CIVILIZATION – THE NOMADIC JOURNEY

*This short skit is an amusing reinforcement activity for students learning the steps to civilization. It can be done in the classroom as readers’ theatre or for an assembly with minimal costumes, lights, or sets. Of course you can also have students make elaborate sets and costumes if you’ve a mind to.*

9 PARTS; GENDER NEUTRAL

PROPS: vines, fruit, some beads, baskets, cheese, lightbulb--cardboard, real, or battery-powered light-up

OPTIONAL COSTUMES  
NARRATOR: academic gown or whatever you like

NOMADS 1-3: skins à la Fred Flintstone

OG & GOG: skins with leather belts

BATU & SABA: better skins with leather and metal bits

ROHAN, MAGDA, LEILA: plain cloth tunics

FRED (or FREDRIKA) & FRANCIS: better tunics such as medieval tabards

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*Spotlight on NARRATOR*

NARRATOR: From the dawn of time humans have been getting together, learning to cooperate and building communities. Over the ages those simple societies evolved into complex civilizations. But how did we change from hunter-gatherers spending every day in a search for survival to prosperous, settled citizens?

This is how it all began. Once upon a Neolithic time…

*Spot out*

*Lights up on NOMADS 1, 2, 3 on empty stage with a few vines in the corner*

NOMAD 1: Remember when we stopped here last year while we were hunting the mammoths?

NOMAD 2: And we ate all of those watermelons?

NOMAD 3: I was soooo sick after eating all that watermelon!

NOMAD 1: And we had that watermelon seed spitting contest.

NOMAD 3: Yeah, I totally beat you both.

NOMAD 2: Did not.

NOMAD 3: Did, too.

NAOMAD 1: Did not.

NOMAD 3: Did, too, and I’ll prove it. I spit all the seeds right over there.

*They go over to look where he is pointing*

NOMAD 1: Ha! I don’t see any seeds.

NOMAD 2: But look at all these watermelon vines.

NOMAD 3: That’s weird. How do you think they got here?

*LIGHTBULB*

NOMAD 1: Do you think maybe they grew from the seeds we spit out?

NOMAD 2: What?

NOMAD 3: Obviously seeds make plants, you brainless Neanderthal.

NOMAD 1: So, you’re saying if we planted the seeds, we could have watermelon whenever we want?

NOMAD 3: I think so.

NOMAD 2: Whoa! How cool would that be?

*Lights out*

*Spot up on NARRATOR*

**II.** NARRATOR: And so the nomads settled down by the watermelon patch. Soon they also planted corn and potatoes, carrots and strawberries--everything they needed. An added benefit was the animals that came to eat the fruits and vegetables, even though at first it didn’t seem like it.

*Lights up on OG and GOG looking at plants and stuffed rabbit and bird in garden*

OG: Why so many bunnies and birds here?

GOG: They come to eat our plants.

OG: Let’s eat them!

GOG: They run away too fast.

OG: Stupid animals! Food is here, it would be so much easier if they would just stay put.

*LIGHTBULB*

GOG: We could trap them.

OG: And put them in pens close by!

GOG: And feed them.

OG: Then we could eat them whenever we want.

GOG: Whoa! How cool would that be?

*Lights out on OG and GOG*

*Spot up on NARRATOR*

**III.** NARRATOR: And so the eons rolled by. As food became more abundant people were able to grow more than just enough for themselves, and began to look for other things they could do.

*Spot out on NARRATOR*

*Lights up on BATU and SABA*

BATU: I have so many watermelons that I don’t know what to do with them.

SABA: I have a ton of fish, they just jump onto my hook. But my watermelon patch is pathetic.

BATU: You know, I could give you some of my watermelon for a couple of fish.

SABA: You would do that? Then I would have something to eat besides fish!

BATU: And I could eat something besides watermelon.

SABA: Maybe I would even have time to do something besides try to find food all day.

BATU: Like what?

*LIGHTBULB*

SABA: I could weave cloth or make baskets.

BATU: To carry the fish in.

SABA: And we could trade!

BATU: Whoa! How cool would that be?

*Lights out on BATU and SABA*

*Spot on NARRATOR*

**IV. NARRATOR**: Having surplus to trade freed people up to specialize and do what each one was best at doing. And so they began to trade amongst themselves and expand their capabilities to making art and music and more advanced forms of food.

*Spot out*

*Lights up on LEILA, MAGDA and ROHAN holding baskets of cloth, cheese and beads*

MAGDA: I love your beads, Rohan. I wish I had a couple of strands.

ROHAN: I have an over- abundance of beads, I just love making them.

MAGDA: And you’re so good at it!

LEILA: And your cheese is delicious, Magda. Mine never tastes as good as yours.

ROHAN: What’s your secret, Magda?

MAGDA: Oh, I can’t tell you that!

ROHAN: Why not?

MAGDA: Well, you won’t tell me about your beads and Leila won’t tell how she weaves such beautiful cloth.

LEILA: OK, um, then I will give you some of the cloth I wove in exchange for a hunk of that cheese.

ROHAN: I guess I got a little carried away making these beads, too. I’ll give you some for cheese.

MAGDA: Great! *(thoughtful pause)* But I will still have a lot more than I can use.

LEILA: Me, too. (*thoughtful pause)* Other people might want to trade for our surplus, too.

ROHAN: But if we have to go out and look for them we won’t have time to make our specialties.

MAGDA: *(sighing)* If only we could find a lot of people together in one place.

*LIGHTBULB*

LEILA: We could meet with the tribes at that bend in the river where they come to fish.

ROHAN: I could tell them all to come at the same time and we could trade with everyone at once!

MAGDA: We could share stories and songs and get new ideas, too!

ROHAN: Whoa! How cool would that be?

*Lights out*

*Spot up on NARRATOR*

NARRATOR: And so markets and trade fairs grew in easy to reach places, usually by rivers or lakes. And people traveled far and wide to reach them and sell their goods and learn the news of the world.

*Spot out*

*Lights up on FRED and FRANCIS*

FRED: Are you going to the big market next week?

FRANCIS: I guess. I wish I had a place to stay when I get there that wasn’t cold and damp. I’m tired of camping out.

FRED: I’m tired of tents in general. I want a place with a roof. And doors you can actually lock to keep the robbers out.

FRANCIS: And beds.

FRED: Near all the action.

FRANCIS: I wish someone would build a place like that

*LIGHTBULB*

FRED: What if ***we*** built a place for people to stay when they came to market?

FRANCIS: A permanent place. And we could charge everyone something to stay there!

FRED: And serve food and drink and tell jokes.

FRANCIS: But there would have to be rules.

FRED: Like no spitting and keep out of my stuff!

FRANCIS: And someone to enforce the rules.

FRED: Like a sheriff. And maybe a place to put people who broke the rules.

FRANCIS: To keep the good people safe.

FRED: And a stable and someone to take care of travelers’ horses.

FRANCIS: Then we could just stop traveling.

FRED: And stay there safe and sound.

FRANCIS: And let everyone come to us!

FRED: Whoa! How cool would that be?

*Lights out*

*Spot up on NARRATOR*

**V.** NARRATOR: And so shops and inns and eateries grew up around the markets and became towns, and the towns became cities and grew rich on trade. People had time to tell stories and write books and sing songs and paint pictures and put on plays. They had the security to study and make improvements in science and math and astronomy. And so society built more permanent dwellings and made laws and courts and organized religion and became more and more complex until it became known as… CIVILIZATION!

THE END