



From Gathering Food to Growing Food - The Earliest People

Have you ever wondered how your family obtains the food you eat? How is the food grown and what tools are used in this process? Who invented these tools?

Can you imagine the life of people who did not grow any crops and lived only by gathering what grew naturally in their surroundings?

Look at the pictures given below to get an idea of the lives of people who lived thousands of years ago.



Fig. 6.1: Earliest people - life style



Fig. 6.2: Earliest people - gathering food

- ♦ In the above figure, how are the people gathering their food?
- ♦ What types of clothes are they wearing?
- ♦ You will find five or six types of tools and weapons in these pictures. Can you identify them?
- ♦ Look at Fig 6.2. What have the men and women brought from the forests?
- ♦ Describe the work they are doing in the picture.

- ♦ Can you list the food items that you eat which are not grown but collected from the wild? How do you prepare them for eating?

If you were sent to a forest, would you be able to find edible food there? You need to know what food is edible, where it grows and when it is available. You may also need to know how to eat it. Can it be eaten raw? Does it have to be cooked or pounded or ground with something else or soaked in water?

Gathering food and hunting

Thousands of years ago, people sustained themselves by collecting fruits, flowers, honey, wild grains and edible tubers and roots that grew naturally in the forests. They also hunted for birds and animals for their food. They did not grow any crop or rear any animal.

Even to hunt, the hunters need to know the hunted animal very well. Where does it spend different parts of the day? Where does it eat or drink water from? In what way is it dangerous? What are the uses of its parts? The earliest people, over many generations, had learnt about all these things and taught them to their children.

- ♦ Can you think of the differences and similarities between the food habits of the earliest people and your own food habits?
- ♦ Do you know that which type of clothes were worn by the earliest people?

Stone tools

Today we use machines, tractors and tools made of steel. The earliest people also used tools but these tools were made of stones, bones or wood. Initially, large stones were given sharp edges by chipping them with another stone. This tool enabled them to cut flesh, dig the earth for tubers and hunt animals.

After thousands of years, they were able to make small, sharp pieces from hard stone. They were called 'microliths'.



Fig. 6.3: How stone tools were made: One of the Techniques is shown here.

They were fixed to wooden or bone handles that served as knives, arrows, sickles etc. These weapons were used to dig soil, chop trees for bark, remove the skin of animals, clean the skin, make clothes from the skin, cut meat and bones, chop fruit and roots and hunt animals easily.



Fig. 6.8 (A), (B): Early Hand axe, Use of microliths: stone sickle



Fig. 6.4 (A), (B): Earliest tools which were largely excavated at Amarabad, Nagarkurnool district



Fig. 6.5: Tools made from stone flakes excavated at Amarabad, Nagarkurnool district



Fig. 6.6: Blades chipped from stones excavated in Yeleswaram, Nalgonda district



Fig. 6.7: Microliths from Ghanapur, Adilabad district

These stone tools of the early people have survived to this day and we can learn more about the lives of these people by studying their tools and the locations where they were found.

- ♦ For what purposes are stones used by people today?

Fire

The discovery of fire by the early people brought great changes in their lives. Probably they made fire by striking two stones or rubbing woodsticks. Fire enabled them to eat roasted meat. This was the beginning of cooked food. They also used fire to keep off wild animals and to light the caves. Wood was often heated on fire to harden it for use.

- ♦ Today, what do we use fire for?
- ♦ Try to make fire by striking two flint stones near cotton or dry leaves to get a feel of earliest men's life.

- ♦ Can you guess the reasons for early people's continual movement from one place to another?
 - o What will happen if a group finishes all the fruits or animals of an area?
 - o Do animals stay in the same place or do they keep moving?
 - o Will water be available in the same place throughout the year?
- ♦ Even today many people migrate from one place to another. What things do they carry with them while shifting?
- ♦ When the earliest people were migrating, what might they have carried with them?
- ♦ Why are people in present times are not leading a nomadic life? Why do they build houses and live in the same place?

Nomadic life

The earliest people used to live in small groups in the caves or under trees or rocks. They did not build houses. Actually, they led a mobile life, constantly moving from one place to another. People who regularly move from place to place are called "Nomads".



Fig.6.9: Cave painting in Pandavulagutta (Regonda, Jayashankar District)

Paintings

The early people drew pictures of animals and hunting scenes on the walls of many caves and rock shelters. Different coloured stones were ground and mixed with animal fat. Pictures were then painted on rocks with bamboo brushes. Perhaps, drawing pictures like these had some religious importance for them.

- ♦ Do people in your community draw pictures or designs as a part of festivals and religious rituals?

number of microliths and a large number of paintings. These paintings are found on the walls of rock shelters of Pandavulagutta near Tirumalagiri village in Warangal district. It has put Telangana State in the map of Rock art sites of the world. It is a unique site as it has paintings from pre-historic times to Kakatiyas and Padmanayaka period that is from about twelve thousand years ago to about five hundred years ago.

- ♦ Look at the picture 6.9 of paintings on the rock shelter in Pandavulagutta. What do you

Stone Age sites of Telangana

The Pre-historic people from early stone age times lived in different parts of the state. We have found stone tools made by them in almost all the districts of the state. Some of these places are Ekkala in Jayashankar district, Amarabad in Nagarkurnool district, Eleswaram in Nalgonda district, Ramagundam, in Peddapally district, Utnoor in Adilabad district, Armoor in Nizamabad district, Manjeera valley in Sangareddy district, Cherla in Badradri district.

- ♦ Find out from your teacher about such sites in your own district and visit those places. Look for stone tools in the museum in a nearby town.

Microlithic and Rock Art Sites:

The prehistoric people living in Telangana have left behind a large

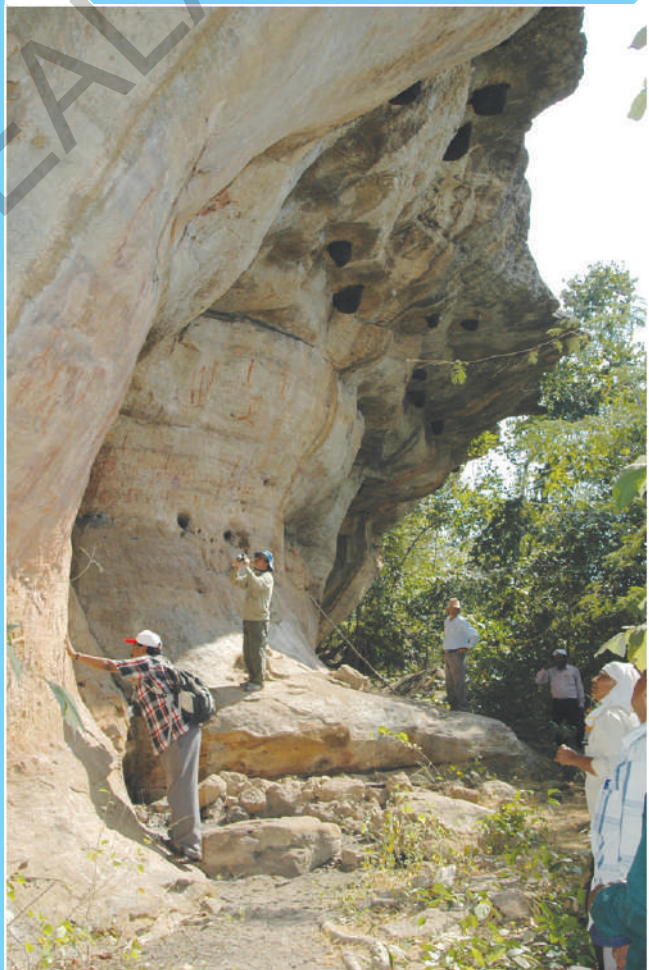
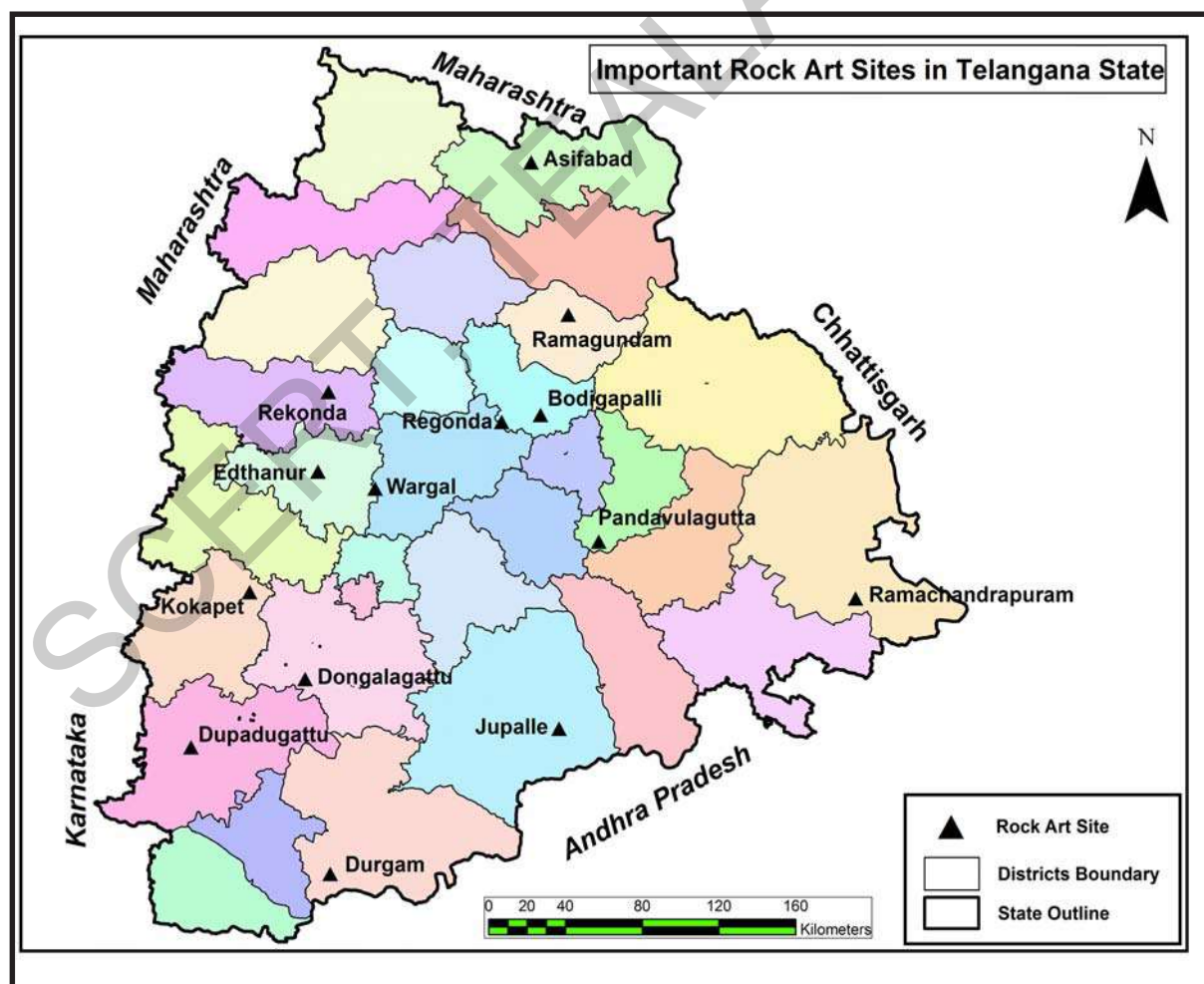


Fig. 6.10: Rock shelter at Neeladri hills
Ramchandrapuram, Penuballi Mandal, Khammam

see? Describe the pictures carefully. Can you see that some of the pictures are painted on an earlier paintings. Why do you think they painted on old paintings?

- ♦ What is the colour of the paintings? Can you find out what materials they may have used for making these paintings – the colours and brushes?
- ♦ Look at the map given below to identify the rock art sites in your district.

The Rock art paintings consist of hunting, fighting scenes, honey collection, dancing, music etc . The animals depicted in Rock painting are bison, buffalo, antelope, deer, elephant, wild goat, tiger, crocodile, scorpion, porcupine, crab, frog, crawling insects, fish, tortoise, lizard, monkey, bear and dog. The paintings also depict birds like eagle, vulture, crane, peacock, crow, beehives, butterfly. There are also geometric signs and human figures. Weapons such as bow, arrow, sword and lances are also seen in the paintings.



Map 1: Important Rock Art Sites in Telangana

Hunter – gatherers in our times

Even now, several groups of people sustain themselves by hunting and gathering food in different parts of the world. In our state, the Yanadis and Chenchus, lived in this manner till very recently. Scholars have tried to live among them and understand their lives. From many such studies done all over the world, historians try to imagine the lives of people who lived in the forests thousands of years ago.

Fig. 6.11 a,b,c: Chenchu hunter gatherer during 1930's



Fig. 6.11(a)



Fig. 6.11(b)



Fig. 6.11(c)

Shared living

We read earlier that the early people lived in small groups and led a nomadic life. It appears that both women and men participated in hunting and food gathering. Women and children were more active in food gathering and hunting of small animals. Hunting large animals may have taken many days of tracking the animals to distant places – this was probably done mostly by men.

Hunter-gatherers shared the food they collected with all the members of the group. There wasn't much scope for storage of food as the food consisted mainly of perishable things like meat, fish, fruits, leaves, tubers and small quantities of wild grains and pulses. The food we eat

today does not perish so quickly. We also have jars and tins to store them for months. But, the earliest people did not store the food, as it would be difficult to carry it around as they migrated from place to place.

Since they shared all the food and had free access to the resources of the forests, hunter-gatherers did not have any rich or poor classes among them. They were all equal and treated each other equally. They also took all the important decisions by discussing them together.

Even though they hunted for wild animals, hunter-gatherers had a great respect and regard for the forests, plants, trees, animals, rivers and hills. They often worshipped them so that they may get enough food all the time.

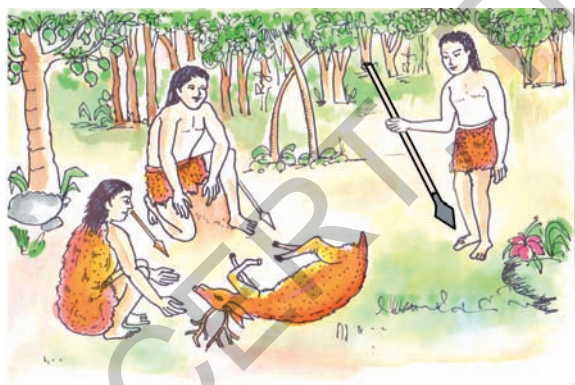


Fig. 6.12: Offering thanks to a hunted deer

We can now imagine the life of early people who hunted and gathered food in the forests.

- ♦ Why couldn't the early people store food for a long time?
- ♦ Do you think it would have created problems if the hunter-gatherers did not share their food?

- ♦ Why were there no poor people among them?
- ♦ Do you find any similarity between thanking the killed animal by the earliest people and worshipping the harvest by the farmers now-a-days?

From gathering to growing food

For thousands of years, human beings lived by hunting and gathering. They started growing crops only about 12,000 years ago. Why did they change their life style? Let us find out.

Around 12,000 years ago, there were major changes in the climate of the world, as it increasingly became warm. It led to great change in natural vegetation as large tracts of forests turned into grasslands. These grasslands provided fodder for grazing animals like cattle, sheep and goats. They also had grains that could be eaten by human beings. As the early people began to come in contact with these grasslands and animals, they gradually tried to control them. This is called domestication of plants and animals. Let us see what this meant and what it led to.

Learning to grow crops and tend animals

Men, women and children probably observed the places where edible plants were found, how new plants sprouted from seeds etc. Perhaps they started looking after the plants – protecting them from birds and animals so that they could grow and the seeds could ripen. Many people who lived

in grasslands where edible grains grew began to rely more on these grains for their food and took to growing them. In this way, different groups of people in different parts of the world became farmers.

Different people in different places learnt to grow paddy, wheat, barley, pulses, millets, tubers and vegetables. When people came into contact, with each other they learnt from each other how to grow and use different kinds of crops and vegetables.

Similarly, people may have allowed gentle animals to come near their camps and eat grass and other leftover food. They may also have protected these animals from other wild animals. In the process the herders got plenty of benefits like regular supply of meat, animal skin and milk. Later they started using oxen and donkeys for carrying loads and ploughing the fields.

Domestication

People usually select those plants and animals that give good yields and but are not prone to disease. Seeds of such crops are selected and used for sowing in the next season and only animals of selected types are allowed to breed. Thus, plants and animals tended by people became different from the wild ones. When people sow selected the crops and protect them till they bear fruit or when they allow selected animals to breed and protect them for their own use, it is called domestication.

In this way, over hundreds of years, people reared and propagated plants and animals beneficial to them in some special ways.

- ♦ Do farmers still use domestication method to select better seeds for the next year?
- ♦ How do you think people protect the crops they select to sow?
- ♦ How do people protect the animals they want to breed?

Of course, not all people took to growing crops or rearing animals. Many people continued to hunt and gather in the forests. And again, not all people practised agriculture in the same way. Initially, many people practised shifting agriculture like the “*Podu*” (you read about it in chapter 5) and also combined a little hunting and gathering from the forests along with growing crops.

Some of them realised that the fertility of the soil could be maintained by tilling and using manure. When they began using the plough and animal manure, they did not have to go in search of new fertile lands every few years. This also meant that they had to combine farming with rearing animals that were needed for ploughing, transportation, manuring the soil and other purposes.

Settled life

When people began growing plants, they had to stay in the same place for a long time to look after the plants - watering, weeding, driving away animals and birds till the grain ripened. At the harvest time, they got so much grain that they could not eat it all at once. It had to be stored for long periods - about six months to one year. All this meant that people had to stay in one place and build houses to store the grain.



Fig. 6.13: An old pot: What do you think could have been stored in this pot?

When staying in one place became inevitable, they constructed huts of stone, wood, mud and dried grass. Vessels were needed to cook grain and store water, milk, etc. It led to the making of pots of different kinds. They also started painting and decorating the pots to make them look better. Cooking also required stoves and stones for grinding corn etc. When archeologists dug up the places where early farmers lived they usually found remains of huts, pots, stoves, microliths and grinding stones. In some places, they also found some roasted grain.



Fig. 6.14: Archaeologists have found remains of food preserved 12,000 years ago

The early farmers needed to clear the forests by cutting trees and branches. They created a new kind of stone tool which is called neolith.

The early farmers selected the right kind of stone which was ground on the rocks to give it an axe like edge. This axe head was then fixed to a wooden handle and used to cut trees etc. By growing crops with the new tools, the early people began a process which changed almost all the aspects of their lives in a fundamental manner. This period of early agriculture is called Neolithic Period, named after the new tool 'neolith'.



Fig. 6.15: Axe head fixed to a wood, excavated at Amarabad, Nagarkurnool



Fig. 6.16: Neolithic stone tools made by grinding stones excavated in Serupalli, Mahaboobnagar Dist,

Source: T.S. State Archeological Museum, Hyderabad

- ♦ How do you think the early people stored grains?
- ♦ Why do people who grow crops have to stay in the same place for a long time?
- ♦ Imagine and draw the huts used by the earliest people. How are they different from your homes?

We find the earliest evidence of cultivation of crops from Baluchistan about 10,000 years ago. In India, there are evidences in Kashmir from around 5000 years ago and Bihar some four or five thousand years ago.

The earliest evidence of domestication in the Deccan comes from the border of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In these states, large mounds of ash were found in a number of places.

Archaeologists believe that around five thousand years ago, hunters of these areas began to rear cattle. The cattle were pegged in special places where a lot of cow dung was accumulated and dried. They were

probably set on fire on festival days causing the ash mounds. Such ash mounds are found in Nagarkurnool in our state and Kurnool and Ananthapur in A.P. Along with cow dung ash, neolithic stone axes, stone blades and rudimentary handmade pots were also found. After a few thousand years, many of these people also started cultivating crops and settling down in villages.

Neolithic Period in Telangana

Number of Neolithic sites have been found in Warangal Rural, Warangal Urban, Janagaon, Jayashankar, Siddipet, Nagarkurnool, Mahabubnagar, Karimnagar and Adilabad Districts and ground stone tools have been collected.

The excavations at Polakonda in Warangal district have brought to light a hearth of burnt clay along with large number of microliths, handmade pots and jars for storing grain. People seem to have lived here about three thousand three hundred years ago.

Keywords

Hunter gatherer

Nomads

Herders

Archaeologist

Stone tools

Shared living

Settled life

Podu agriculture

Microliths

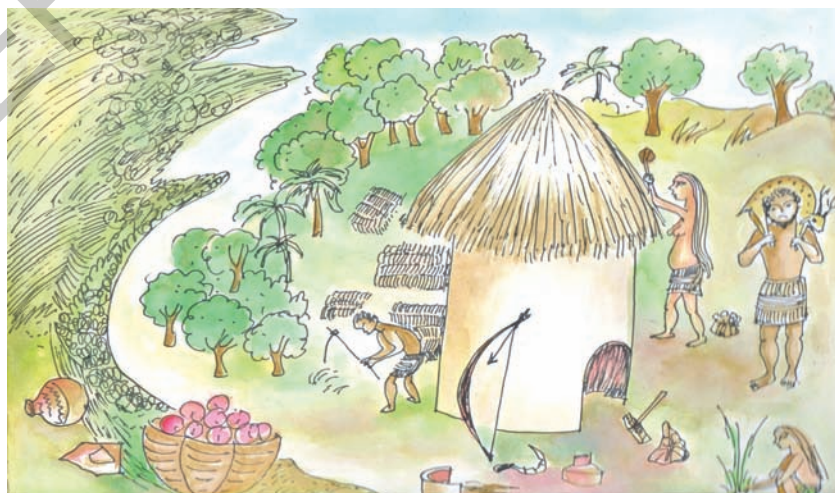
Domestication

Neolithic

Improve your learning

1. Why do you think did the earliest people not wear cotton and woollen clothes?
2. What tools would you use today for cutting fruits? What would you do if these tools were not available?
3. Compare the tools used by the earliest people with those of modern times.
4. Why did the earliest people travel from place to place? In what ways are they similar to/ different from the reasons for our travel today?
5. Locate the following Rock Art sites in the map of Telangana:

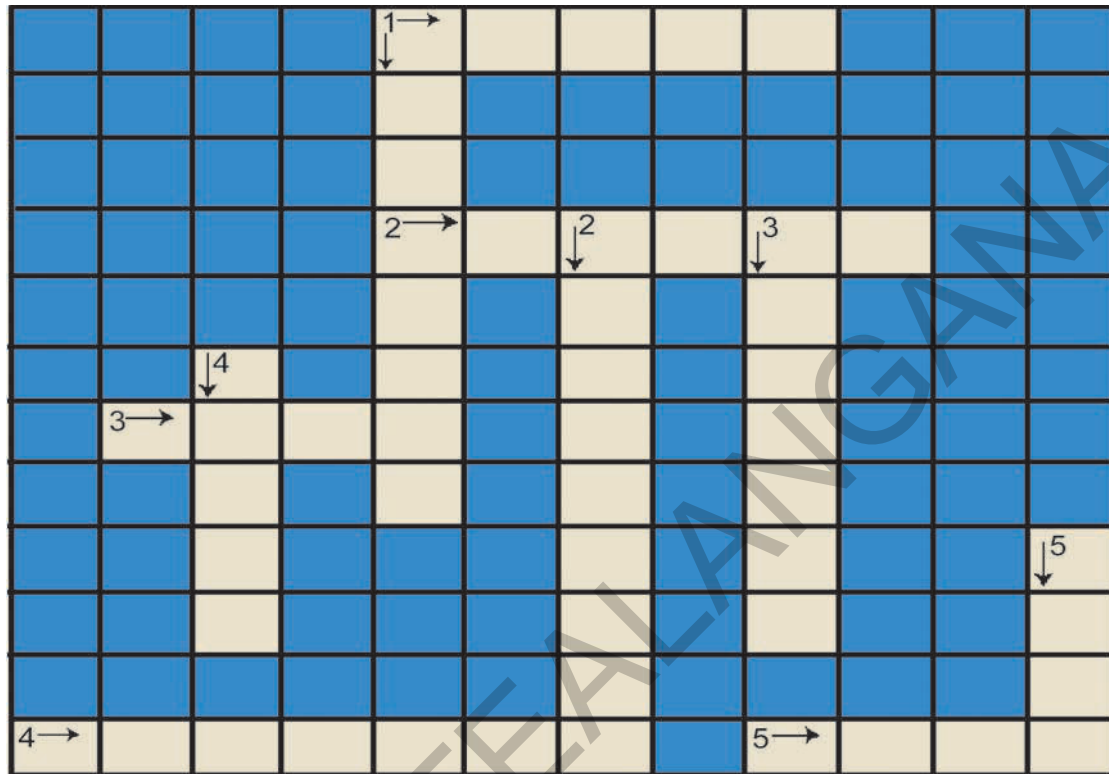
A. Asifabad	B. Pandavulagutta	C. Kokapet
D. Durgam	E. Regonda	F. Ramachandrapuram
6. List three ways in which the lives of farmers and herders in present day are different from that of the Neolithic people?
7. Prepare a list of domesticated animals and agricultural products of the earliest people and write a few lines about each of them.
8. If there was no stove and no grinding stone, how would it affect our food?
9. Write five questions that you would like to ask an archaeologist to know about the present excavations.
10. There are many things in the picture given below. Which of them did not belong to the hunter-gatherers? Which things belong to both the hunter-gatherers and the farmers? Put different signs to distinguish them.



11. How can you say that the lives of earliest people became easier by domesticating animals?
12. Read the paragraph under the heading 'Nomadic life' on page no. 47 and comment on it.

Activity:

Solve the crossword puzzle using the clues given below.



Clues :

Across :

1. These were the shelters of the earliest people (5).
2. These people regularly move from one place to another (6).
3. Shifting agriculture (4).
4. A new kind of stone tool developed by the earliest people (7).
5. This was also used by the earliest people to make their tools (4).

Down:

1. These people are called hunter-gatherers in our times (8).
2. A small piece made from a hard stone (9).
3. These animals were used to carry heavy loads and plough fields (7).
4. The earliest people collected this to eat (5).
5. Flesh of animals was roasted with this (4).

Project:

Find out if there are any rock painting sites near your place and visit them with your class. Write a report on it and present in your class.