Two of the oldest towns in the world are Jericho and Catal Huyuk.

The city of Jericho is both the oldest known city in the world and the lowest place in the world where people live. Jericho is surrounded by desert, but because it is so low all the rainwater from nearby mountains drains downhill into it, providing plenty of water. While the area was always popular with hunter-gatherers, the first permanent settlement in the area was around 10,000 B.C.

Early homes in Jericho were small, round rooms built of sun-dried clay-and-straw bricks. Dead people were buried beneath the floor of the homes. The most impressive part of ancient Jericho was its walls. This first city had 12-foot high walls around it along with a large, 12-foot-tall tower. No one knows for sure why the people decided to build such tall walls and a tower, but archaeologists think it would have taken 100 men more than 100 days to build them, so it was a huge project.

In Catal Huyuk, buildings were built from mud bricks and squeezed right next to one another, with no space in-between. All of the buildings appear to be homes, but none of them had doors or windows. How did people get into the homes? Each home had a hole in the south side of the roof; a ladder or steep stairway allowed people to climb down into the home. Instead of having streets and sidewalks, people probably walked from place to place on the rooftops.

Near the ladder, each home had an oven. Some ovens were found with many small clay balls near them—balls as small as a pea or as big as a baseball. The first archaeologist to find the balls thought that they were used in slingshots for hunting. Later, another archaeologist guessed that perhaps they were used when baking. Yet another archaeologist thought that perhaps they were used to help keep track of things that
people had counted (a small ball might be five sheep, while a large one could be ten). No one knows for sure.

Each home in Catal Huyuk had two main rooms. These had low platforms around the edges that may have been used for sleeping. Dead relatives were also buried in these platforms. Many homes also had a few tiny rooms that may have been used to store food. In addition, the homes had murals, or wall paintings, both on some of their inside and outside walls. Many families had horns from a type of ox hanging on their walls.

What were homes in Jericho like?

What was special about Jericho?

How would you get inside a home in Catal Huyuk?

How did people in Catal Huyuk get from one place to another?

What was the same about these two ancient towns?