Chapter 4, Section 1

What Is Culture?

- What is culture?
- How do cultures develop?
Culture: A Total Way of Life

• Culture is the way of life of a group of people who share similar beliefs and customs.
• Cultural traits are a particular group’s individual skills, customs, and ways of doing things.
• Over time, cultural traits may change, but cultures change very slowly.

What are some elements of culture?
• the work people do, their behaviors, beliefs
• material things: houses, television sets, food, clothing
• sports, entertainment, literature
• spiritual beliefs, ideals, government
• ideas about right and wrong
• language
Geographers are interested in the interaction between humans and the environment. How do landforms, climate, vegetation, and resources affect culture?

Similarly, geographers want to know how a culture can affect the environment. They will look at:

- **Technology**: People use technology to take advantage of natural resources and change the environment.
- **Cultural Landscape**: A group’s cultural landscape includes any changes to its environment and the technology used to make the changes.
Early cultures went through four stages:

1. **The invention of tools:** For most of human history, people were hunters and gatherers. Wood and stone tools and weapons helped them hunt, prepare food, and work.

2. **The discovery of fire:** Later, they learned to make and use fire, so some people began living in colder climates.

3. **The growth of agriculture:** Then, people discovered how to grow crops and tame wild animals. Over time, societies relied on farming for most of their food. This great change is called the Agricultural Revolution.

4. **The use of writing**
3,000 years ago, the Agricultural Revolution had changed much of the world:

- It provided a steady food supply: birthrates rose; death rates fell; population increased.
- Led to the creation of cities and complex societies: some produced food; others developed special skills; people developed laws and government.
- The need to record information led to the development of writing. When a culture creates a writing system it is called a civilization.
- As people learned to control and change the environment, they could grow more and better crops and spread out to other regions, changing the landscape as they moved along.
CULTURE: The way of life of a group of people who share similar beliefs and customs

For most of human history, people were hunters and gatherers
People develop wood and stone tools and weapons
People learn how to make and use fire, allowing some people to move to colder climates
People discover how to grow crops and tame animals, allowing them to settle in one place

The Agricultural Revolution produces a steady food supply, causing the population to increase
People begin to specialize in different kinds of work; develop complex societies
People develop laws and government; to record information they develop a writing system, making them a civilization
Early civilizations develop art and music; also organize beliefs into religions
People learn to control and change their environment; new ideas such as terracing and irrigation and improved transportation methods mean people are able to spread out and live in different regions of the Earth