



Preparing for A Level Geography

Are you 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 two things you can do:**

1. **Developing as a Geographer** - developing your geographical knowledge and understanding through further reading, watching videos, listening to podcasts and undertaking your own research on topics that interest you.
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 guidance below includes, websites, books, podcasts, documentaries and even films which provide a great way of staying inspired and engaging with geography.

1. Online News Articles

THE CONVERSATION.COM <http://theconversation.com/uk> we 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!

2. 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!

3. Books

Remember you can make use of the local libraries digital library service for books – you don't have to access hard copies. As a student you will have access to these services for free. They can also be picked up relatively cheaply from online retailers like Amazon.

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.

4. 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  **BBC 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**

- **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**

- **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>

5. Geographical Films

Some of these are available online free, others may be available on providers such as Amazon or Netflix.

- **Touching the Void**  (great for visualising glacial landscapes) – a powerful true story docudrama (strong language in parts)
- **Before the Flood (2016)**  – National Geographic <https://www.filmsofaction.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)**  – Movie based on real life events of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami which killed 200,000 people.
- **Slumdog Millionaire**  – 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**  – 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 Chosen Hill

At Chosen Hill we follow the OCR A Level in Geography. You will have three examined units and one NEA (Non Exam 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.

If you want to know where to begin, in the September of Year 12 we start with Earth's Life Support Systems and Changing Spaces - Making Places. If you have any questions whilst exploring the following starting points, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Unit 1 – Physical Systems

At Chosen Hill, we cover the following two topics for Unit 1.

Topic 1: Coastal Landscapes

In this unit you will explore how earth surface processes help to shape coastal landscapes with the aid of transfers of energy and movements of material. The unit explores inter-relationships in the coastal system, how they change over time and issues associated in managing them.

Reading: Coastal Landscapes. A good starting point to begin to bridge the learning from your GCSE Distinctive Landscapes unit: <https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/geography-revision/a-level-ocr/coastal-landscapes/>

Video: Coastal Landscape Development. The first in a short series of videos to recap and extend your knowledge on causes of change to coastal landscapes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNtQyJ3TjcU>

Interactive: Changes in Holderness. A GIS story to take a familiar GCSE case study into greater depth: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=760af30c37a245acbd546cf42c7ec0cb>

Topic 2: Earth's Life Support Systems

Water and carbon are fundamental to supporting life on earth and are hence regarded as 'earth's life support systems'. Water and carbon are cycled in both open and closed systems between the land, oceans and the atmosphere. The processes in the water and carbon cycles are inter-related. Human activity is increasingly threatening and altering water and carbon cycles for example through deforestation, ocean acidification, desertification etc. It is important that we look at global and national solutions to protect these.

Reading: Water and Carbon Cycling (Royal Geographical Society) – this is an excellent starting point and 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>

Video: Human Impacts. The scale of human impact on the water and carbon cycles in tropical rainforest areas: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=146&v=LBe4LTLOLvU&feature=emb_logo

Unit 2 – Human Interactions

At Chosen Hill, we cover the following two topics for Unit 2.

Topic 1: Changing Space, Making Places

This unit explores the relationships and connections between people, the economy and society and their contributing to placemaking (i.e. creating places). The unit explores the meanings and representations attached to places and how place making takes place at a variety of scales. It explores places from a local to global level.

Reading: Changing Spaces, Making Places: a good story map introduction – work your way through <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1875e54ccd9c4e18824038f916d7c303>

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

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

Topic 2: Global Connections

The focus of this unit is exploring global processes and flows and their impact on people places and institutions. This will help you start to understand how the world around you is shaped, its complexities and the issues that arise. It is broken up into (i) Global Systems and (ii) Global Governance. We will cover one of the optional topics under each heading.

2b) Global Systems: Global Migration

At Chosen Hill we follow the Global Migration option for the Global Systems part of the Global Connections Topic. You will explore contemporary patterns of migration and understand why it has become increasingly complex. You will also be exploring the issues associated with unequal flows of global migration.

Reading: Introduction to Migration (notes) <https://www.tutor2u.net/geography/reference/introduction-to-migration>

Reading: Global Migration – a good starting point read <https://file.tutorhoo.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Notes-on-Global-Migration-Geography-A-level.pdf>

Video: Escape to Europe: The migrant's story – BBC Newsnight <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZqdUBpHmhM>

Video: The truth about immigration in the UK 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHplEJgevgM>

Video: Immigration: Is Britain Getting Full? <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/jon-snow-explains/on-demand/61877-004>

Video: Between Borders - America's Migrant Crisis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxFOt-SMEXA>
Fleeing Climate Change – The Real Environmental Disaster (forced migration due to climate change) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4Uv9_7KJE

2d) Global Governance: Power & Borders

At Chosen Hill we follow the Power and Borders option for the Global Governance part of the Global Connections Topic. You will explore what is meant by sovereignty and territorial integrity, and how challenges to these have a range of impacts for people at a variety of scales.

Reading: Scotland: An Independent Country? What are the criteria that determine a country's level of independence? <https://www.thoughtco.com/scotland-is-not-an-independent-country-1435433>

Reading: Nations and States. An introductory essay on the rise of the nation state: <https://www.sparknotes.com/us-government-and-politics/political-science/nations-and-states/section2/>

Reading: What Defines a Nation's Identity? An article on the factors people choose as important parts of their national identity: <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/02/02/what-defines-a-nations-identity>

Unit 3 – Geographical Debates

The third unit of the A Level explores some of the most pertinent and dynamic issues that our planet faces. The focus is to go beyond the in-class teaching and give you an opportunity to research and explore in detail two topic areas in which you gain an understanding of the interactions between people and the environment. There are a number of key concepts which underpin the topics, including inequality, mitigation and adaptation, sustainability, risk, resilience and threshold. By exploring the literature and scientific understanding you will gain your own ideas and opinions to enable you to develop your own arguments with regards to the key issues in these topic areas. You will study two topics within this unit.

Topic 3.1: Climate Change

"Climate Change is considered by many to be the planet's greatest threat" (OCR). We will explore the earth's variations in climate from the geographical past through to the present day. We will also look at the ways in which natural and human factors have influenced these changes. We will consider and explore the debates that exist around the issue as well as looking at examples of how the impacts of climate change are already being

felt. We will also consider a range of potential mitigation and adaptation strategies as we face the uncertainty of the earth's ability to cope and explore whether an international response to the issue can ever work.

Video: Climate Change the Facts – David Attenborough

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m00049b1/climate-change-the-facts>

Video: Panorama – Climate Change: What can we do?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0009drg/panorama-climate-change-what-can-we-do>

Video: The Disarming case to act right now Climate Change – Greta Thunberg (TED TALK)

https://www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_the_disarming_case_to_act_right_now_on_climate_change

Video: Climate Change - The Guardian have an excellent section on Climate Change which is frequently updated with articles and is well worth dipping into <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-change>

Video: Climate Change - The Conversation – a wealth of articles – frequently updated – highly recommended! <https://theconversation.com/uk/topics/climate-change-27>

Topic 3.5: Hazardous Earth

At Chosen Hill, we follow the Hazardous Earth option as part of Unit 3. We explore how our understanding has evolved with regards to the seismic and volcanic activity that we experience through the movement of the earth's tectonic plates. We look at how these tectonic processes have shaped our world and created new landforms, helping to support life on earth. We also explore the potential impact of the hazards associated with earthquakes and volcanoes and how as technology has developed we have improved our ability to predict and mitigate, whilst considering reasons for the variation in risks associated with hazards both spatially and over time. We will be looking at the concepts of risk and resilience and how these can be managed at various levels and to various degrees of success.

Video: Power of the Planet (Volcanoes) <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5af4kq> - a great introduction to the work we will be doing on volcanoes.

Reading: Plate Tectonics (The Geological Society) – this will be a good step up from your GCSE work to A Level and is definitely worth reading / working through <https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/Plate-Tectonics>

Reading: USGS Natural Hazards – FAQ <https://www.usgs.gov/faq/natural-hazards> – some excellent reading here in bitesize chunks – well worth exploring

Interactive: Motion of Tectonic Plates – a GIS story detailing the ways in which the crust moves:

<http://gisinschools-nz.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=df5f94c0050b4075adfbbba54fb13eaeab>

Unit 4 – Independent Investigation

The final part of the Geography A Level is a Non Exam Assessment (NEA) project, worth 20% of the overall grade, that is submitted during Year 13. At Chosen Hill we provide fieldwork and data analysis experience, as well as guidance on the scope and scale of the enquiry, but the final choice of what to investigate is yours. Given that most of the work will take place in the latter half of Year 12, there is no need to do any preparation for this yet. If you would like to read up a little on the detail of what you will be doing, the exam board OCR produces this guide: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/390518-independent-investigation-student-guide.pdf>

The OCR A level specification can be found here <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/223012-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-geography-h481.pdf>. The course code for exam entries is H481. Please don't be put off by the size of it if you do have a look, this is typical of most A level courses. It is also worth noting that there is optionality within some units, so there are things here and in the core textbook that you would not need to cover for the exam.

If you have any questions at all about the contents of this document, please contact us at any time and we will be happy to help in any way we can.

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