

ACTIVITY
5

The World's People

CRITICAL THINKING

Wheat and the World

*Culture traits and patterns spread from the areas where they originated in a process called **cultural diffusion**. For example, crops that once were available only in limited areas are now cultivated and consumed by many different peoples. This change has affected the nutrition, health, life expectancy, culture, and population of racial and ethnic groups around the world. Read the passage about cultural diffusion and agriculture. Then answer the questions and complete the activity that follows.*

Many of the agricultural products that we use today are often mistakenly believed to be part of European culture. For example, the so-called "Irish" potato was actually brought to Europe from the culture of the American Indian. In a similar manner, European culture acquired coffee and refined sugar from the Middle East.

The major wheat-producing areas of the modern world include the Punjab in India; southeast Australia; Argentina; the prairie states and provinces of the United States and Canada; and the Ukraine. However, wheat was first grown in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East some 9,000 years ago. Its spread elsewhere occurred with the rise of trade. Cultivation outside the Middle East was encouraged by the fact that the wheat plant adapts to a wide range of environmental conditions.

Throughout history, wheat has played an important part in the feeding of people and animals. Wheat grain is a major source of energy in the human diet. Its composition varies slightly because of differences in climate and soil. However, on average, a kernel of wheat is 70 percent carbohydrates, 12 percent protein, and about 2 percent each of fat, minerals, and crude fiber. A pound of wheat contains about 1,500 calories. Thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and small amounts of vitamin A are also present.

1. Why would the introduction of wheat to a people's diet have helped them to live longer?

2. How could wheat cultivation increase the amount of meat in people's diet?

Activity 5 continued

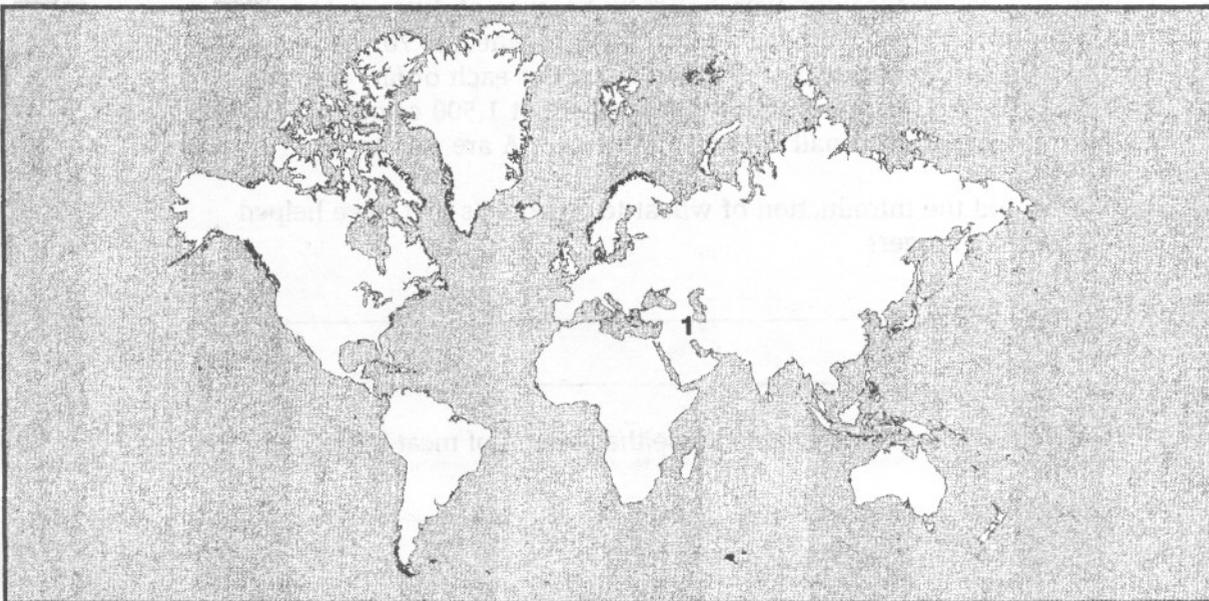
List A names places important in the spread of wheat. List B shows how and when wheat growing spread to these places. Using an atlas, label each of the places in List A on the map below with the number given for each place. (Number 1, the Fertile Crescent has been done for you.) Then use List B to draw arrows on the map to show the pattern of cultural diffusion.

List A

1. Fertile Crescent
2. Egypt
3. Europe
4. India
5. Ethiopia
6. Russia
7. China
8. Caribbean
9. Mexico
10. Peru
11. Argentina
12. Virginia (U.S. state)
13. U.S. Midwest
14. Australia
15. Siberia

List B

- 4000s B.C.—from the Fertile Crescent to Egypt
- 4000s B.C.—from the Fertile Crescent to Europe
- 3000s B.C.—from the Fertile Crescent to India
- 3000s B.C.—from Egypt to Ethiopia
- 1500s B.C.—from Europe to western Russia
- 1000s B.C.—from the Fertile Crescent to China
- 1400s A.D.—from Europe to the Caribbean
- 1500s A.D.—from the Caribbean to Mexico
- 1500s A.D.—from the Caribbean to Peru
- 1500s A.D.—from Europe to Argentina
- 1600s A.D.—from Europe to Virginia (U.S. state)
- 1700s A.D.—from Virginia to the midwestern United States
- 1700s A.D.—from Europe to Australia
- 1800s A.D.—from western Russia to Siberia



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