.

The pastoral nomadic way of life also encouraged aggression and a willingness to resort to violence, a limited empathy for other peoples' suffering, restrained affections in personal relationships, and great concern for personal courage and status. Pastoral societies instilled these martial values in both women and men.

Pastoral Nomads Questions: Big Era 3 L4 Lesson 1

Complete the following chart comparing settled farmers and urban dwellers to pastoral nomads:

Farmers/urban	Pastoral nomads

Place these terms in the correct column in the chart above



- Permanent homes
- Tents
- Job specialization
- Limited job specialization
- Identified by social class
- identified by clan
- Occupation defines roles
- Warrior abilities define
- Surpluses
- limited or no surplus
- meat and milk
- vegetables and fruits
- Wealth defined by land
- wealth defined by herd size
- centralized government
- Organized by tribes and clans
- central leader by heredity
- stays in power as long as effective
- Inner Eurasia/steppes
- south and outside of steppes

C) FILL OUT the following chart

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Farming/Settled		
Hunters/Gatherers		
Pastoralists		

D) Formative Assessment (paragraph): **DO YOU THINK farming was a good idea? Why or why not?**

