

Preparing for A Level Geography or want to just develop your Geography further?

Hoping to study Geography at A Level? Or maybe you are simply interested in taking some time to further your understanding of the geography you have studied at GCSE?

There are number of things you can do:

1. **Developing as a geographer** – through general reading around / watching videos / listening to podcasts etc. to develop your geographical knowledge and understanding
2. **Preparing for the A Level Course** Starting to explore the topics and their foundations which will be studied in the A Level course.

To be a great geographer you need to develop the ability to think synoptically, being able to see the greater overview and how everything begins to link together. Geography is not just about studying people and landscapes; it is also the relationships that exist between people and their environment.

At GCSE you have covered a lot of the foundations of the underpinning concepts; physical processes and how they have shaped the landscape and the key human processes that shape our society. GCSE has provided a breadth of study, whereas A Level will now enable you to gain greater depth by exploring topics in greater detail but also encouraging you to see and explore the links between topics.

The best geographers at A Level keep reading the news and generally seek to improve their geographical understanding by engaging with geographical discussions regarding key issues.

This guide has been designed for you to be able to dip in and out of, from looking at general geographical issues and developing your ability to think like a geographer, through to starting to explore some of the topics we will be looking at in Year 12 and 13 so you can do some valuable background reading.

DEVELOPING AS A GEOGRAPHER

The below includes, websites, books, podcasts, documentaries and even films which provide a great way of staying inspired and engaging with geography.

i. ONLINE NEWS ARTICLES

THE CONVERSATION.COM <http://theconversation.com/uk> *we can highly recommend you use this!* This you will find is really useful to support many of your A Levels. It provides up-to-date articles from academics and specialists in the field written in a way that is accessible to all, summarising key points in short but insightful articles.

BBC NEWS <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> - an excellent source of up-to-date articles – explore the key headings such as Science, as well as the UK, World and other stories.

THE GUARDIAN <https://www.theguardian.com/uk> - again many useful articles and logically ordered – keep an eye on the Environment, Science, Society, Global Development stories in particular!

ii. PODCASTS

Now is the time to broaden your geographical understanding! Stick your headphones in and listen to some of the following...

Costing the Earth – There are some great podcasts here to pick from on a wide variety of geographical issues <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006r4wn/episodes/player> (many topics, including amongst others.. climate change, carbon, urban greening, deforestation, alternative power, plastics etc.)

Royal Geographical Society – “Ask the Geographer podcasts” - <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/ask-the-expert-podcasts/> - a fantastic set of podcasts to keep A Level studies up-to-date with the latest geographical research – pick out some that interest you and give them a go!

iii. ONLINE NEWS ARTICLES

Remember you can make use of the local libraries digital library service for books – you don't have to access hard copies.

[Prisoners of Geography](#) (Marshall, T) – an insightful book which helps understand how physical geography impacts on political reality and really helps to understand how decisions of world leaders have been shaped by geography – a great introduction to geopolitics.

[Factfulness: Ten reasons we're wrong about the world – and why things are better than you think](#) (Rosling, H 2019) – this is a must-read book from a geography perspective – this takes a more realistic view of the world, presenting issues in fact-based context. It is a rational look at actually how far the world has measurably improved and what's left to be done.

[Adventures in the Anthropocene](#) (Vince, G) (2016) – this looks at the effects that humans are having on the surface and structure of the planet with a balanced view on recognising threats and dangers whilst also look for practical answers and solutions.

iv. GEOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTARIES

There are some great geographical documentaries which will help develop your general geographical knowledge and understanding and help you see what an amazing world we live in.

*The following are all available on **iPlayer**.*

- **David Attenborough Box Sets** – there are 9 amazing boxsets available on iplayer from David Attenborough exploring our amazing world <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p06m42d9>
- **The Americas with Simon Reeve** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m00095p0/the-americas-with-simon-reeve>
- **Simon Reeve around the world** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p06rrnkm>
- **Mediterranean with Simon Reeve** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b0bnb6tt/mediterranean-with-simon-reeve>

The following are all available on **ITV Hub**

- **Britain Underwater: Fighting the Floods** <https://www.itv.com/hub/britain-underwater-fighting-the-floods/7a0157>
- **Joanna Lumley's Hidden Caribbean: Havana to Haiti** <https://www.itv.com/hub/joanna-lumleys-hidden-caribbean-havana-to-haiti/2a7578>

The following are all available on **Channel 4 – On Demand**

- **When the Immigrants Leave** (Dispatches) <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/on-demand/69555-001>
 - **China's Lonely Hearts** (Unreported World) <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/unreported-world/on-demand/56011-011>
 - **The world's dirtiest river** (Unreported world) <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/unreported-world/on-demand/58399-001>
 - **Forests of Fear** (Unreported World) - <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/unreported-world/on-demand/69224-006>
 - **Hurricane Hell (Unreported World)** <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/unreported-world/on-demand/69224-007>
 - **The World's Dirtiest Air (Unreported World)** <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/unreported-world/on-demand/67193-002>
 - **The week Britain Froze (Dispatches)** <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/on-demand/66548-007>
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v. GEOGRAPHICAL FILMS

(Some are available online free – others may be available on providers such as Amazon Prime / Netflix etc.)

- **Touching the Void (15)** (great for visualising glacial landscapes) – a powerful true story docudrama (strong language in parts)
- **Before the Flood (2016) (PG)** – National Geographic <https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/before-the-flood-2016/> (presented by Leonardo DiCaprio – exploring climate change and looking at what needs to be done today to prevent catastrophic disruption of life on our planet.)
- **The Impossible (2012) (12)** – Movie based on real life events of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami which killed 200,000 people.
- **Slumdog Millionaire (15)** – based on life in the slums of Mumbai
- **Our Planet** (Netflix series) – explores how climate change impacts all living creatures.
- **Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (12)** – an epic which celebrates the journey of Nelson Mandela from childhood in a rural village through to his election as President of South Africa. This explores what happened in South Africa with regards to apartheid and Black opposition through the eyes of Nelson Mandela.
- **Hotel Rwanda (12)** - the true story of hotel manager who houses and protects Tutsi refugees – this is a hard-hitting film based on the Rwandan Conflict of the 1990s.
- **The Last King of Scotland (15)** – another hard-hitting story, based on struggles faced by Uganda under the dictatorship of Idi Amin.
- **Into the Wild (2007) (15)** – based on the story of a university graduate who gives up all of his material possessions and journeys alone into the Alaskan Wilderness

PREPARING FOR A LEVEL GEOGRAPHY AT LONGBENTON HIGH SCHOOL

At LHS we follow the AQA A Level. You will have **TWO examined units** and **ONE NEA** (Non-Examined Assessment) i.e. an independent geographical investigation.

We have put the following together for you for you to start doing some reading round the topics we will be covering across the two years. For each topic, we have given a brief overview and then some starting points, with examples of reading and video links for you to follow up.

Y12 TOPICS

3.1 PHYSICAL UNITS

3.1.5 Hazards

This optional section of our specification focuses on the lithosphere and the atmosphere, which intermittently but regularly present natural hazards to human populations, often in dramatic and sometimes catastrophic fashion. By exploring the origin and nature of these hazards and the various ways in which people respond to them, students are able to engage with many dimensions of the relationships between people and the environments they occupy. Study of this section offers the opportunity to exercise and develop observation skills, measurement and geospatial mapping skills, together with data manipulation and statistical skills, including those associated with and arising from fieldwork.

Starting points...

[Introductory article on “natural hazards”](#)

5 minute video clip on [how natural hazards affect humans](#)

[Definitions of types of hazards](#) and excellent links to further information on each

[List of natural hazards experienced in different countries around the world.](#)

National Geography feature length [documentary on the world’s “top 10” natural disasters](#)

US Homeland Security has [summarized different types of natural hazards](#). These links are also useful for mitigation and response.

3.1.3 Coastal systems and landscapes

This section of our specification focuses on coastal zones, which are dynamic environments in which landscapes develop by the interaction of winds, waves, currents and terrestrial and marine sediments. The operation and outcomes of fundamental geomorphological processes and their association with distinctive landscapes are readily observable. In common with water and carbon cycles, a systems approach to study is specified.

Student engagement with subject content fosters an informed appreciation of the beauty and diversity of coasts and their importance as human habitats. The section offers the opportunity to exercise and develop observation skills, measurement and geospatial mapping skills, together with data manipulation and statistical skills, including those associated with and arising from fieldwork.

Starting points...

[Summary of fetch and the effect of wind](#)

[Interactive map of current surface winds](#)

[Summary of wave formation](#)

[Video explanation of many aspects of the features of waves](#)

[Simple map of major ocean currents](#)

Exploration of [the causes and effects of surface ocean currents](#)

Exploration of [ocean currents in coastal areas](#)

[Detailed video explanation of ocean currents](#)

3.2 HUMAN UNITS

3.2.2 Changing places

This section of our specification focuses on people's engagement with places, their experience of them and the qualities they ascribe to them, all of which are of fundamental importance in their lives. Students acknowledge this importance and engage with how places are known and experienced, how their character is appreciated, and the factors and processes which impact upon places and how they change and develop over time. Through developing this knowledge, students will gain understanding of the way in which their own lives and those of others are affected by continuity and change in the nature of places which are of fundamental importance in their lives.

Study of the content must be embedded in two contrasting places, one to be local. The local place may be a locality, neighbourhood or small community either urban or rural. A contrasting place is likely to be distant – it could be in the same country or a different country but it must show significant contrast in terms of economic development and/or population density and/or cultural background and/or systems of political and economic organisation.

The place studies complement the requirement to embed the study of content in two contrasting places. Study of this section offers particular opportunities to exercise and develop qualitative (and quantitative) investigative techniques and practice-related observation, measurement and various mapping skills, together with data manipulation and statistical skills including those associated with and arising from fieldwork.

Starting points...

Interactive: Changing Spaces, Making Places – a good story map introduction – work your way through

<https://focusschoolwilton.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f10c512164d0498d8f3bcfad8ae61d39>

Reading: Changing Spaces- Making Places – a good starting point read

<https://pmt.physicsandmathstutor.com/download/Geography/A-level/Notes/OCR/Changing-Spaces-Making-Places/Set-A/Notes%20on%20Changing%20Places,%20Making%20Places%20-%20OCR%20Geography%20A-level.pdf>

There are a number of TED talks focused on ideas around sense of place.

The RGS resource entitled '[Creating a sense of place in the school grounds](#)' is more for younger students, but ideas could be adapted.

Useful ideas and discussion about perceptions of place can be found at [GeogSpace](#)

NON-EXAMINED ASSESSMENT

i.e. an independent geographical investigation.

3.3.2 Investigation requirements

Students are required to undertake an independent investigation. This must incorporate a significant element of fieldwork. The fieldwork undertaken as part of the individual investigation may be based on either human or physical aspects of geography, or a combination of both. They may incorporate field data and/or evidence from field investigations collected individually or in groups. What is important is that students work on their own on contextualising, analysing and reporting of their work to produce an independent investigation with an individual title that demonstrates required fieldwork knowledge, skills and understanding

Y13 TOPICS

3.1.1 Water and carbon cycles

This section of our specification focuses on the major stores of water and carbon at or near the Earth's surface and the dynamic cyclical relationships associated with them. These are major elements in the natural environment and understanding them is fundamental to many aspects of physical geography. This section specifies a systems approach to the study of water and carbon cycles. The content invites students to contemplate the magnitude and significance of the cycles at a variety of scales, their relevance to wider geography and their central importance for human populations. The section offers the opportunity to exercise and develop geographical skills including observation, measurement and geospatial mapping skills, together with data manipulation and statistical skills including those associated with and arising from fieldwork.

Starting points...

(Royal Geographical Society) – this is an excellent starting point
/ content overview for the water and carbon work that we will be looking at
<https://www.rgs.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?nodeguid=6dc9f1c1-f92d-4c04-9f85-9985844a6a79&lang=en-GB>

Reading: Introduction to the Carbon Cycle

<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology/ecology/biogeochemical-cycles/a/the-carbon-cycle>

Reading: Introduction to the Water Cycle

<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology/ecology/biogeochemical-cycles/a/the-water-cycle>

Introductory presentation on [Natural Systems](#)

Website with simple summaries of a number of [earth systems](#)

A summary of the features of the [lithosphere](#)

A summary of the features of the [hydrosphere](#)

3.2.1 Global systems and global governance

This section of our specification focuses on globalisation – the economic, political and social changes associated with technological and other driving forces which have been a key feature of global economy and society in recent decades.

Increased interdependence and transformed relationships between peoples, states and environments have prompted more or less successful attempts at a global level to manage and govern some aspects of human affairs. Students engage with important dimensions of these phenomena with particular emphasis on international trade and access to markets and the governance of the global commons. Students contemplate many complex dimensions of contemporary world affairs and their own place in and perspective on them. Study of this section offers the opportunity to exercise and develop both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gathering, processing and interpreting relevant information and data including, those associated with and arising from fieldwork.

Starting points...

Read the RGS subject content overview on Global systems and global governance by Klaus Dodds before teaching this module. Find it at [Royal Geographical Society \(RGS\): Global Systems and Global Governance](#)

General global systems and governance websites:

The websites of the [United Nations](#), [World Trade Organisation](#) and [World Bank](#) have material on various aspects linked to global systems.

[The Economist](#) is useful.. Interesting articles on globalisation and development can be found at [Global Eye](#)

[International forum on globalisation ; Global Issues Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#)

3.2.4 Population and the environment

This optional section of our specification has been designed to explore the relationships between key aspects of physical geography and population numbers, population health and well-being, levels of economic development and the role and impact of the natural environment. Engaging with these themes at different scales fosters opportunities for students to contemplate the reciprocating relationships between the physical environment and human populations and the relationships between people in their local, national and international communities.

Study of this section offers the opportunity to exercise and develop observation skills, measurement and geospatial mapping skills, together with data manipulation and statistical skills, including those associated with and arising from fieldwork

Starting points...

Statistical information on world food and agriculture can be found at [Food & Agriculture Organisation \(FAO\) of the United Nations](#)

Friends of the Earth has useful resources on food and farming at [Friends of the Earth](#) including a 2016 report entitled 'Farming for the future.'

See recent UNICEF report on alarming links between climate change and falling nutrition levels in developing parts of the world [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund \(UNICEF\)](#)

There is also a YouTube clip (aimed at much younger students) showing this: [YouTube: Earth as an Apple - Space to grow food](#)