AIM:

HOW DID THE AMERICAS BECOME POPULATED?

DO NOW:

GIVE TWO (2) REASONS WHY PEOPLE MIGRATE FROM ONE AREA TO ANOTHER
A. NORTH AMERICA, SOUTH AMERICA, and CENTRAL AMERICA are sometimes referred to as the WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

B. The two continents stretch almost 10,000 miles…from the North Pole to the South Pole
I. Populating the Americas

A. It’s not clear how long humans have been in the Americas – estimates range from 40,000 years to 12,000 years.

B. Most scientists believe 12,000 – 15,000 years is most accurate.

C. People came to the Americas FROM ASIA by the BERING LAND BRIDGE.

D. The Bering Land Bridge was a frozen link between eastern Asia and North America during the last Ice Age.
E. The last Ice Age started about 2 million years ago and ended about 12,000 years ago.

F. During that time, there was a LAND BRIDGE between modern-day Siberia and modern-day Alaska.
G. When the ocean levels rose, the land bridge was submerged.

H. Today, there is a **STRAIT** between Asia and North America – THE BERING STRAIT (named for Vitus Bering, a Danish explorer who worked for Russia).

I. The strait is narrow – 51 miles – and only 200 feet deep.
II. Just Looking for Something to Eat

A. During the last Ice Age, animals such as the **WOOLLY MAMMOTH** and the **MASTODON** probably crossed the land bridge from Asia to North America.

B. Hunters chased these animals (and smaller game animals) and – unknowingly – became the first Americans.
C. Remember – hunting large animals required humans to work together and have relatively advanced weapons such as spears and shaped stone tips.

D. The hunted animal’s coat, tusks, internal organs, bones, and hooves were used for making clothing, shelter, and tools.

E. It’s probable that hunters had to follow a large animal a long distance before it expired and could be butchered.
III. Chasing the Food and Winding Up Someplace Else

A. Hunters in search of food also FORAGED (looked for berries and plants and seeds).

B. So it’s very possible that no one “chose” to live in a new continent…it just happened.

C. During the period 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, humans began to migrate further south, inhabiting Central America and South America as well.

D. The earliest known settlements (in modern-day New Mexico) are about 11,000 years old.
E. An exact sequence of ‘when, where, how’ isn’t known.

F. Here’s another hypothesis: people may have come from Asia VIA BOAT – lots of circumstantial evidence, but nothing provable (yet).

G. Agriculture began about 7,000 years ago (probably in Mexico).

Fish hooks made of bone
BEFORE AGRICULTURE

People were hunter-gatherers.

No permanent communities.

Groups were small.

No time for anything other than gathering food.

AFTER AGRICULTURE

People had a steady food source.

Permanent settlements were possible.

Larger communities were formed.

Job specialization.

Complex societies.