

## Soils and Civilizations Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Readings David Montgomery's The Erosion of Empires and Lester Brown's Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization (p. 31-38 and 202-206)*

1. Did soil degradation destroy early civilizations in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia? Explain.
2. Where did Greek Civilization obtain around half of its food from by the Peloponnesian War (431-347 BC)? Was this an ideal situation? Explain.
3. Regional climate changes cannot explain the boom-and-bust pattern of human occupation in ancient Greece, what can?
4. When did people generally move from highly diversified agriculture to highly-specialized cereal, olive, and grape production? Are there any analogs of this occurring in the U.S.A., if yes explain the positive and negative aspects of highly specialized agriculture over diversified agriculture.
5. Who wrote De Re Rustica? What is it and what did the author emphasize?
6. What did the Roman Emperor Constantine make it a crime to do? Why did he do this?
7. What would happen to you if you delay grain shipments to Rome's closest seaport, Ostia? Why?
8. Who was George Perkins Marsh? What were his two primary revelations upon visiting Italy? How did he challenge American confidence? Was this challenge effective?
9. Using Lester Brown's Plan B 4.0 (p.32-38), within recent history (e.g. the last 100 years) what does he see as the major problems with respect to soil development on Earth?
10. Using Lester Brown's Plan B 4.0 (p.202-206) and your own ideas, what can we do to learn from the mistakes of past civilizations with respect to our agriculture system?