Learning Targets
• To establish the relationship between the First Civilizations and the Agricultural Revolution
• To contrast civilizations with other forms of human communities
• To explore when, where, and how the First Civilizations arose in human history
• To explore how the emergence of civilizations transformed how humans lived and how their societies were structured
• To show the various ways in which civilizations differed from one another
• To explore the outcomes of the emergence of civilizations, both positive and negative, for humankind

Big Picture Questions
1. How does the use of the term “civilization” by historians differ from that of popular usage? How do you use the term?
2. “Civilizations were held together largely by force.” Do you agree with this assessment, or were there other mechanisms of integration as well?
3. How did the various First Civilizations differ from one another?
4. What distinguished “civilizations” from earlier Paleolithic and Neolithic societies?

Margin Review Questions
1. When and where did the first civilizations emerge?
2. What accounts for the initial breakthroughs to civilization?
3. What was the role of cities in the early civilizations?
4. In what ways have historians tried to explain the origins of patriarchy?
5. How did Mesopotamian and Egyptian patriarchy differ from each other?
6. What were the sources of state authority in the First Civilizations?
7. In what ways might the advent of “civilization” have marked a revolutionary change in the human condition? And in what ways did it carry on earlier patterns from the past?
8. In what ways were Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations shaped by their interactions with near and distant neighbors?

Key Terms
Central Asian/Oxus civilization: A major First Civilization that emerged around 2200 B.C.E. in Central Asia along the Oxus or Amu Darya river in what is now northern Afghanistan. An important focal point for a Eurasian-wide system of intellectual and cultural exchange, it faded away about 1700 B.C.E.
Code of Hammurabi: A series of laws publicized at the order of King Hammurabi of Babylon (d. 1750 B.C.E.). Not actually a code, but a number of laws that proclaim the king’s commitment to social order. (See the excerpt of the code in Document 2.2, pp. 95–97.)
Egypt: “the gift of the Nile”: Egypt is often known as “the gift of the Nile” because the region would not have been able to support a significant human population without the Nile’s annual inundation, which provided rich silt deposits and made agriculture possible.
Epic of Gilgamesh: The most famous extant literary work from ancient Mesopotamia, it tells the story of one man’s quest for immortality.
Hatshepsut: Ancient Egypt’s most famous queen; reigned 1472–1457 B.C.E. (pron. hat-shep-soot)
Mohenjo Daro/Harappa: Major cities of the Indus Valley civilization; both of which flourished around 2000 B.C.E. (pron. moehen-joe DAHRoh) (pron. hah-RAHP-uh)
Norte Chico/Caral: Norte Chico is a region along the central coast of Peru, home of a civilization that developed in the period 3000–1800 B.C.E. Caral was the largest of some twenty-five urban centers that emerged in the area at that time.
Nubia: A civilization to the south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, noted for development of an alphabetic writing system and a major ironworking industry by 500 B.C.E.
Olmec civilization: An early civilization that developed along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico around 1200 B.C.E.
Paneb: A circa 1300 B.C.E. Egyptian foreman in charge of a crew of tomb workers whose misdeeds in life were recorded by a rival.
patriarchy: Literally “rule of the father”; a social system of male dominance.
pharaoh: A king of Egypt. The term literally means “the palace” and only came into use in the New Kingdom, but it is generally employed in reference to all ancient Egyptian rulers.

rise of the state: A process of centralization that took place in the First Civilizations, growing out of the greater complexity of urban life in recognition of the need for coordination, regulation, adjudication, and military leadership.

Uruk: The largest city of ancient Mesopotamia. (pron. OOH-rook)