Focus on celebrating geography
Number 88 | Autumn 2015
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Erratum:
The GA apologises unreservedly for the mis-spelling of Vanessa Richards’ name in the Summer 2015 issue of Primary Geography. A corrected version is available online.

FORTHCOMING ISSUE
Spring 2016: Focus on Identities

© Primary Geography Autumn 2015
As our sister journal, Geography, celebrates one hundred volumes of publication I think that this is an opportune time for us all to reflect upon and celebrate what geography means to us, both personally and professionally.

Alex Standish (2014) talks about the ‘uncertain nature’ of geography in education currently; indeed the perceived reduction of geography in schools and in the National Curriculum (NC) has caused ripples of disquiet. But a reduction of words in the NC does not necessarily equate to a reduction of importance, or of time devoted to teaching geography and geographical knowledge, skills and understanding. On the one hand it can be argued that to some extent the new geography National Curriculum has freed up teachers to devote more time to the geography that matters to their school and communities; on the other there appears to be more prescription and less direction. There is certainly a degree of prescription in terms of locational knowledge and I think the debate of balance between teaching the knowledge and helping pupils develop the learning skills needed to research and use the knowledge will continue unabated. Specific mention is made of teaching ‘a region of the United Kingdom, a region in a European country, and a region in North or South America’ (DfE, 2013) in key stage 2, for example, but this does not preclude any other part of the world. Indeed, if you have pupils with experience, family or roots based in another country, wherever it is in the world, then feel free to discover it in class. I think that the real cause for celebration is not in the minutiae of detail – there is freedom to wriggle within that – but in the stated purpose of geography: ‘A high-quality geography education should inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives’ (DfE 2013).

And so now it remains for the geography community to fill any gaps left by the removal of detail and support from the old curriculum and to help teachers adapt and flourish with the new. If we can hold on to that central purpose, that desire, to ‘inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people’ then surely geography in schools will have the potential to flourish and develop. One such way, which appears as a golden thread between two of our articles, is the support and benefit of the Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM). This award recognises excellence across the school and is used as a benchmark of expertise, for example as evidence for the Government-funded Global Learning Programme (see web panel). A Gold Award recognises that such excellence is embedded within the school and shared in some way with the wider community: for example through collaborative working with local schools; journal articles such as in Primary Geography, or through workshops and presentations. Gold schools are beacons of excellence for geography. The GA is currently taking registrations for submission in April 2016. Registrations close October 31st 2015. I would encourage as many inspiring and aspiring primary geography teachers as possible to visit the PGQM webpage (see web panel) and see how their hard work can be recognised and supported.

Geography means so much to us on a personal level, too. I hope that some of the joys of geography, and the thrill of discovering the world around us, from the pupils, teachers, students and lecturers who have contributed to this issue, spill out onto these pages in celebration of the subject.

References
**A world of celebrations**

As Figure 1 shows, on almost every day in November 2015 one country or another (and sometimes the whole world) has reason to celebrate. Each month offers us a wealth of opportunity to celebrate – literally. As a start point you could either challenge your pupils to choose a day, week or month, carry out an internet search and reveal more reasons to party, or choose a celebration in November and find out more about exactly what happens on that day in that country. For example, 7 November is known as *Loy Krathong* (or the ‘Festival of lights’) in Thailand. On this day participants build *krathong* (banana-leaf boats) in which they place offerings of incense, lotus flowers and a small amount of money. As they launch their *krathong*, people ask the water spirits to sail away their troubles. Here, I chose the first and second of November – *Dia de los Muertos* (or the Day of the Dead) – to start you off on your own classroom celebrations.

**Dia de los Muertos**

The Day of the Dead is celebrated across Mexico and in many other Spanish-speaking areas of the world. The festival takes part over two days rather than one, and the celebrations originate from Aztec mythology. The Aztecs held that the dead and the living operated together on Earth. To eat an animal you had to kill it first, and in this way the Aztecs believed the dead gave life to the living. Despite the rather grim name, *Dia de los Muertos* is actually a time when communities and families come together to celebrate the lives of those they have lost and to help the dead on their spiritual journey. A variety of traditional beliefs surround the festival, with some people supposing that the spirits come back either to dance and sing with their loved ones, or to seek revenge on those who do not pay their respects at this time. Families gather together in cemeteries, public squares and even in their homes to remember their loved ones with fondness, often sharing funny stories of family members who have died.

**A world café**

You can use an enquiry-based approach to find out, celebrate and learn from celebrations in different countries and cultures. Transform your classroom into a country-specific café with each table including different (but linked) information about that country, its people and the particular celebration. This works particularly well with food, drink and music that is representative of the countries being studied.

For a Day of the Dead café, for example, one table could contain materials to make and decorate skulls; the second table information on Aztec customs; the third maps of Mexico (perhaps with instructions to plan a Mexican holiday), the fourth cards showing Spanish words and phrases (perhaps with English translations that pupils must match); the fifth a series of recipes for Mexican meals; and so on. The main task could be for the pupils to plan their own Day of the Dead party (see web panel for ideas), but first they must find out as much as they can by working their way around the café...

Using celebrations as a focus for lessons often has a more profound and lasting impact on the pupils than simply learning about the customs of another place or culture. Parties and festivals are unifying; although people may celebrate in different ways and with different historical and social contexts, wherever we live in the world we celebrate pretty much the same things: So, let’s join today’s party!

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**WEB RESOURCES**


Ideas for a festival: www.art-is-fun.com/day-of-the-dead-facts/

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Stephen Pickering is Course Leader Primary and Outdoor Education and Primary Lead Geography at the Institute of Education, University of Worcester.
Geography is at the heart of teaching and learning at Kingmoor School. Here, Leanne describes how this ethos has earned the school a well-deserved GA Quality Mark Gold Award.

Kingmoor Nursery and Infant and Kingmoor Junior School are located within a suburban housing estate on the edge of the city of Carlisle. The site is extensive with plenty of open green space. It is also close to a woodland nature reserve. Geography forms an essential part of the school’s curriculum and is seen as an important foundation to putting context into learning. Therefore, 12 of the 18 topics covered by the whole school over a school year have a geography theme running throughout.

Our school is successful in that it gives pupils a strong sense of pride in, ownership of, and belonging to, both the school and the local community. Our vision for geography supports the aims of the school: it ensures that pupils enjoy their learning and develop the necessary skills to become successful life-long learners. It also provides the route by which we can encourage the pupils to question and learn more about their environment and develop a sense of community and responsibility both for the local area and the wider world. Successful learners in the early years develop a sense of self and connectedness (Pasqual and Bertram, 1997). Research from the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), led by Christine Pasqual, demonstrates that pupils learn more effectively if they develop emotional well-being, a positive attitude to learning and social competence (Pasqual and Bertram, 1997). Our geography learning projects have encouraged the pupils to engage actively with the local community and the local environment, to learn about and take pride in their local area.

School trips are organised frequently here, because they are a form of enrichment for all and are an integral part of the delivery of geography at our school. They extend pupils’ geographical experiences and develop their learning through experience and context. Even our very youngest pupils are encouraged to explore their world, with regular walks to places of interest in the local area. For example, an autumnal walk to see seasonal changes or, during the transport topic, a walk that takes in looking at traffic can encourage questioning, exploration and a desire to discover more about the world around us. In year 1 emphasis is placed on visits to local farms, the woodland nature reserve and surrounding area. Year 2 enjoy a variety of visits throughout the year, culminating in a seaside study day and visits to Silloth-on-Solway and Allonby, on the Cumbrian coast.

Many of the tasks the pupils experience are enquiry based, as we have found that this encourages them to ask...
questions about their learning; it also helps tap into their natural inquisitive natures and invokes a desire to discover. Pupils collect information and data for themselves and are then able to interpret this data to find answers to their questions. For example, year 2 pupils were able to create a graph showing the amount of traffic travelling through and around a local housing estate. They compared the results with the traffic on the main road near a local industrial estate. They were able to ask questions of the data, including whether there was a difference in the amount and type of traffic and what factors might affect their results. In this way the maths learning had a context and the pupils could appreciate the learning purpose.

However, it is important that pupils are enthused to answer the questions because this leads into them starting to ask these types of questions for themselves. The pupils wanted to know why the traffic amounts and types varied throughout the school day, where the cars and lorries were coming from, and where they were going.

Pupils’ investigations are based on fieldwork in the school grounds, the local environment and further afield. Nursery and reception pupils’ investigations are based on their own learning experiences. For example, year 1 visit the woodlands every week over the course of the year. Here they investigate what type of trees are growing and look at the habitats of different creatures. The woods are brought to life by developing pupils’ questioning skills. We usually ask them ‘what would a tree say if it could talk to you?’ Year 2 end the year with a trip to Silloth-on-Solway and Allonby, where they can investigate the type of waste found on the beach. They then use the waste to create sculptures.

### The benefits

The variety of ways the school provides for opportunities to learn means that pupils are always eager to engage with learning. It also enables them to comment positively on their experiences at the end of a topic, which provides us with an opportunity to assess learning. Pupils are able to use their knowledge in different areas and apply it to different situations. Providing pupils with a fun and exciting way to learn means that not only is their geographical understanding enhanced, but it also impacts on other areas of the curriculum (such as literacy, maths and science).

Kingmoor staff are enthusiastic about the subject and aware of the benefits of teaching geography to pupils, equipping them with life skills and a moral responsibility. Teachers are committed to making the lessons and fieldwork experiences interesting, meaningful and stimulating, and have been known to adapt or deviate from a lesson plan in order to draw upon the pupils’ experiences. Being flexible in this way allows the teachers to use these experiences, or timely events, to continue to bring geography to life. By making these real-life connections, drawing upon experiences that pupils can relate to or get excited by is crucial to learning. It also has a big impact on their understanding.

### Reference


Leanne Storey is a year 2 teacher and geography co-ordinator at Kingmoor Nursery and Infant School, Cumbria. She worked closely with all members of staff in order to achieve the Gold Quality Mark Award.
CELEBRATING THE AMERICAS THROUGH PICTUREBOOKS

ANNE M DOLAN

Locational and place knowledge of the Americas are a feature of the new geography curriculum for key stage 2 (DfE, 2013). In this article Anne highlights the possibilities of using the children’s picturebooks illustrated by John Parra as inspiration for a range of work in the classroom.

Children’s picturebooks provide a doorway to many cultures (Dolan, 2014), and the potential of using art as a means of seeing the world differently has been highlighted by Mackintosh and Kent (2014). The settings for John Parra’s illustrated picturebooks include Mexico, Chile and Columbia, thus, they are ideal for teaching about aspects of Central and South American culture.

Travelling through Central and South America is an experience that seduces all the senses. From the Incas in Peru and Ecuador to the Mayans in Guatemala, visitors encounter vibrant colours and beautiful natural landscapes, interesting local artists and history, with a mix of ethnicities and cultures. Illustrations from carefully-chosen children’s picturebooks can bring Central and South America alive in primary classrooms. John Parra, an award-winning illustrator, fine artist, designer and educator, is perhaps best known for his Latino-themed children’s books (see web panel). These include Round is a Tortilla (Thong and Parra, 2013) and Waiting for the Biblioburro (Brown and Parra, 2011).

Parra’s bold illustrations are drawn in a manner that is representative of Latin art itself. In Figure 1 Parra offers his thoughts on where he draws his inspiration for the illustrations he produces, and on children’s books in general.

Figure 1: Ideas and inspiration: the words of John Parra.

Children’s books are a great way to introduce our youth to the diverse cultures, environments, and locations around the world. They build a friendship of awareness and empathy in an ever-growing global reality. Within each group of selected children’s books, one can find an arrangement of fascinating and inspiring worlds.

Much of my art inspiration comes from the many different regional areas of North, South, Central America, Mexico, and the western United States. In each and all of these geographic regions, I find a rich and diverse local artistry of craftsmanship and ritual customs that assists me in building a treasure of visual references and images for my work.

I am also influenced by the architecture, geology, landscape, flora, biodiversity and population in each of these respected settings. Since many of my children’s books are non-fiction, including My Name is Gabriela [location: Chile] and Waiting for the Biblioburro [location: Colombia], I am persistently aware of the specific visual allusions that define and relate to each project’s distinctive location.

For me it is important to honourably portray an area so that it touches true to the reader and to residents of that community... each and every book is an opportunity to experience and journey to wonderful and distinctive places that exist in our world.

C is for Cacao
Chocolate! Oh, chocolate!
We drink it hot or cold.
The beans were prized
by Aztec Kings
and worth as much as gold.

D is for Diego Rivera
Diego painted everything,
from radishes to chillies.
He painted Aztec history –
and lots of calla lilies.
The new geography curriculum provides a unique opportunity to bring some of the colour of South and Central America to primary classrooms, and the list of recipients for the Pura Belpre Award¹ and others (see web panel) represents an excellent source of resources for teachers in their efforts to source high-quality thematic children’s picturebooks.

To mark the tenth anniversary of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the southern states of the USA, Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the spirit of New Orleans (Bildner and Parra, 2015) tells the story of a heroic man, Cornelius. Cornelius was a humble garbage man who made a great contribution to the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of the severe flooding that took place in 2005. I am sure that this book will be added to the list of resources for teaching natural disasters in primary classrooms (Dolan, 2014).

Notes
1. John Parra received a Pura Belpre Honor Award in 2015 for Green is a Chile Pepper.
2. Named after the first Latina librarian at the New York Public Library, the Pura Belpre Award is presented annually to a Latino/Latina writer/illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and young people.

References

WEB RESOURCES
Américas Book Award: http://clasprograms.org/americanaward
Golden Kite Award: www.scbwi.org/awards/golden-kite-award/
International Latino Book Awards: http://latinoinkidlit.com/
John Parra: http://johnparraart.com/home.htm
Pura Belpre Award recipients, 1996-2015: www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal/belprepast

Anne M. Dolan is a lecturer in primary geography at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland.

Figure 3: Pupils’ illustrative responses to the stimulus provided by Waiting for the Biblioburro (Brown and Parra, 2011).
Here, Nick reports on a unit of outdoor mapping activities that resulted in growing smiles all round.

As the outdoor learning co-ordinator for a special needs school in the West Midlands, it is my job and delight to take every pupil in the school outdoors for at least one hour a week. It is also a fantastic opportunity to teach geography outdoors to almost 230 pupils. One of the recent geographical topics we covered was a simple mapping activity. We wanted to help pupils understand the idea that things have a place or location and that this can be represented on paper as a map. This gave me the opportunity to develop a range of activities for the various abilities that we have at the school.

Over the course of a term we usually end up with about five or six sessions, so to cover mapping and a sense of position pupils carry out the activities shown in Figure 1. I use the DfE’s P-scale attainment document (DFE, 2014; and see web panel) as a guide for planning activities and, as you can see from Figure 1, many of the goals or targets we encourage the pupils to achieve are fairly small in scope. For example, if we show pupils who are working below P4 – pupils extend the skills to help them explore the world’ (DFE, 2014) – a picture, sign or symbol for our outdoor learning area and they manage to navigate themselves to it, this is a huge achievement. However, at P8 – pupils recognise the physical/natural and human/made features of places – (DFE, 2014) and above on the scale, we would ask pupils to design their own symbols to represent a specific place on a map.

After a term of focusing hard on trying to ingrain straightforward geographical skills, I decided it would be helpful for the pupils to lay claim to a piece of land, plant bulbs in it, and have it as their own to watch over and look after. Could they make their own face or a flag by planting the bulbs into that shape? What would it mean to them and then mark on outdoor learning map where they have planted their bulb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support: P1i – P4</th>
<th>Core: P5 – 7</th>
<th>Extension: P8 – L2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait: explore outdoor environments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils explore the different outdoor areas with adult using appropriate positional and geographical language.</td>
<td>Pupils explore the different outdoor spaces with adult support. Adult to point out where things are in the areas, what they are near and what is far away.</td>
<td>Pupils explore the different outdoor spaces and create labels/symbols/keys for the different places and objects in the areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait: follow routes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore a specific outdoor area by following a nighttime with adult using different tones in their voice at different points.</td>
<td>Explore a specific area using a route reminder card, e.g. we come to a gate on our way we write/draw/symbolise the gate on a piece of paper.</td>
<td>Pupils go to a specific area and create a route reminder card for a trail. Adults to ask them closed questions about where is where.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait: follow routes and explore symbols</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore the same area with adult along the right line, but (in certain areas) the adult is to change the tone of voice every time they reach a new object, so the pupil becomes familiar with a certain tone relating to a certain object.</td>
<td>Go to the same area again and using the route reminder: ask the pupils what are we going to be looking out for on our walk today? Do the walk, and ask ‘what is coming up next?’ and what to expect later in the walk.</td>
<td>Go to a different area and make a group/individual pupil map of the area using their symbols. The adult to ask closed questions about where things are. Then to ask pupils ‘if you were to change this as a group where would you put these different things?’ Adult to draw a rough plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait: explore routes, symbols and maps</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as above but adults are looking for expectation/excitement/change of feeling in the pupil for an object and area.</td>
<td>Go to the same area again, but this time adult goes the other end of the route reminder and see if the pupils can work backwards along the route using the same questions as before.</td>
<td>Bring out rough plan from last session, give it to pupils and ask them to create a mini model of the map. Pupils can carry out this activity individually or in a group (have resources available to create man-made items) take lots of photos!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait: explore routes, symbols and maps</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as above, but the objects are in different locations and in a different order along the line. The adult is looking for awareness from the pupils of different items being in the different places.</td>
<td>Go to the same area again and at certain sites leave symbols/prizes. When there, adult asks the pupils individually to find these areas and to collect any items. Adult to randomly select areas rather than go in the sequence of the route reminder card.</td>
<td>Pupils use the photos, plan and memory to recreate the map. Then give pupils a certain area of the school that they need to go and map. Pupils map the areas using symbols and photos and bring back together to discuss their findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait: create maps (last week)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils to handle and experience all the items needed to plant daffodils. They are taken to their favourite place in outdoor learning space and plant the bulbs (as a sign of owning that place) for them to go back to and enjoy.</td>
<td>Pupils are to select places to plant their bulbs, plant them and then mark on outdoor learning map where they have planted their bulb.</td>
<td>Create map of plan of how they wanted to plant daffodil bulbs. Use their own symbol to represent the bulb, and then place paper on the mud, place bulbs in the right places on their maps and cover with compost.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Activity planning using the P-scale attainment targets
how plots could be designed. I encouraged them to create their own designs and add a touch of their personality to their plot.

The pupils designed their own symbols for the bulbs on separate cards and positioned them on their maps. A few pupils copied the example, but most came up with the idea to draw a smiling face using the bulbs. On this particular Wednesday we were blessed with good weather, which was a stroke of luck for the middle of November. The day started off brilliantly with a lot of pupils working really hard, planting bulbs all around our orchard (Figure 3). Some of the pupils planted over the top of the paper, placing the bulbs on top of the paper and then covering the whole lot with soil, some used their map as a plan and placed the bulbs out individually straight into the soil.

Then when the bulbs started to grow the pupils were very keen to act as farmers – looking after their little patches, watering them and asking questions about the plants as they developed. Figures 2 and 3 show just how much the pupils enjoyed creating their daffodil smiles across the outdoor learning space.

The benefits

This was a fantastic session, with the pupils gaining a real sense of space and ownership over their maps. In the spring, pupils are thrilled to see their bulbs growing into beautiful plants and flowers. Their plots are then used all year round as a teaching resource for geography, science and PHSE. The pupils learn how to manage and care for their local environment, develop a sense of where food comes from and are encouraged to think about the awe and wonder of nature.

Hopefully, as you read this, the pupils’ own smiles will be in full bloom as they plan next year’s designs. Perhaps they will want to progress from smiles to flags, or even country shapes!

Reference


WEB RESOURCES

P-scales attainment targets: www.gov.uk/government/publications/p-scales-attainment-targets-for-pupils-with-sen
Plant and plot sample map: www.growinginteractive.com/products.aspx

Nick Lee is the Outdoor Learning Co-ordinator for Fort Royal Community Primary School, Worcester.
CELEBRATING GEOGRAPHY

For this issue’s Interview, we challenged geographers and educators from across the country to answer the question, ‘why celebrate geography?’

‘Geography is a way of life...enabling you to both understand and appreciate our world and made special by the engaging and supportive individuals who study this dynamic subject, be they colleagues, students or pupils. The geography community really is unique and I feel deeply privileged to be part of it.’

Steve Rawlinson, President, Geographical Association 2015-16

‘Celebrating to me means have a party; geography should be fun, inclusive and about bringing something to the feast. We all bring our lived experiences, perspectives and opinions: this is our gift to any geography party.’

Anthony Barlow, Senior Lecturer, Roehampton

‘It’s easy to get drawn into really serious issues when teaching geography because it’s about what’s happening in the real world, but before we start burdening children with problems, we need to celebrate the planet on which we live.

David Sobel, the American environmental educator, once pleaded, ‘no environmental tragedies before fourth grade (year five)’. I agree. An ethos of caring and concern is best based on celebration rather than anxiety.’

Dr Stephen Scoffham, Visiting Reader in Sustainability and Education, Canterbury Christ Church University

‘Marvelling in the wonders of the diversity of the world; delighting in exploring from the infinitesimal to the infinite; travelling...’

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on a different journey every minute of every day; sensing how seemingly random and disparate phenomena fit together; sharing a common language and marvelling at the sameness in us all.’

_Tessa Willy, Lecturer in Education, Institute of Education and Primary Geography Editorial Board_

_“there is a greater chance for pupils to have fun in geography if teachers have fun teaching geography.”_  

‘When I think about what celebrating geography means to me I think about how glad I am that geography is in the curriculum and I was able to take this subject at school and teach it in the UK and Italy. Having just finished a tour of Pompeii and seeing hundreds of people orientating their maps and following routes and directions, I realised geography really is part of our lives and this is a great reason to celebrate it.’

_Jane Whittle, International School of Bologna and Primary Geography Editorial Board_

_“We need to celebrate fieldwork within the geography curriculum and how the Global Learning Programme encourages teachers and pupils to reflect on the world and challenge ideas.”_  

_Paul Baker, GA Independent Schools Special Interest Group_

_“I feel geography needs to be celebrated because it helps us all appreciate the wonders of our planet. This is one of the foundation stones of informed, concerned and active citizenship, which is necessary if we are to find meaningful responses to the social, political, economic and environmental challenges that face humankind.”_  

_Julia Tanner, Educational Consultant_

_“Geography to me means always being able to find some inspiration, knowledge and enjoyment in places new and old; exploring even those well-worn paths with a new eye and an eager heart. I like to celebrate geography out of doors, through the soles of my feet or in a kayak, preferably with the company of friends and/or family. Mind you, if you’re a school the best way to celebrate it is to do the Quality Mark!”_  

_Paula Owens, Primary Curriculum Leader, GA, and Primary Geography Editorial Board_

_“Celebrating geography involves fun, creativity and exploration. I encourage my students to have fun when they are teaching geography. They usually respond with looks of surprise and disbelief. However, there is a greater chance for pupils to have fun learning geography if teachers have fun teaching geography. The whole idea of a celebration is a valuable frame for geography as it generates themes of community, place, space, colour, festivities and parties. Geography without a celebration should not be entertained!”_  

_Dr Anne Dolan, Mary Immaculate College, Ireland_

_“Celebrating geography is not only about the awesome diversity of people and places, and all of the ordinary, extraordinary ways they are connected together. It is about the peculiar power of geographical thinking to help us visualise the patterns and processes at work in our world; to engage meaningfully with all its glorious messiness; and to keep re-making it as well as we possibly can.”_  

_Ben Ballin, TIDE– and Primary Geography Editorial Board_

_“To me, geography is eclectic and exciting. I teach because I want to share this with my students and to pass on the skills that the subject has given me. We should celebrate it noisily (my former year 7 geography club made a bright throw out of flags for the department sofa) and quietly (by encouraging thought and reflection about our planet)”_  

_Becky Kitchen, Secondary Curriculum Leader, GA_

_“Geography is understanding landscapes; this enables caring for our world. Celebration requires knowledge to understand all the aspects and the verbal, literary, musical and graphic skills to present to others the wonder of these landscapes.”_  

_Rachel Bowles, Associate Research Fellow, University of Greenwich_

_“Geography is all about celebrating our place in the world – being embedded in our local geography and exploring how we connect with the wider world. Whether it’s finding a new way home, a secret path that you don’t know where it leads or discovering the path of a stream, geography forces us to look at our place in new and exciting ways. As a teacher, it means looking at our pupils’ lives, what they value and how they experience their local area. It means tapping into that deep resource of knowledge that the pupils have, also pushing us as practitioners to think about our own role in imparting knowledge and skills. Celebrating geography helps us to celebrate our pupils – where they come from, where they are and where they want to move on to.”_  

_Simon Collis, Emmaus Primary School, Sheffield, and Primary Geography Editorial Board_

_“Geography should be celebrated as it is the physical geography that has nurtured the evolution of humans, and the human geography that has moulded humans into the people we are today.”_  

_Assunta Spina, Bedford Preparatory School_

_“To be or not to be a geographer? It is not really a question, since we are all ‘geographers’ everyday. It is in all of us - just let it flourish; bring it out of ourselves and in others.”_  

_Professor Simon Catling, Emeritus Professor of Primary Education, Oxford Brookes University_

_“Experiencing the landscapes, peoples and cultures of places around the world with the understanding and insight that being a (sort of) geographer provides”._  

_Margaret Mackintosh, Primary Geography Editorial Board_

_“I think that studying geography is cool. I like learning facts about countries and the fish in the sea... I also like the stories and using different words.”_  

_Olivia Browne-Labella, age 7, Naunton Park Primary School, Cheltenham_

_“Geography is part of our everyday lives and also part of our dreams: dreams of distant places and wondrous things.”_  

_Stephen Pickering, Senior Lecturer, University of Worcester, and Primary Geography Editorial Board_
In this article, Jane reports on how an application for a GA Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM) helped to boost geography’s place in her school’s humanities curriculum.

Okay, maybe as the daughter of an ex-military survey employee I am biased in my views about geography, but I am always amazed by the fact that many teachers see geography as the ‘slightly more boring cousin of history’. This view then rubs off onto their pupils. I am not sure what the reason is, but I do wonder whether it is because geography is about the outdoors – rivers, cities and mountains – yet teaching geography takes place, largely, within four walls. Pupils tend to become disengaged with the subject if they find it hard to understand how geography links to their real lives. Making ‘mountains’ exciting and relevant in an area like ours in the southeast of England (where the nearest ‘mountain’ is Box Hill), can be a challenge.

Luckily, like many teachers, I relish a challenge, so it was with the aim of putting geography more firmly on our school’s map that I approached our Head teacher about applying for the PGQM (see web panel). After looking through the guidelines, I sat down and asked myself a series of questions: ‘what do I think would make geography more exciting, relevant and meaningful for the pupils in our school?’, ‘What would I like to learn if I were 7 or 9 or 11?’ and, perhaps most importantly in my role as Humanities Co-ordinator, ‘what can I do to help geography compete on a more even footing with history for the coveted “humanities crown”?’ Below I outline just a few of the approaches our school has experimented with this year to really help pupils to see geography as a vital part of their curriculum.

We made maps real

The new geography National Curriculum may be rather sparse, but it is clear on one thing: mapping should form a key part of all geography topics. Of course, there is plenty we can do to make maps more fun – exploring digital mapping and affective mapping to name but two. However, to my mind, the real interest in maps lies in using them. This is why we decided that the best way to help our pupils to enjoy using maps was to send them orienteering.

We linked geography to the pupils’ own lives

Just last week I overheard a funny comment in relation to one of our geography-themed literacy lessons. One pupil turned to another and said: ‘It’s pretty annoying that we’ve just found out that Primark doesn’t use Fair trade cotton. Where am I going to buy my World Book Day costume from now?’ Humorous, yes, but it is also heart-warming that our pupils are really beginning to see how geography affects their everyday lives. Even if it has made their shopping a little bit more difficult. Now I’ve always found it strange when teachers claim something is linked to ‘real life’ when it is nothing of the sort – e.g. making up letters from a local museum asking for information texts and pretending it is real. The good news is, in geography you don’t need to make up tenuous real-life links because there are plenty of proper, solid ones. For example, during Fairtrade Fortnight we decided to write letters to Primark asking them to stock Fair trade cotton. This was a real problem that pupils could do something about (Figure 2). One pupil summed it up beautifully when he said, ‘Their website says they’ll sell organic and Fair trade cotton products in the future, depending on market demand. That just means when we ask for it enough, doesn’t it?’

CELEBRATING THE HUMANITIES’ CROWN

JANE THOMAS

In this article, Jane reports on how an application for a GA Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM) helped to boost geography’s place in her school’s humanities curriculum.

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Figure 1: The fun of geography outdoors – orienteering for ten year-olds. Photo: © Jane Thomas.
Recently, we held a Geography Challenge Day, organised jointly with another local primary school. During the day a group of pupils heard from the local council planning team about how the town was going to change over the next ten years. Lots of pupils were excited to hear about a new cycle route, which was planned on a floating walkway along the river. One pupil was delighted when the Council Officer said they would seriously consider his suggestion of putting up screens in the town centre so that people could watch Wimbledon every year. We’re not sure whether it will actually happen, but if it does that pupil will have the thrill of knowing a change to his town centre was down to him.

We helped pupils to experience things beyond the ‘everyday’

While it would be lovely to actually take pupils up Everest on a school trip, or perhaps fly them to Brazil, these things are unlikely to happen, so we teachers need to think even harder about how we can bring these experiences to our pupils. A visit from a Polar Explorer (also arranged as part of SMSC week) was a case in point. From the first question posed by the Polar Explorer: ‘What would you do if you came face-to-face with a polar bear?’, the pupils were taken to a world far beyond their everyday existence. After teaching pupils how to survive in Arctic climates and letting them try on his many layers of clothing, the Explorer also spent a considerable amount of time answering those questions that you just cannot answer satisfactorily using Google. Questions such as, ‘What does it feel like lying in a tent knowing there are polar bears outside?’ and ‘How exactly do you do a wee when it’s below freezing?’ were answered as candidly as possible, but also with some hilarity.

Another example of how we celebrate geography in our school is by exposing pupils to the unfamiliar via a year 4 sleepover. During the evening a team of animal handlers brings a selection of rainforest animals for the pupils to touch and even hold. For the pupils, most of whom have only seen these animals in pictures when they study rainforests in year 3, it is an experience that stays with them. While we may not have the budget or the time to take the pupils to Brazil or the Arctic now, perhaps by inspiring them in the ways described here we could create the Polar or Rainforest Explorers of tomorrow.

We use creativity

Geography is an exciting subject that pupils can grow to love with the right stimulus and passion from their teacher. Yes, it does require effort, creativity and a budget to think about how to bring mountains alive in a classroom in Slough or Stratford, or to explain why it is a useful skill to learn how to read six-figure grid references, but the subject deserves to be the queen of the humanities agenda. Let’s start celebrating geography again.
The key message from a year 5 class on Dartmoor is that geography fieldwork is fun, whatever the weather. Here Jessica and Jo summarise their planning and the fieldwork, with support from Margaret.

"Today... I went on the best school trip ever. It was to Dartmoor." (Abby)

"I like geography fieldwork because it’s fun that we get to explore Dartmoor." (Leia)

Dartmoor, with its high granite tors, steep wooded river valleys and heather-covered moorland, has been (somewhat contentiously) described as the ‘last great wilderness in England’. However, knowing what the weather on Dartmoor can be like towards the end – or indeed at any time – of the year can make planning for autumn-term fieldwork somewhat daunting.

Despite this, the two visits described in this article celebrated cross-curricular experiences that involved both geography and history. Although specifically planned for Dartmoor, the activities described below could be replicated or adapted for any upland area in the UK.

Figure 1 goes some way towards indicating the opportunities for cross-curricular work with a geography lead. It identifies an emphasis on map work, landscape, land use and settlement. This was carried out as enquiry-based fieldwork, which focused on two questions: ‘Why is Dartmoor popular with tourists?’ and ‘If we were taking a group of elderly people to Merrivale, what would we need to think about – how would the trip change?’.

Prior to the fieldwork, health and safety was discussed and the pupils prepared their own ‘risk assessment’. In addition to geography-led history and archaeology activities on the moor, one child’s father prepared a ‘Stone Age survival rabbit stew’, which all the pupils tasted, while another father demonstrated some first aid techniques. Although parents had been forewarned that we would make the fieldwork look dangerous and risky during the first aid session at the High Moorland Visitor Centre, health and safety was discussed and the pupils were aware of the need for a key; use of key symbols used in the area (interpret features to be seen, effectiveness of symbols, design own), need for a key, use of key contours, interpreting terrain scale 1km grid (whatever the scale, enlargement or reduction of map), using for approximation of distance compass (8 points)

**Figure 1: Opportunities for geography-led cross-curricular fieldwork on Dartmoor, Devon.**

(a) Preparation for the fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography opportunities</th>
<th>Activities specific to Dartmoor</th>
<th>Cross-curricular opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning the route to fieldwork location</td>
<td>Locate UK, Devon, Dartmoor, Merrivale on maps Route from school to Merrivale, Dartmoor</td>
<td>English: letter to parents about fieldtrip Maths: mileage, time (for journey); average speed IT: internet research skills (Dartmoor), using Google Earth (journey and destination), sat nav PSHE: risk assessment, health and safety (clothing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) During and after the fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography opportunities</th>
<th>Activities specific to Dartmoor</th>
<th>Cross-curricular opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using graphicacy skills Google Earth</td>
<td>Sort photos of Dartmoor by landscape features, landscape types and land use Identify archaeological and other features in the Merrivale area Bronze Age settlement menhirs (standing stones) kistvaens (burial chambers) hut circles stone rows rail-line to King’s Tor Quarry associated with old tin workings</td>
<td>Maths: gradients/slopes, measuring distances, informal measure (especially for measurement on undulating surfaces) History: activities during Bronze age, quarrying, rail line, tin mining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distance and direction

- locating north, then orientating map/grid
- identifying features shown on map(s) by symbols
- assessing accuracy of map(s)
- measuring distances and directions in situ
- measuring direction of, and distance between, the archaeological features
- length of stone rows
- hut circles
- facing direction of entrances to hut circles
- measuring distances over rough, rocky ground in strong wind

Science: Sun and North Star (for determining direction) Maths: measuring distances, informal measure (of stones)

Human and Physical Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>D&amp;T: design and make instruments to measure and record weather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>identifying features in situ and those seen on maps and photographs</td>
<td>tors granite quarries</td>
<td>Science: plants/vegetation (effect of climate/altitude/location), geology (rocks and soils) Art: landscape paintings by local artists (e.g. F.J. Widgery), pupils’ own paintings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weather

- describing and recording

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### Human and Physical Features Continued...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human and Physical Features</th>
<th>PSHE</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rivers and Streams</strong></td>
<td>health and safety, survival techniques, first aid</td>
<td>health and safety, survival techniques, first aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• following movement of water downhill, flow, development of associated features</td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• human intervention with water</td>
<td>• stories/myths/legends/poetry about the area</td>
<td>• writing report on area’s importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reservoirs</td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources of streams (e.g. bog, spring)</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• leat</td>
<td>• evidence of distant past (archaeology), evidence of more recent past</td>
<td>• evidence of past land use/change and of settlement development and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• clapper bridge</td>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Settlement</strong></td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evidence for settlement through time</td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong></td>
<td><strong>images of wilderness</strong>; pupils’ own paintings and photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tracks, routeways, bridges, railway</td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong> models of landscape and settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• boundary wall of old school for Quarry workers’ children (now car park)</td>
<td><strong>Merrivale Quarry, now defunct, but was last granite quarry on Dartmoor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Merrivale Quarry, now defunct, but was last granite quarry on Dartmoor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• hut circles, walls, field boundaries</td>
<td><strong>Huntshanger Quarry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Huntshanger Quarry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• time line of Stone-Age, Bronze Age, Medieval, Victorian and modern buildings</td>
<td><strong>Huntshanger Quarry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Huntshanger Quarry</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Land Use and Human Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use and Human Activity</th>
<th>PSHE</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture, Forestry</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leisure</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• hotels, golf courses, tourism</td>
<td>• evidence of past land use/change and of settlement development and change</td>
<td>• evidence of past land use/change and of settlement development and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mining, quarrying, water (management)</td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong> models of landscape and settlements</td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong> models of landscape and settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wildlife</strong></td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong></td>
<td><strong>D&amp;T</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• flora, fauna</td>
<td><strong>Merrivale Quarry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Merrivale Quarry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Future Change</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Wilderness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wilderness</th>
<th>PSHE</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• notions of ‘wilderness’</td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identification of human intervention that has taken place to shape/change the landscape</td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• is it still ‘wilderness’?</td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conservation and Protection of National Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation and Protection of National Parks</th>
<th>PSHE</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why is this considered to be a special area?</td>
<td>health and safety, survival techniques, first aid</td>
<td>health and safety, survival techniques, first aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• land ownership</td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• work of National Trust, English Nature Heritage and RSPB</td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSHE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• designation of Site of Special Scientific Interest and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 2: Dartmoor in glorious October sunshine. Photo © Beacon School.

Centre in Princetown, we reassured them that it would not be. In fact, the early October fieldwork activities, which included some role-play, took place in glorious sunshine (Figure 2).

‘I loved the October visit because we learnt lots about map reading, using a compass, we used mud to put on tribal/clan face paint and altogether it was just great fun.’ (Edie)

‘The October visit was the best because it wasn’t raining and we didn’t get wet. We also got to do more fun stuff like walking in the leat.’ (Patryk)

When the second, follow-up, visit took place in November, the weather was horrendous, with Dartmoor’s characteristic horizontal rain (Figure 3). Nevertheless, the activities went ahead and provided a dramatic experience for many pupils.

‘When we went to Dartmoor in November it was pouring. The wind was blowing the rain sideways, it was muddy, it was boggy and very, very wet.’ (Kayleigh)

‘Fieldwork in the pouring rain is fun because I like getting wet and I love the sound of the wind and rain together.’ (Leia)

‘The November visit was the best because in October the weather was perfect and nothing was really very challenging for me. But the November trip was quite challenging because we had to walk up King’s Tor in the wind and rain, but nothing was very clear. It was very hard to pick out the rocks and holes. The wind was super strong as well.’ (Bea and Lydia)

‘Dartmoor was amazing but the wind knocked me off my feet a couple of times.’ (Lydia)

To gather pupil feedback, we asked pupils to identify the highlights and lowlights of the two visits, comments included:

‘A highlight to me was learning how to use a compass and a map because I loved how to find north with a compass and I loved finding out what landmarks were on the map.’ (Edie)
'My highlights... were when we got to the top of King’s Tor and going to the Dartmoor National Park Museum. They were both fun activities.’ (Abby)

'The highlights were finding a hut [circle] for our clan and trading with other clans. The lowlights were walking and learning how to use a compass.’ (Patryk)

‘On the November visit we had a hot chocolate, ate home-made rabbit stew, conquered King’s Tor, went to the museum, bandaged someone’s head and leg and jumped over a leat. The highlights were the rabbit stew and hot chocolate. The lowlights were the museum and jumping over the leat (because the adults thought we couldn’t do it by ourselves).’ (Anon)

‘On the November visit... the highlights were looking down on everything from the top of King’s Tor, drinking hot chocolate and eating rabbit stew and walking in the rain and watching a film on the coach. The lowlight was being in the museum.’ (Leia)

As these comments also indicate, pupils slip easily into using appropriate geographical vocabulary. The quotes below help to indicate a wide range of skills was acquired, and that the pupils’ knowledge of physical and human geography, of land-use and how the landscape has been changed by human actions (such as settlement), were also developed – exactly as we had planned.

'The geography I learned was using a compass; Dartmoor’s weather can change immediately; Dartmoor has a massive landscape; the rivers are very cold and long; the settlements were in different places (from today); there are some mines used on Dartmoor; there is lots of tourism on Dartmoor; the weather can change any second on Dartmoor.’ (Patryk)

'I learned that Stone Age people lived on Dartmoor.’ (Kayeleigh)

'The geography I learned about Dartmoor was that Stone/Bronze/Iron Age round houses were usually built in villages. The landscape is very mountainous; the rivers are very small but strong, the weather is very wet and cold.’ (Anon)

'I learned a bit about the old school that the Quarry-workers’ children would have gone to. It is now used as a car park.’ (Abby)

We were also encouraged that the pupils commented on the challenges and emotional aspects of the fieldwork visits, believing these important to the overall success of the event. The experiences have left the pupils with a positive view of geography fieldwork, especially with the hot chocolate (which was funded by the Head teacher) providing a suitable celebration in the challenging Dartmoor weather!

'I like geography fieldwork because it is fun. Fieldwork in the pouring rain is not fun because you’re gonna get wet.’ (Patryk)

'I like geography fieldwork because it is really fun. Fieldwork in the pouring rain is cold, but it is more exciting.’ (Abby)

'Fieldwork in the pouring rain is not fun at all and is very tiring and cold... I like geography fieldwork on the moors because it is fun and it is on mountainous terrain... What I learned (that was not geography,) was that after a lot of hard work hot chocolate tastes much better.’ (Anon)

Through this unit of work the pupils met our aims, but there are a number of things we intend to change. This includes leaving a longer gap between the two visits. In future, we will carry out one visit close to the start of the term and the other as near the end as possible, in the expectation that some seasonal change will be apparent. The first will set the real scene for the whole class. The second will provide a purpose for the intervening classroom geography, bring the whole to a practical conclusion and enable the pupils to use their newly-gained skills. At present pupils complete the enquiry work in the classroom; the second visit will also enable the pupils to seek answers to their own questions too.

Jessica Collinson is year 5 Teaching Assistant and Jo Fison is year 5 teacher and Deputy Head at Beacon C of E VA Primary School, Exmouth. Margaret Mackintosh has retired as a primary teacher and BEd geography-in-education tutor; she is now a geography consultant and writer, and member of the GA Primary Geography Editorial Board.
‘TUT, TUT, IT LOOKS LIKE RAIN’

ALASTAIR MACNAUGHTON

Alastair investigates the influences – perceived and real – of the weather on pupils and their learning.

As a youngster, I was lucky enough to play within the Dartmoor National Park, for it was there where I grew up and worked. Here the climate was regularly described as ‘nine months winter and three months bad weather’ (Dartmoor National Park, 2007). As a young man, it was on many a lonely hilltop I would often relish the rain on my face and delight in the power of the wind. You would never hear me use the phrase used as the title of this article (which is taken from a Winnie-the-Pooh story – Milne, 1986). Even now, as a newly-qualified teacher, my enjoyment of the outdoors continues and thoughts about the weather are never far from my mind.

The official stance
The National Curriculum (NC) describes how pupils need to learn about the weather and the seasonal changes around them (DfE, 2013). The House of Commons Education Committee (2010) also suggests that learning outside supports child development. Thus, as the majority of our weather is experienced outdoors, it seems sensible for teachers to combine these two requirements.

In their writings, both Dewey (1910) and Piaget (1976) extemporise on the significance of experience being at the heart of learning; and for energetic primary school pupils, learning outdoors is an important part of their social, physical and intellectual development (National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2014). However, for many of my pupils it is evident that a greater number are spending less and less time exposed to the elements.

Even within school, the weather is one of the reported barriers to the implementation of outdoor education – alongside inadequate outdoor play spaces; form filling (NFER, 2010); unsuitable outdoor clothing; insufficient resources; too many school staff who have an inclination toward extraneous risk assessment; curriculum demands; and parental anxiety (Waite, 2011). However, the Department for Education (DfE) (2014) recently stated that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) wants to encourage schools to remove inefficient bureaucracy and focus only on real risks, not paperwork. Indeed, HSE (2015) and The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA, 2015) corroborate the rarity of legal cases relating to outdoor accidents in schools.

As a teacher who gets excited by dark skies and frosty mornings, I wanted to further understand how the weather impacts on the behaviour and feelings of pupils. I asked myself two questions: ‘How can my pupils become more in tune with their climate?’, and ‘how can teachers maximise their “all weather” learning opportunities (and not just when it is their turn for Forest school)?’

What the literature says
Apparently, extremes of weather affect our behaviour! Carried out more than a century ago, Dexter’s (1899) analysis of corporal punishment records revealed higher disciplinary problems during extremes of barometric pressure. More recently, Scagliotta (1980) studied several hundred pupils who had previous behavioural disturbances, and found a significant correlation between decreasing atmospheric pressure and poor behaviour.

As teachers, we know some types of weather present consistent challenges during child play and learning (Bilton, 2010). Precipitation-sodden paper and clothing take a long time to restore or regenerate, and the myths surrounding sun-cream application are the cause of much wrangling with parents (HSE 2015). However, all too often have I overheard staff blaming windy days for their pupils’ poor behaviour. It is most likely attributable to confirmation bias, but there is insufficient evidence within the literature to support this assertion. Indeed, if pupils really are excitable (whatever the weather), then their energy needs to be captured and channelled towards learning opportunities such as speed, wind resistance and flight.

Find a space in the playground and investigate
The issue of health and the weather is a controversial one. Certainly, the ‘you can’t go out without a coat on; you’ll catch a cold’ myth was busted a long time ago by immunologists (Janeway et al., 2005). However, recent research by Foxman et al. (2015) indicates that an antiviral response may be hampered by cold nasal passages. Thus, an assemblage of differentiated nose warmers by the classroom door might enable your pupils to enjoy the cold weather for longer. I will let you know when I’ve found a reputable supplier…

While the disadvantages of play in the ice and rain are evident, Waite (2011) raises the point that the outside world is unforgiving. Schools provide a safe environment to make mistakes, and the weather is the perfect, non-judgemental teacher. While a puddle will give a child a wet foot, it will not be disapproving. Indeed, Davis and colleagues (2006) demonstrate that pupils who are encouraged to take risks and identify their own limits can understand the impacts of wet clothing. Pupils who remember their own coats are journeying towards personal responsibility.

Sometimes though, clothing and equipment are of limited use. Due to its geographical location, all pupils in the UK experience seasonal variations in the weather, and respond to them in different ways (Wehr et al., 1991). In a systematic review of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) in 4–11 year olds, Magnusson (2000) demonstrated that between 3 and 13% of primary school-aged pupils in the northern hemisphere satisfied the criteria for SAD (Carskadon and Acebo, 1993). Furthermore, Glod and Baisden (1999) describe how indicators of SAD often include irritability, difficulty concentrating and inattention, all of which are, intriguingly, the symptoms regularly ascribed to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). However, unlike ADHD, remedies for SAD can be as simple as greater light exposure within school or even dawn-simulating alarm clocks (Glod and Baisden, 1999).

While I am not advocating you spend your hard-earned pennies on a fancy alarm clock for each of your pupils, it is interesting that Helbig (2011) demonstrates how the cognitive performance of pupils and their ability to concentrate can be significantly increased with the short-term effects of ‘biologically optimised lighting’, oriented to simulate daylight. And, although the control and treatment groups were not directly comparable, the findings are bolstered by Demir’s study (2013), which reveals higher achievement and attendance rates of students in schools lit solely by sunlight. Demir (2013) also found...
positive effects on the motivation, job satisfaction and the attendance of teachers in these schools. Moreover, in a study of 20 different primary schools, both pupil and teacher productivity were shown to be dramatically affected by the ventilation of fresh air within the classroom (these results were collated with the findings from 300 peer-reviewed articles) (Clements-Croome et al., 2008). 

My class
I asked my class about the weather: ‘how did it make them feel in school?’ and ‘Did they feel it affected their learning?’ Surprisingly, not one pupil liked cloudy days! This is a little disheartening as apparently, in the UK, we are under cloud cover approximately 70% of the time (Met Office, 2015). I wondered whether there was a direct effect on their work. Cloudy skies generally occur during times of low barometric pressure, and research by Scagliotta (1980) and Schory et al. (2003) demonstrates that low atmospheric pressures can affect the amount of oxygen reaching the brain, which (as we know) is essential for cognition and happiness (Peacock, 1998). When I asked my class what they wanted, their response was: sunshine of course, but not too much because they loathed ‘really hot’ weather for learning. Certainly, the maximum temperature can sometimes be left to increase during lessons with no cut off mechanism other than the teacher’s own thermo-cognition. When the summer encroaches, I often enter classrooms only to be hit by a wall of warm, clammy, stale air. I do think I am not alone in wanting my pupils to go home bathed in knowledge, not sweat. While many schools have thermostats that regulate (in my experience often inadequately) the minimum temperature, should we always be teaching in an unchanging atmosphere, one where temperatures do not vary? Considering our climatic range, I think that a variety of weather and temperature range is important for pupils, and helps to make for memorable experiences.

What we can do
It is evident that the influence of seasonal weather inside, as well as outside, the school classroom is considerable. By preventing the restriction of natural
lighting in the classroom (with blinds, curtains, etc.) and partaking in a short aerobic exercise regime (specifically aimed at stimulating cerebral blood flow) during a low-barometric pressure period, you may be able to reduce the formation of stale attitudes towards learning in your pupils. However, as the majority of pupils indicated that extremes of temperature did not aid learning, we teachers must carefully consider the ventilation rates in our classrooms. Try walking out and into your classroom during a lesson, just to check! Installing a barometer and a thermometer will help you monitor the climate conditions in your classroom; they will also provide an additional opportunity for learning.

Depending on finances, schools and parents could provide more ‘weather friendly’ clothing and equipment, thus allowing pupils to spend more time playing outdoors (where happiness levels are generally higher) and for them to experience and come to enjoy a wider range of weather types. This would have the additional advantages of helping teachers to continue lessons and playtime during inclement weather and encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own equipment.

Teaching can be a little like weathering a storm sometimes; head down, battling forward against external forces that seem intent to knock you down. But it does not have to be like this. The British weather has myriad features that can be enjoyed and used to scaffold learning: bright sunshine can present the opportunity to understand shadow, sun dials and our place in the solar system; the rain can be used to demonstrate the water cycle, water resistance, erosion and surface run-off, with numerous cross-curricular numerical and geographical links.

You may be familiar with the old adage: ‘When the chairs squeak, it’s of rain they speak’. However, in my classroom, when the chairs squeak it’s because we are going outside – precipitation or not!

References


Rebecca explores how overlaps in geographical and numeracy skills reflect the desired opportunities for pupils to use and apply their core knowledge in geography.

In my experience there is nothing better than witnessing the joy of pupils who are fully engaged in lessons that link their instinctive appreciation of the world around them with a richer and more accurate understanding of real places and people. Such exploration requires a range of skills and knowledge from a variety of curriculum subjects. Thus geography and geographical skills are often combined and integrated within other subjects, often without the pupils – and possibly even their teacher – realising! Unfortunately, the government’s desire to measure up to world-class standards of education has led to a more performance-driven approach with a greater priority given to those subjects involved in high-stakes assessments. Consequently, as more time is dedicated to the higher-valued core subjects, foundation subjects, such as geography, receive less immediate attention and direct representation within curriculum organisation than they deserve: a situation that can deprive pupils of the opportunity to explore and understand their world.

Alongside the continued focus on raising standards of achievement in the core subjects, the 2014 National Curriculum has also placed an emphasis on ensuring that curriculum provision is ‘balanced and broadly based’ (DfE, 2013). There is also the expectation this will allow for the development of pupils’ knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum. As a result there is an increased drive for teachers to adopt elements of cross-curricular practice and use every relevant subject to develop pupils’ core knowledge and skills in exciting and stimulating lessons.

Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils leave school mathematically confident and capable – a goal that is being given even greater emphasis after the OECD’s latest global rankings (based on maths and science results). This showed that one in five pupils in the UK leave school without ‘a basic level of education’ (Coughlan, 2015). In order to achieve this basic level of confidence and competency, pupils need to be able to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in routine and non-routine problems and in contexts that are not purely mathematical (see the aims of the 2014 curriculum for mathematics – DfE, 2013). These non-mathematical contexts and situations can be found in abundance throughout the curriculum, with both Ofsted (2008) and the DfE (2013) recognising the meaningful opportunities available for developing pupils’ mathematical knowledge and skills in a variety of curriculum subjects.

Such transference of learning across subject domains has been found to be vital in securing pupils’ understanding of the knowledge and skills involved. The use of cross-curricular contexts to provide new and alternative situations in which learning can be applied not only reinforces, deepens and enhances pupils’ existing understanding, but also helps to make learning more meaningful for pupils by allowing them to identify and appreciate its relevance and usefulness outside of its original context. This concept is underpinned by the constructivist learning theory, which suggests that the establishment of connections between pupils’ existing knowledge and new information helps to reinforce their learning. Therefore, the establishment of cross-curricular opportunities between the core and foundation subjects can be used not only to secure pupils’ existing core understanding, but also to assist with the acquisition of new knowledge in the foundation subjects. This approach allows the core subjects to remain at the forefront of the curriculum while giving greater, and much needed, attention to the foundation subjects, generating the broad and balanced curriculum the government desires.

However, what has this got to do with geography? It is widely believed that good geography teaching integrates the three elements of geography: skills, places and themes. Geographical skills are of particular importance as they are believed to underpin and reinforce the other elements, supporting the acquisition of geographical knowledge and the understanding of geographical concepts. However, these skills are not purely geographical and often require the basic literacy, oracy and numeracy skills pupils acquire and develop in the core subjects. This overlap in skills reflects the potential geography holds to provide the desired opportunities for pupils to use and apply their core knowledge.

In particular, there are substantial links between geography and maths. Both subjects demand similar skills – including exploration, discussion, identifying patterns, problem solving and graphicacy – and, while the mathematics curriculum requires that pupils have the opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills and understanding in a wide range of contexts, the geography curriculum generates a wealth of purposeful, relevant and realistic contexts in which geographical understanding, knowledge and skills are developed. Thus, the overlap between the two subjects suggests that geographical contexts can be used to provide pupils with opportunities to transfer and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills. Not only will this approach provide pupils with opportunities to experience mathematics in an alternative context and thus reinforce their mathematical understanding, it will also support pupils’ understanding of geographical principles due to the mathematical nature of many geographical skills.

You may be surprised to discover just how much maths is embedded within geography. When considering the maths used within geography, the most common responses will often include reference to fieldwork – for example, measuring a river’s length, depth and width. However, there are plenty more opportunities to incorporate maths into geography beyond these obvious fieldwork studies. Climate and population graphs require pupils to draw on their data-handling knowledge; pupils’ understanding of distance and scale can be deployed by measuring journey lengths, or changes in the environment; money skills and budgeting may be involved in a design or regeneration project – the possibilities are endless, and the benefits to pupils’ learning are immense.

To begin with, using maths in a geographical context provides pupils with new and different opportunities to practice, reinforce and extend their mathematical skills and understanding, reflecting the importance of creating purposeful and meaningful opportunities for the application of mathematical learning. Additionally, these opportunities allow pupils to see the relevance and purpose of their mathematical learning outside of the context in which it was taught – thus enhancing their understanding and awareness of how
Maths is used in everyday life. Perhaps less obviously, there is a significant advantage to using maths in geography on pupils’ geographical understanding. Maths can improve the accessibility and interpretability of geographical content by presenting information in a more easily-understandable format, and making key information more memorable, thus supporting the acquisition and development of geographical knowledge and understanding.

I encouraged my year 6 pupils to use climate graphs when investigating mountain environments, in order to compare the temperature and precipitation and decide whether all mountain environments have the same climates. By putting the information into a graph, the pupils were able to organise the numbers and statistics, making them less intimidating; this helped the pupils to easily identify similarities and differences between the climates of two locations.

On another occasion, I used a scaled diagram to illustrate the retreating movement of glaciers. In this instance, I asked the pupils to calculate how far the glacier had retreated using the scale provided. This was intended to emphasise the magnitude of the glacier’s retraction. However, as the pupils had little experience of using scales before and consequently found this task extremely challenging, an impromptu maths lesson arose before we could continue with the geography. In instances such as this, it is important to ensure that the mathematical links incorporated into geography are both purposeful and beneficial to pupils’ geographical learning, as well as being of an appropriate level that utilises the knowledge and skills the pupils already possess.

Ultimately, because of its extensive links to the core subjects, geography has a distinctive role in the curriculum. Geography can provide the purposeful and relevant contexts needed for pupils to apply and develop their mathematical thinking and understanding, creating the cross-curricular opportunities the government desires. Geography is a valuable vehicle for contextualising maths, and it has the potential to develop and expand pupils’ knowledge and understanding across a range of other curriculum subjects. It can be argued that geography (and other foundation subjects) should have greater significance in the National Curriculum and a bigger allocation of teaching time due to their potential to be the most powerful, meaningful and relevant areas of learning.

**References**


**Rebecca Hankin** is a year 4 teacher at Priory Rise School in Milton Keynes.
In summer 2014 Nick’s year 4/5 class studied coasts. In this article the pupils describe how they learned about coasts; and primary education student, Sarah, explains what the student teachers learned from the pupils.

Nick’s introduction
What is geography to a teacher? What is geography to a child? To me geography needs to have purpose. Why study coasts if you are not going to do anything with the knowledge? How can a pupil or University student study coasts without going to one? To my mind, the pupils need to be immersed in the whole experience, they need to live and breathe geography, which is exactly what our pupils did.

In the 2014 summer term, as well as a residential seaside trip to beautiful Lyme Regis my year 4/5 class visited the University of Worcester to turn the tables and teach the primary education students how to teach about coasts. The pupils also described what a good teacher should look like and how they should behave.

At the University of Worcester, each group of six pupils took charge of a group of 28 students for a particular aspect of the teaching and learning. One group taught the students how to teach about longshore drift using the students as waves and pieces of sand. Another group taught the students a land use game that demonstrates the conflict of interests between different stakeholders and how hard it would be to satisfy everyone. A third group demonstrated how biscuits can be used to teach about rock erosion and dough and a weight to show how wave height affects coastal erosion. A game was devised by the fourth group to help the students learn about coastal features and a final group demonstrated all the fieldwork undertaken on the trip.

The pupils’ views
What is geography?

by Sam Heppener

Geography is field trips. Field trips are our favourite, and you find out so much. You get to do practical activities like measuring beach profiles and also observing swash and backwash by standing in the sea.

Imagine a lesson where all the desks and chairs were empty, where all the children were having fun outside, where everyone was learning lots of information. This is what a field trip feels like. You can work with friends in teams and experience working with people you don’t often work with, while you do fieldwork projects. Field trips aren’t just about learning though, they can be about staying away from home for a while, possibly even sleeping over for a night. This is good because it gives you a chance to be independent and experience something new. Who wouldn’t want to experience something new and see what things are like?

On field trips you get to speak to people and ask them questions, some of us really enjoyed this especially as we didn’t know anybody and they were all polite. We did an enquiry about the future of Lyme Regis, about whether the new sea wall was a good or bad thing, and why. This lets us think about the future and we need to because it will be our future.

You also feel like you’re not actually doing school work when you really are! Various types of fun fieldwork activities are:
1. Fossil hunting
2. Beach profile
3. Measuring groynes
4. Swash and backwash
5. Study chart

Geography is also looking at the world. Finding out about countries and places, finding out about their population, climate and landscape. This helps us understand why places are like they are and how and why they are different to us.

Geography can also be linked to other subjects. In literacy we have written stories linked to coastal erosion; we have written newspaper articles about the Dawlish railway. In science we have looked at fossils and had a great time fossil hunting at Lyme Regis. In numeracy we have used our questionnaires for data handling. In art we produced sand sculptures at Lyme Regis and done some watercolour paintings on coasts. We also made fudge and ice cream. Which child wouldn’t enjoy doing that?

Geography can be used in lots of lessons, but overall geography is study of the world that we live in, it should be exciting, fun, and all subjects can include geography.
What we like about geography
by Harriet Nagle

The first thing we like about geography is field trips. They are really fun and they involve lots of activities. When we went to Lyme Regis we did loads of activities.

At Lyme Regis we did activities like a long shore drift experiment where you put an apple in the sea and watch it go bobbing in and out along the beach. Even in the classroom children can have fun, the best way for this is practical activities. Some practical activities in geography include dropping weights on dough; this is to demonstrate that the higher the waves the more erosion. You can also show how sand is made by having a biscuit and breaking it up smaller and smaller until it is crumbs. If you don’t do practical activities, if children don’t do things for themselves, if children don’t learn anything fun, then there is no point to lessons.

Geography lessons are usually active and we really like practical activities. This also lets us get out of the classroom, which is something everyone enjoys. You can play games in geography, you can have debates in geography, and you can ask people questions about geography; these are all things we have enjoyed this year.

In geography you get to see lots of different places by going there or looking at them on the internet or in books. It is fun to see how it is in different places and interesting to know how different places are to where we live. You can find out about their climate, landscape, population and wealth. You find out how each country survives on its own, or relies on others.

Overall geography is fun, active and you go on great trips. It can be a bit like you are not learning, when actually you are.

What is a geography teacher?
By Robert Carter

To our class, a geography teacher is fun and interesting. They know what they are talking about, but can tell us in child-friendly speech, which is basically shorter words that us children understand.

They are polite, helpful, Kind and always willing to listen to you. They should be able to help children as much as possible, even if that child is really getting on their nerves.

One of the most important things about a geography teacher is that they actually know something about geography. However they must know what interests children, like making a lesson that children enjoy, and maybe outside as this is better than in the classroom. They also need to make lessons active, we don’t want to learn sitting at a desk; we want to be doing things.

The best geography teachers organise field trips, we have been on two field trips in the last two years and they are extremely fun. You also learn so much from field trips without realising. The fieldwork activities are the best and so much fun to do and our residential to Lyme Regis is the highlight of the year and something we will never forget.

Geography teachers therefore should be;
Smart, Kind, Helpful, Fun and Interesting.
And finally they should... be able to make memorable moments that we will never forget.

The student view
What did the students learn from the pupils?
by Sarah Brewster

When the primary education teachers were told that we would be taught about coasts by year 4/5 pupils, we approached the day with a little trepidation. We all thought the idea of being taught by pupils was exciting, but what could they teach us as trainee teachers? The pupils showed us that this question was entirely unfounded.

The key learning points of the day were the ways in which pupils felt that geography should be taught. Far from being sat behind a desk, we were taught by groups of six pupils, who used games and poems to teach us about longshore drift. These activities not only got the whole group up on their feet and participating, but really helped us to remember the key teaching points.

The kinaesthetic activities led me to consider how I could make my own geography lessons more engaging and inclusive. Even the most reluctant geographers, which I can sometimes be, were fully immersed in learning through the exciting and engaging activities.

The pupils applied so much of their own knowledge, and we learned so much from them. It really made me consider how my own teaching can be so often limited to learning facts. The pupils’ enthusiasm for geography was infectious, and their understanding taught us all - be it geography facts, or an insight into what makes a good geography teacher.

Acknowledgements
With thanks to pupils from The Wyche CE Primary School, Malvern, and primary education students from the University of Worcester.

Nick Pett is a year 4/5 teacher at The Wyche CE Primary School, Malvern. Sarah Brewster is a primary education student at the University of Worcester.
To celebrate moving on in geography to a secondary school in Altrincham, Matthew, Paul and Arthur discuss some small-scale research into the transition of pupils from year 6 to year 7.

While the fact that the purpose of study and the aims of the geography curriculum at key stages 1 and 2 are identical to those at key stage 3 (DfE, 2013a, b) may raise questions about progression from primary to secondary schools, it does highlight a unity of purpose across primary and secondary geography. The importance of effective transition is widely recognised, with evidence of general research into issues promoting continuity and progression for pupils (see, for example, Powell et al., 2006). However, there is relatively little research on this topic that is specific to geography.

It is worth noting that two-thirds of a pupil’s entitlement to geography occurs in the primary phase. Moreover, as Wendy Morgan (1996) has noted, there is an obvious need for liaison between primary and secondary teachers of geography. Indeed, Morgan has further argued for ‘teachers of older primary pupils to be aware of the expectations of their secondary colleagues and the way geography will be presented in the first term of secondary education’ (1996).

Thus, our aim here was to explore two main areas of geography with year 7 pupils: first, the challenges and opportunities of teaching geography to pupils in year 7 (the first year in secondary school for the majority of pupils in England); and, second, year 7 pupils’ memories of what geography they learned at primary school – in terms of what they learned geography was, as well as how this information can be used to aid a smooth transition and learning experience between primary and secondary school.

Our evidence is based upon a piece of small-scale research carried out in 2015 with 30 pupils during their transition from year 6 to year 7. Some aspects of the cohort are common – for example, the wide range of feeder primaries and the diversity of geographical learning these pupils bring; while others are particular to the school – for example, the nature of the intake.

Altrincham Grammar School for Boys (AGSB) has Academy Status and is a non-fee-paying school, with admission via an entrance exam. The school welcomes around 180 pupils into year 7 each year from up to 67 feeder primaries with a very diverse intake – pupils arrive from state primary schools as well as private (independent) preparatory schools; it also includes a much higher than average intake (30-40%) of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Many of the pupils are well travelled, which can have an impact on their curiosity about the world and their geographical knowledge of it. These factors bring opportunities and challenges, not least in the variety of geographical experiences pupils have had.

Teacher perspectives
In an attempt to capture the diversity of pupils’ geographical experiences at primary level, two major teaching and learning activities are carried out in the first half term of year 7. First, a base-lining activity, which helps us to identify pupil knowledge, understanding and skills; and, second, pupils construct a ‘geography passport’ in which they outline their personal geographies, memories of geography in primary school and interests. (The latter could also be used as a transition activity with year 6 pupils to assess the impact of geography provision through pupils’ memories.)

As stated above many pupils in the intake are well travelled and they often express a wish to make links between the subject and places they have visited. In some cases this can provide particular challenges. For example, those pupils who have strong links with the Indian sub-continent (i.e. have lived or travelled in India) may have much deeper understandings of those places than others. In other cases pupil knowledge and experience of a place can be a useful resource during discussions or to challenge other pupils’ misconceptions. Interestingly, given the socio-economic intake of the pupils, some seem more prepared to conceptualise deprivation in distant places than in the Greater Manchester area or the North-west of England.

In terms of curriculum coverage and pedagogy there is a concerted effort to make the geography lessons in year 7 interesting. This includes:

- a focus on enquiry and skills using a range of maps at different scales
- a requirement for pupils to research a range of places at a global level
- work on futuristic cities, whereby pupils look at particular developments in the Manchester area and which helps to consolidate pupils’ enquiry skills
- a focus on volcanoes and tectonics in terms of physical geography, and
- pupils learn about sustainability by exploring their own eco-footprint on the world.

While the above activities provide a balance of human, physical and environmental geography, given the diversity of experiences at primary level, care has to be taken to build on pupils’ learning rather than repeating it.

The most important thing for the teachers is that pupils leave year 7 with a real interest in, and love of, geography that stays with them throughout school and beyond (this links to the purpose of study in the National Curriculum – see DfE, 2013a, b). Our aim is to build on the knowledge and skills developed during the primary phase, while moving pupils on from knowledge of places and location to understanding the interactions that ‘make’ those places. There is also a concerted effort to make the geography real, by linking to events in the news, but also by emphasising to pupils their role as active geographers in their relationship with the world.

Pupil perceptions
The following comments are based on an analysis of a sample of pupils’ notes in their ‘geography passports’ as well as responses to the open-ended prompt:

‘Before I came to AGSB I had already learned about these things in geography…’

While most pupils did note geographical experiences in their passports, a small minority confused the subject with history (for example, by mentioning the Second World War and D-Day as part of geography). Very few pupils noted little or no geography:

‘I have never learnt about geography at primary school.’
"The problem was we very rarely did geography at my school."

Obviously these are memories. It may have been the case that these pupils were taught geography, but in a cross-curricular or thematic manner and, therefore, the subject would have lacked a distinct ‘identity’. Analysing the qualitative responses, pupils’ memories of the subject fall broadly into three equally represented areas:

1. physical geographies
2. map work
3. place-based geographies.

1. Physical geographies
There is a clear focus on physical geography, with volcanoes and earthquakes topping the bill. However, only about one third of respondents shown in Figure 1 perceived the learning as geographical. This is particularly interesting, because the subject did not form an explicit part of Curriculum 2000 (QCA/DfEE, 1999). Continents are categorised under physical geography, but it may be that these aspects of geography were covered as part of developing understanding of spatial hierarchies. The other aspects covered are less surprising given the areas covered by the QCA scheme of work for primary geography (QCA/DfEE, 1998).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volcanoes/earthquakes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather/Climate</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceans</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polar regions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coasts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserts</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
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Figure 1: Year 7 pupils’ responses on particular aspects of physical geography in primary school.

2. Map work
Use of maps and map skills were also prominent in year 7 pupils’ memories of the geography they learned at primary school. As Figure 2 shows, there was a strong association of the subject with the skills aspect of using maps and/or atlases in learning geography with a clear focus on using symbols, keys and grid references, and drawing maps. From the pupils’ perceptions it seems that maps and atlases are placed at the heart of primary geography, which is good, but for the school the challenge is diversity of experiences.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Map reading</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas work</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keys</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing maps</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-figure grids</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compass</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
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<td>Longitude</td>
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<td>Google Earth</td>
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<td>Globe</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contours</td>
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<td>6-figure grids</td>
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<td>37</td>
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</table>

Figure 2: Year 7 pupils’ responses on particular aspects of map work in geography in primary schools.

3. Place-based geographies
Figure 3 illustrates how place-based geography was a key aspect of pupils’ memories of the subject in primary school: from the local to the global, and from general to the specific. Again, from the responses it is difficult to gauge what pupils’ specific learning was concerned with, but some pupils’ responses suggest it may have been about less complex, dynamic and nuanced aspects of places, for example:

“We mainly learned about the Africans and their dances.”

4. A note on fieldwork
Interestingly, not one pupil mentioned geographical fieldwork as an aspect of their provision at primary school. The closest mention was of ‘going to the Isle of Man’, but even of those pupils who learned about where they live, no one mentioned fieldwork. Fieldwork may well have happened, but the pupils did not readily view it as learning in geography.

Summary
The results of this research indicate that the aims and aspirations of teachers of geography at primary and secondary level are broadly similar, and that secondary colleagues wish to build on and develop from pupil experiences of primary geography. Primary colleagues have their challenges with the subject in a crowded curriculum and while time is allocated (in this case) there is the challenge of diversity of experiences at the primary phase. Perhaps most interesting was the fact that pupil memories of primary geography fell into the broad areas of map skills, human and physical geography – this is the imprint this cohort of pupils took from their primary schools. While this article raises many more questions than it provides answers to, it does help to highlight the similarities of expectations.

If there is one piece of advice we would give primary geography teachers, it is to strike up a learning conversation with your secondary counterparts. You never know where it might lead.

References
The results – general comments

The results indicate that, before the intervention, pupils were generally enthusiastic about learning outside, with the majority of them describing it as ‘fun’ or ‘exciting’ (Figure 1). Many pupils also asserted that ‘you could do or learn more [than in the classroom]’ and noted the specific activities that they enjoyed. However, over half (14 out of the 25 pupils) chose to draw a single subject – physical education – in order to illustrate outdoor learning (Figure 2). Asked to nominate the worst thing about learning outdoors, nearly as many (10 out of 25) identified ‘cold or wet weather’ (Figure 3).

Following the series of lessons outdoors, pupils’ responses to the statement completion activity were more varied and nuanced. Many pupils now thought the best things about learning outdoors were ‘the fresh air’ and ‘space’ (Figure 1) – thus reflecting much of the literature on outdoor learning. Their drawings of learning outdoors also showed a wider range of subjects. It was obvious from their responses that an outdoor history lesson on the Second World War was particularly memorable, because ten pupils chose to depict it (Figure 2). In addition, post-intervention, nearly two-thirds (16 out of 25) of the pupils could think of ‘nothing’ that was the ‘worst thing about learning outdoors’ (Figure 3).

The third sentence completion exercise (i.e. ‘Subjects that can be learnt outside include...’) revealed that before the lessons outdoors, most pupils recognised that many subjects could be learnt outdoors (see Figure 4), even if their drawings did not reflect this. Following the intervention, most pupils listed more subjects in response to this question, with only PE and science receiving the same number of nominations. It seems that, following the intervention, more pupils now recognised the potential for taking the learning outdoors across the curriculum.

In discussing outdoor activities with the focus group, the post-intervention responses included:

‘I think it’s really fun. You also get lots of fresh air and lots of space to run about, not like in the classroom’ (Amie)

‘If you want to write poems about outside and the wind, you can look all around you and get some inspiration... and it can help you concentrate because it is difficult to concentrate on work when it gets hot and stuffy in the classroom.’ (Jen)

‘You can do nearly every subject [outside]’ (Adam)
As asked about their post-intervention drawings of outdoor activities, the pupils described what they had drawn. Jen had drawn children pretending to be soldiers in the Second World War and described it as ‘learning in topic or history’. Adam had drawn a PE lesson where children were paired up, playing tennis. Fabian had drawn volcanoes erupting, and said it was better to do this lesson outside because it would make a mess in the classroom. Jen had drawn four different activities: children being evacuees; a maths activity with children measuring perimeters; children playing tennis; and a science lesson of children making models of volcanoes. All of her pictures illustrated activities that the class had done outside during the six-week intervention period.

As asked about the worst things about learning outdoors, the focus group reported potential disadvantages. Amie commented:

‘It not that I don’t like working outdoors, but I can never concentrate because there’s lots of space to run about and I get excited... But I remember of one time that I did concentrate outside. It was a maths lesson when I had to concentrate because it was tricky’.

Adam discussed difficulties with recording work, stating:

‘If we’re working on a piece of paper, sometimes it flies away, or when you’re trying to write things down in the clipboard it keeps flying everywhere.’

As asked in conclusion if children of their age learned more outdoors, Fabian and Jen answered ‘yes’, and gave examples. Adam was ambivalent, feeling:

‘that it made learning more exciting, but the sounds outside, such as the birds and wind, made it difficult to concentrate’. Amie also felt that there were lots of distractions.

---

**Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outdoor activity drawing and description</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-intervention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post-intervention</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Exercise (subject) (e.g. football, tennis, lacrosse, ball skills, gymnastics)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (e.g. plants, nature hunts, materials, making volcanoes erupt)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths (e.g. perimeter of playground, sums using chalk on the ground)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSHCE (circle time)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic/History – Second World War (e.g. building shelters, acting being soldiers, being evacuated)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (e.g. poetry)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: The subject of pupils’ drawings and descriptions of learning outside before and after the intervention. Note: some phrases/words were used more than once, hence totals are greater than 25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases/words used in responses</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-intervention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post-intervention</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold/rain</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing specific things they don’t like doing outside (e.g. Maths, English)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall over/Get hurt</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insect (bites or stings)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds flying around</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harder to concentrate/easy to get distracted</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get tired if they are running</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper might fly away</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harder to listen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Pupils’ responses to ‘The worst thing about learning in the school grounds is...’ before and after the intervention. Note: some phrases/words were used more than once, hence totals are greater than 25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-intervention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post-intervention</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSHCE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>157</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Pupils’ responses to the sentence completion activity: ‘Subjects that can be learnt outside are...’ Note: pupils listed numerous subjects, hence totals are greater than 25.
outdoors, more pupils identified these subjects as ones that could be learnt outside. It seems, however, that not all of the pupils were able to generalise from this that learning outside can involve all subjects. This is disappointing given that all school sites have great potential for learning key geographical concepts and skills in a familiar, safe and immediately accessible environment – as shown in Figure 5.

Overall, this small-scale action research project revealed that key stage 2 pupils relish opportunities to ‘take the learning outside’ and appreciate the rich potential of learning in the school grounds. These pupils remembered the lessons they had been taught outside, and were enthusiastic for more. In order to support teachers in developing their outdoor learning, a consortium of organisations has designated 2015–16 ‘The year of fieldwork’. The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography: Local Fieldwork (Tanner and Whittle, 2015) also provides a wealth of ideas for geographical enquiries for primary pupils to undertake in their school grounds and the immediate local area. It should inspire you to go outside and exploit the opportunities for pupils to engage in rich geographical learning outside your classroom door.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of geography</th>
<th>2014 National Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Enquiry, geographical skills and fieldwork</em></td>
<td>• Asking and answering questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Planning and undertaking geographical enquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicating the outcome of enquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Making and using plans/maps/photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using directional and locational language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using a compass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fieldwork skills – observing, identifying, recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Studying places – locational and place knowledge</em></td>
<td>Location of the school grounds in context – local area, region, national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place knowledge – physical and human geographical features, and their distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Physical, human and environmental geography</em></td>
<td><em>Physical geography</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• landscape features (e.g. slopes, water drainage patterns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the weather, seasonal changes and weather patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• plants and animals, different habitats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• rocks and soils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Human geography</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• land use and the location of activities (e.g. car park, playground, field, wildlife area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• buildings (e.g. use of space, building materials and architectural styles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• journeys and the movement of people, goods and ideas (e.g. routes around the site, deliveries to school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• jobs in school and services provided (e.g. catering, technical, administrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Environmental geography</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• change and development on the school site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• caring for the environment and the planet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• sustainability and environmental responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Aspects of the geography National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) that can be investigated in the school grounds.

References


WEB RESOURCES

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom: www.lotc.org.uk
Field Studies Council: www.field-studies-council.org
Learning through Landscapes: www.ltl.org.uk

Previously a teacher at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, Harrogate, Gemma Whawell is now Deputy Head teacher at Thorner CE Primary School in Leeds. Julia Tanner is an educational consultant, editor of The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography series and a member of the GA’s Early Years and Primary Phase Committee.
Everyday Guide to Primary Geography: Story
Julia Tanner and Jane Whittle
Sheffield: Geographical Association, 2013
Pb., 210x297mm, 36pp, £15.99
ISBN 978-1-84377-329-0

This is a great resource for both specialist and non-specialist geography teachers to use as a starting point when teaching geography. It provides a number of lesson activities and ideas for 15 story books that can be used by a range of ages as well as providing evidence of curriculum criteria for each book.

The first few pages highlight the importance and the benefits children can get through using a story book in a geography lesson - it provides cross-curricular links, stories can be used to engage and excite the children and to broaden children’s horizons. As yet, I have not used a story in my geography lessons, but this book has highlighted some invaluable qualities that I have been missing out on.

It is an extremely easy-to-use resource and although it only focuses on 15 books, the activities suggested are easy to adapt and therefore could be used with other story books. For each double spread, there are additional web-based resources such as activity sheets and examples of pupils work, which I liked as I found this was a great opportunity to extend the children’s learning and enthusiasm. Altogether, I found this a very useful and easy resource to use and will definitely be using stories in my geography lessons in the future.

Charlotte Mortimore,
PGCE QTS Geography specialist

Teaching Geography Creatively
Stephen Scoffham (ed)
London: Routledge, 2013
Pb., 174x245mm, 202pp., £19.99

This book includes numerous ideas to help bring geography alive in the classroom. It covers suggestions for all aspects of the subject including physical, human and environmental geography. Some of the ideas that it provides are based around games, stories or outdoor learning as well as map work, all of which will attempt to make geography in the primary classroom much more interesting and exciting for the pupils.

This action-packed book is very relevant as it is linking all of its work to the requirements of the new curriculum, making it very current and up to date. It is aimed at primary school teachers and really concentrates on ways and means of bringing geography alive in the classroom. This will enhance learning, with the goal of developing a higher rate of pupil progress in the subject. One way that Stephen Scoffham believes in doing this is to make geography a much more cross-curricular subject, and this book shows some superb examples of how this can be done in subjects such as history, mathematics, music and art. The book is laid out well and very effectively provides teachers with the appropriate information they need to make every geography lesson exciting and motivating.

Having obtained some great ideas from this book, there isn’t much that can be made better. Perhaps as science and geography often overlap, it might have been nice to have some more exciting ideas about making geography cross-curricular with science. Apart from this, I would definitely recommend the text book for teachers, both geography specialists and non-specialists.

Christina Warwick,
PGCE QTS Geography specialist

I Want to Know... What makes it snow?
Paul Humphrey and Helena Ramsay
London: Evans, 2011
Pb., 148x210mm, 32pp., £3.99

This book is part of the I Want to Know series and gives a detailed account for key stage 1 pupils about reasons why it snows and the activities that may be possible in the snow. What makes the book particularly engaging for teachers is its layout. The book can be read in multiple ways, either through the main body of the text or through telling the story through the speech bubbles, which allows for re-reading the book and taking both fictional and non-fictional approaches to the book.

What Makes it Snow? gives a wealth of information about the topic of snow and as a class read this may be overwhelming. However, taken over an extended period of time, each page lends itself to interesting investigations and activities relating to weather. These include, but are not limited to: frost, animal and plant adaptation in the snow and icicle formation.

The book also has a contents page and an index page, which allows teachers to model the function of non-fiction texts using a book with a geographical focus; it therefore has a multifaceted role within the classroom library and would be an engaging way to teach about weather. It would spark curiosity and encourage questions from different perspectives thus promoting higher order thinking skills in your pupils.

Jane Whittle,
International School, Bologna
El Salvador Geography education pack

Includes:
- an illustrated map
- photo cards
- classroom activities
- 12 short films

cafod.org.uk/geography

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St Teresa’s RC Primary School

The year 6 residential visit to FSC is one to be remembered not only by the children but also the adults. FSC is an ideal place to take the children for outdoor activities but also develop life skills. It was great to be given the opportunity to let the children take part in different experiences and encourage them to be out of their comfort zone.

St John’s CE Primary School

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PRESENTER
Nell Lee, Consultant to the GA

www.geography.org.uk/outside

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The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography is a new series that aims to encourage active ‘curriculum making’ in geography by providing stimulating ideas that can be adapted, extended or modified to meet the needs and interests of individual classes and schools. All the activities are ‘tried and tested’ and demonstrate how everyday and easily accessible resources, used creatively, can enhance and enrich pupils’ geographical learning.

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FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS AND GEOGRAPHY SUBJECT LEADERS

Birmingham Tuesday 10 November 2015
London Tuesday 17 November 2015
Leeds Saturday 12 March 2016
Manchester Thursday 17 March 2016

OVERVIEW
This course will help you successfully lead primary geography and raise the standard of geography teaching and learning in your school. Join us to develop your understanding of geography’s core knowledge and skills and consider the successful application of the subject in relevant and exciting contexts. You will also find out about geography’s contribution to other subject areas and whole-school dimensions such as global learning, sustainability, values and Learning Outside the Classroom.

PRESENTERS
Birmingham/London: Nell Lee, Consultant to the GA
Manchester/Leeds: Jessica Hill, Advanced Skills Teacher, Alwoodley Primary School, Leeds

www.geography.org.uk/leadingprimary

OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY
FOR PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY SUBJECT LEADERS

Leeds Thursday 26 November 2015
Manchester Saturday 5 December 2015

OVERVIEW
This course will help you to provide stimulating geography teaching and learning that will inspire and enthuse both pupils and other members of staff. We will consider what constitutes high-quality geographical knowledge and skills, and how to plan for and evidence it. Taking a wider view, we will investigate how aspects of SMSC and British values can be taught in the context of geography.

PRESENTER
Jessica Hill, Advanced Skills Teacher, Alwoodley Primary School, Leeds

www.geography.org.uk/outstanding

PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY FOR THE NON-SPECIALIST
FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS WHO ARE NOT GEOGRAPHY SPECIALISTS

Manchester Wednesday 11 November 2015
London Thursday 12 November 2015
Leeds Friday 10 June 2016
Birmingham Friday 17 June 2016

OVERVIEW
This course will support non-specialist teachers in developing geography in relation to the 2014 National Curriculum. It will support their subject understanding and the development of outstanding practice within the subject. Considering the question ‘What is geography?’, the day will also look at geographical skills, place and locational knowledge, progression and the subject’s contribution to the wider curriculum. The day will include presentations, group discussion and practical activities, including planning for a geographical enquiry into distant places.

PRESENTER
Ben Ballin, Consultant to the GA

www.geography.org.uk/nonspec

GEOGRAPHY THROUGH TALK
FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS AND GEOGRAPHY SUBJECT LEADERS

Bristol Monday 7 December 2015
London Friday 20 May 2016
Manchester Thursday 23 June 2016

OVERVIEW
This course will provide primary teachers with strategies to develop talk within geography. It will focus on the use of speculative and exploratory talk and make connections with geography and discursive writing to support outstanding practice in geography in line with the National Curriculum. It will also develop place, locational knowledge and approaches to fieldwork supported by an enquiry framework.

PRESENTER
Sarah Whitehouse, PGCE Programme Leader and Senior Lecturer, University of the West of England

www.geography.org.uk/talk
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- Downloadable activity sheets

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- Tried and tested activities to enhance geographical learning
- Online resources including activity sheets and examples of pupils’ work
- Key vocabulary and cross-curricular links

The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography: Local Fieldwork provides inspiring and stimulating fieldwork-based enquiries in your school grounds and immediate environment.

The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography: Art demonstrates how to use works of art to stimulate and enrich geography teaching and learning.

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