

THIS THRESHOLD TODAY – AGRICULTURE

Purpose

In this activity, students will read news articles that reveal unexpected connections between today's world and the rise of agriculture. We are learning new things all the time related to what we know about Threshold 7. This activity will help students see the connection between this class and today.

Process

When humans first began to practice agriculture about 10,000 years ago, not only were their lives transformed but the surface of the Earth was transformed as well. Humans were no longer forced to move from place to place in search of food. They could settle down in one place, and they could produce more food than they needed in that place, resulting in human population growth. Humans also altered the surface of the Earth more deliberately to make more land available for agriculture. Cutting down trees and digging irrigation canals are just two of the ways that humans made the land more suitable for growing crops. Because farming resulted in such dramatic changes in the Earth and in the way humans lived, it qualifies as the seventh major threshold of increasing complexity in this course. Scientists and historians, and all of us, are continuing to learn more about the beginnings of agriculture and what this development means for our species.

Your students can join in this process of discovery by searching for new stories about the rise of agriculture on the timeline of humanity. Before they start their research, remind them of the following questions that we can ask about article credibility. By now, students should be fairly familiar with these:

- What authority does the author have about the topic?
- What authority does the website have about the topic?
- Does the person have a degree or extensive experience in the field they are talking about?
- Is this person respected by their peers?
- Do they have publications in the field that are cited by others?
- Is the website hosting the content known and respected for featuring that type of content?
- Is the article based on opinion or is it well supported?
- Are there other articles or websites that further support or corroborate the claims being made in the article you are reading?

After you've reviewed these questions, tell them there's even more that they can look into to determine credibility and bias. To do that, they should ask themselves:

- Why was the article or website created in the first place? In other words, what was the purpose of the article?

Point out that articles can be written for a ton of reasons. In politics, people often write articles to convince other people of their viewpoints. Sometimes people write articles because they're covering a popular topic and think more people will read or pay them for their work (such as celebrity news and gossip). There are different reasons people write and make claims, and understanding those reasons can help you decide if the arguments are credible. Understanding the audience, or who an article was written for, also helps with this process. Once you've discussed that as a class, time to dive into research!

You and your students can look at these sites to help you get started:

- [What We Can Learn from This Ancient 'Lunchbox'](#)
- [Ancient Wheat DNA Find Shifts Early UK Farming Theories](#)
- [Hidden History of Prehistoric Women's Work Revealed](#)
- [From Early Agriculture to Future Farming](#)
- [Ancient Farmers Spared Us from Glaciers but Profoundly Changed Earth's Climate](#)

THIS THRESHOLD TODAY – AGRICULTURE

Purpose

In this activity, you'll read news articles that reveal unexpected connections between today's world and the rise of agriculture. We're learning new things all the time related to what we know about Threshold 7. This activity will help you see the connection between this class and today.

Process

When humans first began to practice agriculture about 10,000 years ago, not only were their lives transformed but the surface of the Earth was transformed as well. Humans were no longer forced to move from place to place in search of food. They could settle down in one place, and they could produce more food than they needed in that place, resulting in human population growth. Humans also altered the surface of the Earth more deliberately to make more land available for agriculture. Cutting down trees and digging irrigation canals are just two of the ways that humans made the land more suitable for growing crops. Because farming resulted in such dramatic changes in the Earth and in the way humans lived, it qualifies as the seventh major threshold of increasing complexity in this course. Scientists and historians, and all of us, are continuing to learn more about the beginnings of agriculture and what this development means for our species.

You can join in this process of discovery by searching for new stories about the rise of agriculture on the timeline of humanity. Before you start your research, think about the following questions:

- What authority does the author have about the topic?
- What authority does the website have about the topic?
- Does the person have a degree or extensive experience in the field they are talking about?
- Is this person respected by their peers?
- Do they have publications in the field that are cited by others?
- Is the website hosting the content known and respected for featuring that type of content?
- Is the article based on opinion or is it well supported?
- Are there other articles or websites that further support or corroborate the claims being made in the article you are reading?

That's a lot, right? Well, there's even more. Another way to evaluate credibility and bias is to uncover why an article was written in the first place, or in other words, the purpose of an article. Discuss purpose with your class. Once you've done that, time to dive into research!

You can look at these sites to help you get started:

- [What We Can Learn from This Ancient 'Lunchbox'](#)
- [Ancient Wheat DNA Find Shifts Early UK Farming Theories](#)
- [Hidden History of Prehistoric Women's Work Revealed](#)
- [From Early Agriculture to Future Farming](#)
- [Ancient Farmers Spared Us from Glaciers but Profoundly Changed Earth's Climate](#)

THIS THRESHOLD TODAY – AGRICULTURE

Name: Date:

Directions: Look online or in the links provided for current news articles related to Threshold 7: Agriculture. Find at least three articles and complete the research cards below. If you are doing a Little Big History project, you might gather sources to help you with your research for that project (as long as they relate to Threshold 7).

- What We Can Learn from This Ancient ‘Lunchbox’
<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/ancient-bronze-age-box-discovered-archaeology-spd/>
- Ancient Wheat DNA Find Shifts Early UK Farming Theories
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/people-and-culture/food/the-plate/2015/03/03/ancient-wheat-uk/>
- Hidden History of Prehistoric Women’s Work Revealed
<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-42173236>
- From Early Agriculture to Future Farming
<https://www.natureasia.com/en/nmiddleeast/article/10.1038/nmiddleeast.2018.30>
- Ancient Farmers Spared Us from Glaciers but Profoundly Changed Earth’s Climate
<https://news.wisc.edu/ancient-farmers-spared-us-from-glaciers-but-profoundly-changed-earths-climate/>

Threshold 7: Agriculture	
Headline/Title:	
Date of article:	
Name of website:	
Author:	
Authority	
What makes the author an authority on this topic?	

