



Support units: Professional practice

Overview

Questions students might spontaneously ask

Some basic questions which students might spontaneously ask (or have asked) their geography teacher:

1. How do sailors know exactly where they are when they are in mid-ocean?
2. Can it really rain 'cats and dogs'?
3. What are Britain's most important industries nowadays?
4. Is it more important to be in the Commonwealth or the European Community?
5. Are there any parts of the world still unexplored? If so, which parts?
6. How does an 'atlas' get its name?
7. If all flat map projections are distortions of a curved globe, which one is best?
8. What is the monsoon and why does it happen?
9. Why are some farmers paid not to grow crops when other people are starving?
10. Which is the world's biggest city (and how can we be sure)?
11. Who owns Antarctica?
12. If the continents are drifting apart, are the oceans getting smaller?
13. Why does the polarity of a compass sometimes reverse?
14. Why do trees split open when struck by lightning (whereas people don't)?
15. What do tidal waves have to do with tides?
16. Where, supposedly, was the Garden of Eden?
17. Why do clouds look 'fluffy' and what are they made of?
18. Why is the sea salty?
19. Why is the Prime Meridian (0 degrees longitude) where it is?
20. Why do birds migrate and how do they find their way over long distances?
21. In what way may 'post-modernism' affect the teaching of geography?
22. How was coal formed – and is it still happening?
23. What is the most important thing that the study of geography teaches us?
24. Which is more likely to come – another ice-age or a meltdown?

25. What is the difference between a hurricane and a tornado?
26. Why does the sun seem larger at sunrise and sunset than at mid-day?
27. What exactly is a 'wind-chill figure' and how is it calculated?
28. Why does a compass point to the north?
29. Will there ever be a Fourth (or Fifth?) World?
30. What causes a thunderstorm?
31. Who, what or where is Shangri-la?
32. Which country has the highest density of population and why?
33. How were the West Indies named and what do they have to do with India?
34. Is it better to give aid or develop trade with poorer countries?
35. How did America get its name?
36. Is geography more important than history?
37. Which countries don't belong to the United Nations and why?
38. What or where is the Mappa Mundi and why is it so important?
39. Does everybody have an innate 'sense of direction' and if so, how?
40. Will 'down-town' city areas all eventually be replaced by out-of-town centres?

Teacher responses

In relation to the question which you are asked to answer:

- Prepare a brief answer (not more than 30 seconds) to give spontaneously 'in class'.
- Word-process a definitive answer in not more than 250 words on an A4 page.

Source: Walford, R. (1998) 'The questions they ask', *Teaching Geography*, 23(3), pp. 139–141.
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