1. In just 15,000 years, humans went from hunting and gathering to create such improbabilities as the airplane, the Internet, and the 99 cent double cheeseburger. 15,000 years ago, humans were Foragers and hunters. Foraging meant gathering fruits, nuts, and also wild grains and grasses. Hunting allowed for a protein-rich diet, so long as you could find something with meat to kill.

2. While we tend to think that the lives of foragers (hunter/gatherers) were pretty bad, fossil evidence suggests that they actually had it pretty good. Their bones and teeth are healthier than those of agriculturalists; they actually work a lot fewer hours than the rest of us; and spend more time on art, music, and story-telling.

3. It’s important to note that cultivation of crops seems to have arisen independently over the course of millennia; using crops that naturally grew nearby—rice in Southeast Asia, maize in Mexico, potatoes in the Andes, wheat in the Fertile Crescent, yams in West Africa—people around the world began to abandon their foraging for agriculture.

4. Let’s first take a look at the advantages and disadvantages of agriculture:
   - **Advantage:** Controllable food supply. You might have droughts or floods but if you’re growing the crops and breeding them to be healthier and heartier, you get a bit more say in whether you starve.
   - **Disadvantage:** In order to keep feeding people as population grows, you have to radically change the environment of the planet.
   - **Advantage:** You can create a food surplus, especially if you grow grain, which makes cities possible. Agriculture can support people not directly involved in the production of food, like, say, tradespeople who can devote their lives to creating better farming equipment (or more food).
   - **Disadvantage:** Some would argue the whole complexity of large and complex agricultural communities that can support cities are not actually beneficial to the planet or even necessarily its human inhabitants.
   - **Advantage:** Agriculture can be practiced in many places all over the world, although in lots of places it requires extensive manipulation of the environment; e.g., irrigation or controlled flooding.
   - **Disadvantage:** Farming is hard work—so hard that one is tempted to for instance claim ownership over other humans and then force them to till the land on your behalf—which is the kind of non-ideal social order that has tended to emerge again and again in agriculturalist communities.
5. **Herding** is a very good and interesting alternative to foraging. The upsides of herding are obvious: animals are not only excellent sources of meat and milk; they also help out with shelter by providing wool and leather. On the downside, you have to move around a lot because your herds always need new grass to eat, and it's hard to build cities when you're constantly moving. (These people are called nomads.)

6. So why did the Agricultural Revolution occur? We don't have records, but historians love to make guesses:

   - Maybe population pressure necessitated agriculture even though it was more work, or abundance gave people leisure time to experiment with domestication or planting originated as a fertility right or—as some historians have argued—people needed to domesticate grains in order to produce more alcohol. (The History of the World in Six Glasses)
   - Maybe the best theory is that there wasn't really an agricultural revolution at all but that it was part of an evolutionary desire to produce more food.

7. No doubt that the impact of the discovery and adoption of agriculture is probably the most momentous “event” in human and the planet’s history. Without agriculture we couldn’t have large groups of people in the same place (they’d starve) and therefore no complex societies, cities, religions, art, metalworking, ...

8. It’s also true that without agriculture we wouldn’t have all the bad things that come with complex civilizations, like inequality, patriarchy, war, and unfortunately, famine.

9. And as far as the planet is concerned, agriculture has been a big loser – without it humans would never have changed the environment so much, clearing forests, moving rivers, building dams to create and prevent floods, drilling wells for agriculture, and in the 20th and 21st century drilling for oil to process into fertilizer.