Seafaring Traders

Before You Read
In the last section, you read about major religions that developed in India.
In this section, you will learn about traders whose influence spread throughout the Mediterranean.

As You Read
Use the web below to take notes on how trade spread both products and culture.

Minoans Trade in the Mediterranean (pages 72–73)
Who were the Minoans?
In the Mediterranean area, a new culture arose on the island of Crete. The Minoans were peaceful people who lived in rich cities that were safe from invaders. They controlled trade in their area, Crete. Crete is a large island on the southern edge of the Aegean Sea. The Minoans sent their fine pottery, swords, and metal drinking cups to other lands. They also sent other countries their style of art and architecture. This style later had influence on the art of Greece.

Archaeologists have explored the ruins of Knossos, the capital city of the Minoans. It was the archaeologists that first called the culture Minoan, after its famous ruler, King Minos. They found beautiful wall paintings that offer views of Minoan culture. One interesting feature of Minoan life was the high position that women appear to have held. An earth goddess seems to have headed all the gods of Crete, and women ruled over some important religious places. Women did not play such
important roles among other peoples who lived nearby.

Minoan cities were damaged in 1470 B.C. by a series of disasters. First, a number of earthquakes rocked the island, destroying buildings. Then a volcano exploded on a nearby island. That was followed by huge waves and clouds of white ash from the volcano’s fire. These shocks seem to have been too much for the Minoans. The Minoan civilization ended about 1200 B.C.

1. What were three important features of Minoan culture?

The important achievement of the Phoenicians was their alphabet. They used symbols to stand for the sounds of consonants. They brought their system of writing to other lands such as Greece, where Greeks changed the form of some letters. The alphabet that we use today, however, had its beginnings in Phoenician writing.

2. How did the Phoenicians spread their culture?

Ancient Trade Routes (page 76)

What were the major trading networks?

Trading networks also connected the Mediterranean Sea with other centers of world commerce in South and East Asia. Some routes went across Central Asia by land. Some sea routes went across the Arabian Sea. These networks helped people exchange products and information. Traders carried ideas, religious beliefs, art, and ways of living. They did not just trade goods. They also helped “trade” culture.

3. Why were trade networks so important?