Antarctica’s last wilderness

Cultural globalisation

Food security and the end of poverty

Italian Volcanoes

Journal of Sixth Form Geography students at CLFS
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All views expressed are those of the article authors, and not those of the geography department, City of London Freemen’s School or the Corporation of London.

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FOREWARD BY THE HEAD OF GEOGRAPHY:

I wish to congratulate the sixth form geographers for another fine publication. The fact that these articles have been written and created in the students’ spare time, on top of their busy AS and A2 courses is testament to their enthusiasm for the subject. The articles here cover a variety of topics but what ties them all together is the idea that geography is a dynamic, engaging and contemporary subject and it is always this aspect of geography that appeals to students.

Young people today are growing up in an increasingly globalised world, and international workplace and so geographical knowledge has never been more important.

Thanks too for the support of the Geographical Association, and the Independent School’s Special Interest Group.

Mr R C Bustin, Head of Geography, City of London Freemen’s School.

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Ellie Wall investigates the threats to one of Earth’s truly last wildernesses.

Lake Vostok is a sub glacial lake located in Antarctica. It is the 4th deepest lake and the 7th largest lake in volume, on the Earth. Lake Vostok is said to have lost contact with the atmosphere 15 million years ago, yet it was discovered by the Russians in 1956. It is currently the largest discovered sub glacial lake in Antarctica of which there are 379.

The lake is 240 kilometres long, 50 kilometres wide and hundreds of metres deep. Lake Vostok itself lies in a sub glacial topographic basin which varies in depth; it is at least 1000 metres deep in the south, but gets increasingly shallow in the north and the southwest corners.

Lake Vostok was formed years before the ice cap formed above it, which creates possibilities life could have been present in the past. In addition, the extreme pressure of the weight of the ice at 350 atmospheres, causes the Lake to remain in a liquid state beneath the ice.

Antarctica is the coldest and windiest continent on the planet. It is also covered by the largest single mass of ice on the earth. For these reasons it provides geographers across the globe the opportunity to discover new exciting features and
processes never discovered before. As a result research is constantly taking place in Antarctica for many different reasons and objectives.

Discoveries are so important in Antarctica, because they are usually fundamental to changing our view on creatures and formations found there or have never been seen before. The thick ice sheet which covers Antarctica has large bodies of water hidden underneath. This intrigues many people who want to find out much more about what is withheld underneath.

The threats

Contamination

For many years Russian scientists along with a limited number of other countries have been drilling into Lake Vostok in the hope of reaching the liquid part of the lake so they can take a sample and test for living organisms. The original theory living creatures could exist was due to the fact the lake could have been in the past connected to the ocean and therefore could contain saltwater. Also it is rumoured there are hydrothermal vents at the bottom of the lake, pumping energy and nutrients into the water. This could contribute to the reasons as to why life might exist in Lake Vostok. In February 2012 a Russian team broke through into the lake and took a sample in which they discovered life did exist under the thick layer of ice. This was a massive discovery which millions of people across the world took interest in. Thousands of different microscopic species were identified as a result of these findings. They were classified into different groups using statistical analysis methods. Investigations by Bowling Street State University in Ohio, also explored two ice core sections from two different sections of the Lake. Overall, over 3,500 different species were discovered. Within this, 94% were bacterium and 6% were more complex organism called eukaryotes, which are single-celled or multicellular organism whose cells contain a distinct membrane-bound nucleus. The discovery of these organisms may suggest for the species to live in such an extreme environment for several millions of years, the only explanation could be that Lake Vostok has recycled its limited supply of carbon, showing that Lake Vostok has produced a sustainable ecosystem.

Although this discovery has meant many possibilities of life in very unusual conditions has been found, it has brought about many threats to Lake Vostok. Firstly, the drill used to break into the Lake could possibly be contaminated. The drill which was used too pierce through the ice sheet in 2012 by the Russians used kerosene to keep the borehole open. The borehole is the deep narrow hole in the ground which is needed to reach the water in the lake. The data being collected is from the surface of the lake because it is difficult to reach the massive depth the lake ranges to. Yet the important sample which has been collected and analysed from the lake could be rumoured to be contaminated by the kerosene. Kerosene could produce microbes which may resemble possible life in the Lake. Nevertheless it must be taken into account these are just rumours from extremely sceptic people around the globe and important matches of bacterium and eukaryotes have been discovered.

NASA research

NASA has always had lots of interest in Lake Vostok due to

Life might exist in Lake Vostok
the possibilities of never before seen features existing under the thick layer of ice. NASA has always wanted to send probes down because of the possible link with new breakthroughs on Europa. In 1999, funding was approved for a probe called, ‘Cryobot’. This probe would venture through the ice cap and then as it reached the liquid state of the lake it would decontaminate itself. Then once inside the lake a ‘hydrobot’ equipped to roam the lake with a camera and other features would be released. However this would have proposed a serious risk for the lake. Although the decontamination process would take place there are always dangers that parts of the robot could separate or the contamination process may not work. This is because the robot is very complicated to construct, as a result small pieces could possibly fall. Also it may not cope with the conditions underneath the ice because no one knows what the true conditions will actually be like. The malfunctioning of the robot could result in chemicals being released, which may possibly produce contamination. In addition, the decontamination process may be proven and tested to remove all possible dangers to the lake. But when the probe reaches this stage just before the lake the process may take place at a different rate. Also, there is also no actual evidence the process has been completed successfully. The probe may be able to send messages back but there is no way researchers could completely prove that it has been successful. Thus there is still a high chance that NASA’s proposed investigations could cause large hazards to the wellbeing of Lake Vostok.

**Extreme weather**
Lake Vostok is located in East Antarctica, which means the weather conditions experienced by the lake are extreme, intense and life threatening to people working with the lake. The coldest temperature on Earth was recorded on a mountain near the lake. It reached the vast temperature of -89 degrees Celsius. The team which have, and are currently, investigating Lake Vostok face intense weather conditions. The freezing weather could cause hypothermia which can be a life threatening problem if it is not treated properly. The hazards of just simply getting trapped and isolated because of the poor communication systems are also a vast threat. This could result in a loss of life if a worker gets into danger, as rescuing an unknown casualty will not be able to occur and even if it did it would prove difficult due to the intense weather conditions. The weather conditions propose many threats because humans will have to adapt to the changes in their environment. Possible accidents and wrongly forecasted weather could put people working with the lake in vast danger. As a
result, this is an important threat which needs to be recognised and at all costs avoided.

**Bad publicity**
The media play a large role in any large or significant research process worldwide. However, the media is very powerful and incorporates views from many different parties. As a result, articles and reports produced could influence readers to develop a sufficient and positive understanding about current research taking place. In contrast, it could lead the research process of track and influence people into believing facts which aren’t true. For example the problem of potential contamination in Lake Vostok is greatly exaggerated by the media. The media will print copies of articles which propose that Lake Vostok is already contaminated or is going to be contaminated to frighten people into thinking a new, pristine environment is going to be damaged. The media reporting in this way may lead to an on-going stream of further problems, because all interested parties will begin to speculate and spread rumours. It could result in support for the project being lost or even opposition groups protesting against the research taking place. This proves how powerful the media can be.

**Conclusion:**
Overall Lake Vostok is facing many threats, but it could be argued the problems which the lake is facing are only of minor significance. This is because the potential results which could be found would greatly outweigh the threats of finding them.

The biggest and most prominent threat the lake faces is the possibility of contamination. This is the largest threat, because contamination could ruin or impact all life that had been discovered within Lake Vostok. Again, it may also mean further breakthroughs may not be possible because the Lake would be unnatural as it could contain damaging chemicals such as Kerosene. There is always a risk involved with carrying out investigations, but contamination must be avoided at all costs, because it would be detrimental to the future of the only newly discovered Lake Vostok. This could present a barrier to further research taking place if contamination did occur. Other threats are also very significant. However, the intense weather conditions and the media’s influence do not directly impact the nature of the lake in any way. These two threats are related more closely with the threats Lake Vostok faces due to the research taking place. Overall, my report has reached a definite judgement that Lake Vostok faces numerous threats, but the biggest threat the lake is facing is the risk of contamination from drilling and sending NASA probes too deep within the lake.

*Ellie Wall is an U6 geographer, and is due to read geography at University.*
Ellie Turner investigates food security.

As population levels begin to rise, so does the amount of food and energy consumption, leading to an increasing demand on resources and the environment. Despite this, developments in agriculture and nuclear power mean that many people believe that these pressures are inexistent. This is not the case at all, and with 1 billion people in Africa, Latin America and Asia recently gaining “middle class” status, the pressure on resources is at the highest it has ever been. This increase in size of the “consuming class” is already beginning to have effects, and current patterns of consumption in some parts of the world are no longer sustainable. Currently, the global average consumption of plant energy per person is 6000 calories per day and consequently the Earth’s carrying capacity is 11 billion people. If average consumption were to rise to 9000 calories per day then the carrying capacity is reduced to 7.5 billion people. This is a startling fact considering our population is currently 7 billion people, with average consumption bound to rise in the near future due to the ubiquitous fast food restaurants and easily accessible cheap calorific food. It leads to question how geographers and governments plan to cope with this rising food consumption in the future- especially considering this era of “cheap food” will not last long. One plan is to cut back on unsustainable meat rich diets, an idea that the UK government began to encourage in households across Britain back in 2013. Current meat diets are unsustainable as the livestock that is killed for this meat consumes much of the world’s crops, reducing food availability. They also consequently use up large amounts of freshwater, fertilisers and pesticides. Meat-rich diets have also led to increases in the price of grain (used for animal feed) as

The UK is “never more than a few days away from a significant food shortage”
well as widespread deforestation and pressure on agricultural land as the production of livestock has increased. A recent UN report claims that “Agriculture, particularly meat and dairy products, accounts for 70% of global freshwater consumption, 38% of the total land use and 19% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.” Shockingly, as much as a third of the world’s fish catch is ground up to feed farm animals instead of being used for human consumption, causing a major impact on species that prey on the fish as well as humans. It is for these reasons that the international development select committee claim that the increase in meat eating is one of the many factors that have caused the recent food crises in the developing world. They believe that going vegetarian for a few meals a week is an easy step to take with vital positive impacts on both personal health (cutting back on meat is also linked to a decreased risk of cancer and heart disease) and global food sustainability, reducing the pressure of rising food consumption. They are consequently urging the government to start a public health campaign to encourage people to change their behaviour.

Another way of tackling the effects of rising consumption levels is to cut back food waste. The Guardian writes, “A report from the government’s waste advisory group Wrap showed Britons were throwing away the equivalent of 24 meals a month, adding up to 4.2m tonnes of food and drink every year that could have been consumed. One-fifth of what households buy ends up as waste, and around 60% of that could have been eaten.” Considering the pressing issue of rising consumption levels, it is important that all excess food is either eaten or used sustainably. In 2013 the UK government unveiled a national campaign that aimed to ban all food waste going to landfill by 2020. Instead of being thrown into landfill, the government hopes that food will be recycled to provide energy and heat, as well as benefits for agriculture. These benefits for agriculture would in turn again help reduce the pressure of rising consumption levels, as the nutrients from food waste would ensure that
crop harvest is both healthy and plentiful. It is also likely to ensure that nutrients and compost are even cheaper for farmers to access, meaning that more can be used.

Additionally, the UK government are prioritising increasing Britain's food production as they warn that the UK is "never more than a few days away from a significant food shortage" due to heavy reliance on imports. 93% of imported food and drink arrives by sea through nearly 50 ports, but the majority of it arrives through the key 6- London, Dover, Liverpool, Felixstowe, Grimsby and Immingham. All of these ports are "potentially vulnerable to storm surges and coastal damage", which could potentially leave Britain with higher food prices or a lack of food altogether. The government aims to develop a "meanwhile" lease for landowners and voluntary groups wishing to set up temporary allotments on land awaiting development. This would decrease the pressure of rising consumption as people are growing and eating their own food, relying on their own allotments instead of imports.

On the other hand, many controversially suggest that GM crops are the way to solve all problems regarding consumption pressures and food sustainability. Many people believe that GM crops are an ‘easy way out’, providing a way to increase food productivity in the UK without having to turn wild areas into fields for farmers. However, those in opposition claim that the crops are a health risk, although no research has ever produced any credible evidence to support this. The report to the Council for Science and Technology, which advises David Cameron, has urged the government to reconsider GM crops, claiming that “Britain and Europe are likely to soon fall behind other parts of the world where GM crops have been embraced”. It would therefore be unsurprising if GM crops became the ‘norm’ in supermarkets and houses across the country in the near future.

With many options for governments to take, it may appear as though the UK does not have to worry too much about rising consumption levels. However, many of these plans are ‘easier said than done’, and it is up to the government to effectively put them into place. Only time will tell just how sufficiently rising consumption levels have been managed, and whether or not the food we are producing today is adequately sustainable.

Ellie Turner is a L6 geographer.
Inspired by a TED lecture from renowned statistician Hans Rosling, televised on BBC2 entitled ‘Don’t Panic- the Truth about Population’, Ben Leslie decided to investigate some of the claims made about issues of development.

In the presentation, Hans Rosling gave viewers an insight into the statistics of our world with data explaining poverty levels, countries’ income and different rates of birth, death and fertility. He also demonstrated the ignorance of British citizens on topics such as global illiteracy levels and world fertility rates. He believes that most people are living in the past and that the gap between the Western world and the third world, or the rich and the poor, is now almost non-existent. Here I would like to discuss whether it is possible to truly eradicate extreme poverty and hunger on a global scale in 20 years’ time, which was the question Hans Rosling was primarily trying to answer. This goal was set by the UN in the Rio+20 conference held in July, 2012, Brazil. Here they set out new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) to replace the old Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) which are due

The actual goal set was to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty (living on less than $1.25 a day) to below 15% by 2015.
to expire in 2015. The MDG’s were set in September 2000 by the United Nations.

The United Nations is an international organisation founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights—as quoted on the UN official website. The UN provides a forum for its 193 Member States to express their views through the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and many other bodies and committees. The work of the United Nations reaches every corner of the globe and its specialised agencies, funds and programmes affect many lives across all of the continents.

The UN deals with five fundamental global issues which are entitled Peace and Security, Development, Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs and International Law. These can then be divided into many different individual programmes and missions dealing with specific problems identified throughout the world. The MDG’s set in 2000 was a new initiative, part of the Development section, which principally deals with reducing poverty, promoting prosperity and protecting the planet.

World leaders committed their nations to 8 MDG’s that were to be achieved by 2015. These 8 MDG’s were; eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, to achieve universal primary education, to promote gender equality and empower women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and to achieve a global partnership for development. To attain these goals the Secretary General has launched various initiatives,
including the Zero Hunger Challenge.

The MDG that most interests me is the first, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The actual goal set was to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty (living on less than $1.25 a day) to below 15% by 2015. The UN wanted to then evaluate their progress and move forward, enabling them to eradicate extreme poverty entirely by 2025. The following is taken from the 2011 UN Millennium Goals Report discussing their progress on MDG 1.

"Robust growth in the first half of the decade reduced the number of people in developing countries living on less than $1.25 a day from about 1.8 billion in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2005. At the same time, the corresponding poverty rate dropped from 46 per cent to 27 per cent. The economic and financial crisis that began in the advanced countries of North America and Europe in 2008 sparked declines in commodity prices, trade and investment, resulting in slower growth globally. However despite these declines current trends suggest that the momentum of growth in the developing world remains strong enough to sustain the progress needed to reach the global poverty reduction target. Based on recently updated projections from the World Bank, the overall poverty rate is still expected to fall below 15 per cent by 2015, indicating that the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target can be met. By 2015, the number of people in developing countries living on less than $1.25 a day is projected to fall below 900 million.” Ban Ki-Moon-Secretary-General, UN

768 million people in the world do not have access to safe drinking water. This is roughly one in ten of the world’s population.

These encouraging words issued in the report suggest that we are on target for reducing the numbers currently living in extreme poverty significantly by 2015. However, 900 million people is still a monumental figure and I believe our planet can do much more to reduce this figure at a much quicker rate. I believe that the eradication of poverty cannot be brought completely about by charity but first and foremost we need to empower the poor and focus on encouraging women to be proactive and stand up for themselves in society. It is known that women fall into poverty more easily and more frequently than men and consequently there are many more women currently struggling in poverty than men. Ending discrimination against women and promoting gender equality are critical for poverty eradication, especially in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia where women’s rights is still a major issue.

Hunger and malnutrition were the worst manifestations of poverty and in 2011, 24,000 people died each day from hunger and hunger related diseases and 14,000 of them were children. The chronically hungry cannot grow out of poverty because of a vicious cycle. Efforts should be and need to be intensified to reduce the proportion of malnourished people if MDG 1 wants to be met.

A sufficient supply of safe and clean water and a clean environment are also necessary for life and at the moment, statistics show that this is a drastic issue. 768 million people in the world do not have access to safe drinking water. This is roughly one in ten of the world’s population. Around 700,000 children die every year from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation which is almost 2,000 children a day. Various charities are the main driving force behind the
campaign that is trying to reduce this massive figure. WaterAid is a British based charity that, in their own words, “works together with the poorest and most marginalised communities to set up practical and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene projects that meet their real needs.”

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the global health situation. If we are trying to eradicate extreme poverty, health in countries especially located in Africa needs to be sufficiently improved. To do this, programmes of preventive medicine, including immunization and control of infectious diseases, should be implemented such as the Roll Back Malaria initiative. This programme was set up by the UN its overall strategy aims to ‘reduce malaria morbidity and mortality by reaching universal coverage and strengthening health systems.’

Finally education is the key to development in poorer countries. Quality basic education, as well as secondary and higher education, professional training, and skill acquisition throughout life are indispensable tools to eradicate poverty. Today, there are still 125 million children who never attend school and another 150 million children who drop out before they can read or write. Also, global inequalities in the provision of education are enormous. Today, a child in Mozambique can expect to go to school for two to three years, with luck. A five-year-old European or North American child can expect to spend 17 years in formal education. Oxfam, an international organisation that is trying to find solutions to poverty and related injustice around the world, is leading an education campaign to try and reduce global illiterate levels and kick-start people’s journey out of poverty.
An excellent example of many of these factors helping drive a country out of poverty is Bangladesh in Southern Asia, chiefly a Muslim country. In the last 50 years its population has tripled, from roughly 50 million to now more than 150 million people. It is a very densely populated country with 15 million people already living in the crowded capital city of Dhaka because of an increasing urbanisation rate in the past few decades. People nowadays are very concerned about family size and many are now only having 2 children because they cannot afford to have any more. In 1972 the average life expectancy in Bangladesh was less than 50 and its fertility rate was 7 (women on average had 7 children). However now the average life expectancy has increased dramatically to over 70 and the fertility rate has fallen to 2.2. This is because of a variety of reasons - but mostly because of government campaigning and a better education system. A popular government slogan in the capital city loosely translates to; “No more than 2 kids, 1 is even better”. This attitude has been encouraged by the government for many years now to try and reduce the fertility and birth rate which would then indirectly reduce the infant mortality rate. This is because the women would only have to look after 1 or 2 children instead of the traditional 6 or 7. The government were also very keen to encourage various methods of contraception and sent ‘advisors’ round handing out free condoms and pregnancy pills to try and empower the local women and encourage them to take control of their lives. The government put a large amount of time and efforts into increasing the number of women educated in Bangladesh and are now funding primary school education for everyone. Lessons are being taught on reducing family sizes and because of the increased number of Muslim girls going to school, there are more job opportunities for them. So it is not surprising that Bangladesh’s figures are now looking much better than 50 years ago and it is now looking like a much more developed country with a prosperous future. Bangladesh is not the only example of a country’s decreasing fertility and infant mortality rates boosting its population growth and development- but it is certainly one of the most successful. Bangladesh’s progress shows that improving woman’s rights, implementing a better education system and to some extent improving the healthcare facilities dramatically increases a countries chance of escaping poverty.

As we can see in Bangladesh if all or even some of the efforts mentioned above such as improving education systems, aiding water and food supplies ad empowering women are accomplished, I believe it will be possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2025 and eradicate poverty for good. However it will require every country to be 100% committed and at the moment this is not the case. Hans Rosling said that the “challenge of population growth is already being solved and the number of children has stopped growing. The challenge of extreme poverty has been greatly reduced and it is for the first time in history within our power to end it for good.”

Ben Leslie is a L6 geographer.
Emily Bushnell investigates the impact of Cuban migrants on the cultural geography of Miami, USA.

The Latin American population in the United States of America is growing into a key force in today’s American society. The dramatic increase in Hispanic migrants has changed the dynamics of American society as for every 10 people in the United States, 1 is of Latin American origin. However, nowhere in the US do as many Cubans reside in than Florida with 68% of all people of Cuban origin. In Miami-Dade County, Cubans form 52.71% of the Hispanic population which makes up over 65% of the total population. Considering Cubans only make up 3.5% of the total US population, this demonstrates the distinctive concentration of the Cuban population in Miami. Miguel A. De La Torre even goes as far as to say that Miami is the ‘Mecca’ for Cuban-Americans and ‘Miami is the capital of the imaginary nation of Exilic Cubans’.
Due to its proximity to Latin America, Miami has quickly become the ‘gateway’ for migrants seeking the American Dream. Prior to the revolution, the Cuban population in the US and in particular, Miami, was small.

The Cuban Revolution in 1959 resulted in a wave of Cuban immigrants who were unhappy under the new regime of Fidel Castro. In the early years of the revolutionary period over two hundred thousand Cubans are thought to have settled in the U.S.

Operation Pedro Pan was an organised mass migration of more than 14,000 children without their parents from December 1960. However, commercial flights between the USA and Cuba ended with the Missile Crisis in October 1962 and continued for a 3 year period. The only way to fly between the two countries was to travel through third countries such as Spain and Mexico.

Suddenly on April 20th, 1980, the Castro regime announced that all Cubans wishing to emigrate to the U.S. were free to board boats at the port of Mariel. This sudden announcement was triggered by 6 Cubans driving a bus through a fence at the Peruvian embassy and being granted political asylum on April 1st. Hundreds of thousands left Cuba in the ‘largest ever Cuban emigration in a single year’ as almost 3,000 Cubans were arriving every day at its peak.

The Wet-Foot-Dry-Foot policy grants up to 20,000 visas each year to Cubans and allows those who reach dry land in the U.S. to remain in the country but if they are intercepted out at sea, they will be returned back to Cuba.

Great efforts were made by the Cuban Refugee Program to ease the demographic and economic pressures of the arrival of great number of exiles. It established a resettlement program, providing transportation costs and help in finding

The percentage of the population of Hispanic origin in the counties of Florida.
accommodation, employment and financial aid until employed if necessary for families relocated away from Miami, most to New York, New Jersey, California and Illinois. However by 1972, many began to drift back to Miami. Most of the Mariel émigrés chose to stay in Miami where they could find employment in a familiar cultural environment and use their native language.

The Spanish Language

A staggering 65.61% of the population of Miami-Dade County speak Spanish in the home, as seen in Figure 4. According to the Cuban National Planning Council, ‘91.9% of Cubans in Miami spoke only Spanish at home and an additional 4% spoke mostly Spanish’. White Miamians often claim to feel like strangers in their own city when in some neighbourhoods it’s hard to find an English speaker. Cuban individuals can purchase a home or car, obtain specialised medical treatment, or consult with a lawyer or accountant without having to use any language but Spanish. They can also tune into Spanish radio and television, watch live theatre in Spanish and eat in Cuban restaurants where menus are in Spanish.

In 1976, The Miami Herald became the first in the country to publish a daily Spanish-language edition, El Herald.

However, this does not mean that Hispanics eschew English as 94.3% of Cuban-Americans born in the United States stated they spoke English well in the U.S. Census of 1980. In fact, English tends to replace Spanish as the leading language more and more in each generation – a sign that the newer generations are assimilating into American society more than past generations.

In 1963 the first bilingual program in a U.S. public school was founded. The ‘pioneer program’ at the Coral Way elementary school, had the main aim of teaching English to native Spanish speakers,
while also attempting to maintain Spanish-language skills among Spanish speakers and to teach Spanish to native English-speaking children as well.

In 1973, the Dade County Commission declared the county officially bilingual and bicultural.

Culture and Traditions

Most Cuban exiles have tried to hold on to some of their Cuban customs and traditions, several of them Catholic, for example baptisms and confirmations while embracing the U.S. culture as well. It is more common now for Cuban Americans to exchange presents on Christmas Day rather than on the Día de los Reyes Magos (Three Kings’ Day, or Epiphany) as was previously tradition. Most families still celebrate their daughters’ fifteenth birthday but quinceañera customs have differed and spread to outside the Cuban community as well. In the 1980s, the famous Calle Ocho festival began to grow to the huge street celebration of Latin culture that it is today.

The Cuban Enclave

Exilic Cubans have not only hugely impacted the society of Miami through the spread of their language and culture but also have a very significant influence in the world of business. Most Cubans chose to start their own businesses rather than join the ‘Anglo’ businesses and firms and the recession of the early 1970s provided them the opportunities to do so.

The Cubans built their own powerful economic enclave, unrivalled by any other Hispanic group or even ‘Anglo’ groups in Miami shown by the fact that in 2007, 65.5% of all Hispanic or Latino firms in the whole US were owned by Cubans. According to the Pew Hispanic Center in 2006, US-born Cuban Americans have a higher median income than even non-Hispanic whites.

The enclave has many implications on the greater society as it tends to insulate the members of the ethnic community, reducing outside
contact and consequently strengthening the culture of the community. One of the negative repercussions is that at the same time it also isolates the non-Cuban groups in the business arena. “It’s very hard to do business here [in Miami] if you don’t speak Spanish or have Cuban connections” states Florida International University Professor Andrea Queeley.

Politics

The Republican Party has long held the vast majority of the Cuban’s votes. Due to the staunchly anti-Communist views of the exiles, most of the early refugees are extremely loyal to the Republican Party and their exile identity has resulted in an antipathy towards anything ‘leftist’. In 1980, more than 90% of Cuban-Americans voted for Republican Ronald Reagan. This is in strong contrast to most other Hispanic voters across the country, generally a blue-collar group.

However, the Republican’s lock on Florida’s Cuban community could be slipping away from them. Many of the first wave exiles have died and second- and third-generation Cuban Americans are more open to voting Democratic; 60% of Cuban Americans born in the U.S. voted Obama over Romney in the 2012 election while only 45% of those born in Cuba voted the same.

There is no denying that Cuban Americans are becoming swing voters in Florida over the sure Republican vote they have been in the past and that they pretty much control politics in the state of Florida.

Relations with Non-Cubans and Assimilation

One of the most apparent perceptions about the relationship between Cubans and non-Cubans has been the claim of exclusion and isolation. Even the name given
to a Cuban dominated neighbourhood in Miami, Little Havana, indicates the sense that outsiders are not welcome.

As a result of being exiles from their homeland, many Cuban Americans are reluctant to assimilate into mainstream American society as they are waiting for the time to come when Castro and his regime falls and they can return home. However, as time has gone by, the exiles and their children are beginning to realize that that day may not come as soon as they first believed. In fact, polls show that if Castro did fall, only 30% would move back to Cuba. This train of thought has made way to an intergenerational shift toward greater acculturation and assimilation. Removed somewhat from their Cuban origins, the younger generation of Cuban Americans will think more like immigrants rather than exiles, and will more easily find common ground and solidarity with other ethnic groups in the community, especially the growing number of non-Cuban Hispanics. However, as they assimilate more, they find they are stuck between their cultural origins and the host society of Miami society which leads them to question their identity as they don’t solely fit into either culture.

This original hesitation to assimilate meant that many others perceived them as having a greater commitment to rebuilding Cuba than developing Miami, building resentment and causing inter-ethnic tension between Cuban and non-Cuban Hispanics in particular. Professor Andrea Queeley claims that “if you don’t speak Spanish or you are not Latino you are kind of invisible and they are pretty closed to you”. A significant number of both White and Cuban Americans complained that they were regularly dismissed when the businesses where they worked were taken over by Cubans. They also often resent them for their success in the business world as it is a common belief that Miami Cuban success has been at the expense of Miami’s Blacks.

The Cuban experience of American immigration is significantly different to that of other ethnic groups, not only owing to the US government’s response to the influx of exiles, but also due to their role in shaping foreign policy and their ability to adapt to American life while still withholding their own culture and identity.

Unlike Cuban Americans, many other Hispanic immigrant groups such as Haitians have had more difficulty finding a social and political voice in Miami and are not treated equally in the US. For example, while Cubans have been recognised by the US Government as refugees and are granted permanent residency after only one year, regardless of whether they came legally or illegally, and are eligible for social benefits such as English language and job-training classes, Haitians are not granted the same privileges nor granted citizenship as easily. Some are imprisoned if they don’t have

The Cuban experience of American immigration is significantly different to that of other ethnic groups

Black Miamians believe that you can’t get a job, or even in some neighbourhoods get directions unless you speak Spanish.

Cuban American relations with members of society outside the community are often strained due to resentment of both their success and the privileges the US Government provide them, making it difficult for them to assimilate completely into American society.

The Cuban Community have long had particularly tense relations with the Black community. Many African Americans complained that they were regularly dismissed when the businesses where they worked were taken over by Cubans. They also often resent them for their success in the business world as it is a common belief that Miami Cuban success has been at the expense of Miami’s Blacks.

The Cuban experience of American immigration is significantly different to that of other ethnic groups.
a visa but intend to stay. The US Government continually seek to discourage Haitians from coming to the US by using the US Coast Guard to intercept boats off the shores of Haiti that may be headed for the US. This is a cause of tension between the two ethnic groups as the positive reception of Cubans has allowed them to thrive in all areas while Haitians are very limited by the negative reception they receive. Because of this, they remain one of the poorest groups not only in South Florida but nationwide.

In conclusion, Cuban Americans have adapted to and embraced many aspects of American culture and society while at the same time retaining a strong cultural identity and outlook that is uniquely Cuban. Not only have they adapted to the city, but the city has evolved over time to incorporate elements of Cuban culture, becoming a melting pot. However, more and more other Latin American groups are immigrating into Miami-Dade County and the nature of Cuban immigration has changed. This may start to lessen their impact and influence in Miami as it becomes progressively more ‘Latin’ and less ‘Cuban’.

When asked in an interview about ways she believes the Cuban community is part of Miami society, Assistant Professor Andrea Queeley of Florida International University responded “It should be how is Miami a part of Cuban society! I say this because it’s absolutely ‘Cubanised’ in every single way possible”.

Emily Bushnell is an U6 geographer, and this research was conducted as part of her EPQ project. She is due to study geography at university.
Inspired by the Classics department trip to Italy, Maria Carr investigates the geography behind Mount Vesuvius.

Mount Vesuvius was formed when the Eurasian and African plates collided approximately 25,000 years ago. The heat produced from this collision turned the rock into magma, which increased in pressure in the mantle and broke through to the surface, giving birth to a new volcano. Vesuvius is now the only active volcano in mainland Europe, and has produced some of the continent's largest volcanic eruptions. Located on Italy's west coast, it overlooks the Bay and City of Naples and sits in the crater of the ancient Somma volcano.

After the powerful eruption of 79AD, Mount Vesuvius is slowly splitting into two mountains. In 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius spawned a deadly cloud of volcanic gas, stones, ash and fumes to a height of 33 km (20.5 miles). The molten rock and pulverized pumice was thrown into the air at the rate of 1.5 million tons per second, ultimately releasing a hundred thousand
times the thermal energy released by the Hiroshima bombing. The towns of Pompeii was obliterated and buried underneath massive pyroclastic flows and lava. The town of Herculaneum was incinerated by the heat of the volcano. Overall an estimated 16,000 people died from the eruption. Due to the heat, rock and pumice, Mount Vesuvius destroyed part of the lip of the crater which is now causing the volcano to split into two.

The current height of the main mountain is 1,281 m (4,203 ft) tall and Monte Somma, the smaller mountain, is 1,149 m (3,770 ft) tall. The base of the volcano is approximately 48 kilometres long. The valley of Atrio di Cavallo is the valley between the two mountains. The slopes of the mountain are scarred by lava flows but are heavily vegetated, with scrub and forest at higher altitudes and vineyards lower down. Vesuvius is still regarded as an active volcano, although its current activity produces little more than steam from vents at the side of the crater. Vesuvius is a stratovolcano at the convergent boundary where the African Plate is being subducted beneath the Eurasian Plate. Layers of lava, scoria, volcanic ash, and pumice make up the mountain.

Recent tests in the volcano show that Vesuvius is not very active. But the Mount Vesuvius observatory believe that the quiet activity of the volcano could mean one of two things; the volcano cannot produce enough gas so it is slowly going extinct or deep below the surface of the crater of the volcano there are vast amounts of gas being produced which could cause another catastrophic eruption like 79AD. The observatory believe at the moment it is a fifty - fifty chance of the volcano going into either situation.

If the volcano was going to erupt, the Mount Vesuvius observatory believes that they would have 3 days warning. They have set up a system where everybody living on the mountain side and at the foot of the volcano is given a number and colour. The number and colour represents which coach the people would get on so that they can be evacuated from the volcano.

* Maria Carr is a L5 geographer*
Time to ditch the bad Apple?

Jess Pandian

Jess Pandian investigates the dark side of globalisation.

We are a nation in love with the global TNC Apple. It plays an integral part in our modern day life, proving to be an indispensable tool. A life without Apple products would be unimaginable. However, as Apple continues to develop new products which will invariably benefit our lives so greatly, it is important that we are aware of how these products have been manufactured. As part of their philosophy Apple states “This is what matters. / The experience of a product. / How it makes someone feel.” So, how do the workers in China feel about making Apple products?

On average, the workers in apple factories work 12 hours per day, excluding overtime which can range between 100-130 hours per month. During peak production season this can extend to 150-180 hours per month. Sometimes overtime is unpaid. According to employees in Foxconn (a factory which makes Apple products – it is a Taiwanese brand) many workers were dependent on their wages from overtime as they didn’t receive living wages from the regular hours. Consequently, the workers felt exhausted and exploited. Fatigue can also be attributed to the fact that dorms are shared by some people who do night time shifts and others that do day time shifts, meaning that sleep is constantly disturbed.

Furthermore, living conditions in Foxconn have been repeatedly described as inhumane. Overcrowding is a recurrent theme as 8 people are meant to live together in one tiny campus dorm. Sadly, overcrowding is not the only issue which needs to be solved. The workers struggle with poor sanitation on a daily basis - the result of 300 people
having to share one bathroom and shower. The use of laptops and kettles within the dorms is forbidden, supposedly because they use too much energy. After an exhausting 12 hour shift at the factory, the workers return to their dorms to sleep on ice-cold, hard, steel beds. The windows are barred to prevent suicide.

This begs the question, is Foxconn a prison?

This notion of Foxconn as a prison is reinforced by the fact that employees are only allowed to visit their families once a year. This is particularly cruel as migrants make up a huge percentage of the workforce; in Shenzhen they account for 99%. Similar to a prison the workers are constantly surveyed.

The workers apparent “worthlessness” is demonstrated by the lack of safety precautions and procedures in place within the factories. In 2012 the FLA (Fair Labour Association) published an article about the health and safety standard across all Foxconn factories in China. It detailed how in the Chengdu factory 16-17 year olds were exposed to aluminium dust and extremely high temperatures. Exposure to aluminium dust attacks the central nervous system and can cause brain disease. It is also linked to Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease. Apart from the health effects, it is also extremely flammable. Many tragedies have arisen from the complete disregard to safety. In 2010 137 workers at an Apple supplier in eastern China were injured after they were ordered to use a poisonous chemical (n-hexane) to clean iPhone screens. N-hexane causes permanent nerve damage. The following year, there were two explosions at iPad factories which were caused by aluminium dust. 4 people died and 77 were left injured.

The appalling state of the living quarters, concerning the lack of services and the complete disregard of human rights makes the workers feel beyond worthless. They are treated no better than chicken in a chicken factory, or indeed criminals. Thus, it was no shock when in 2010 18 workers jumped off the top of Foxconn buildings. Fourteen lost their lives.

How did Apple respond?

Safety nets were installed around the factories and 70 mental health professionals were hired by Foxconn to serve the 1.2 million workforce. Personally, I think that the installation of safety nets does not address the real ethical issues at heart. By stating that they have employed mental health professionals, I feel as though Apple is just trying to lull the consumers into thinking that they care about the workers.

The solution?

Firstly, it is imperative that we realise the role we play in this system. As consumers, we fuel the cycle of production. In order to improve the lives of these workers, we need to question our own desires and look beyond the marketing ploys. Apple has manipulated us into thinking that an iPhone or iPad is essential, part of our being. By boycotting the brand, Apple sales would reduce and alert them to the fact that their customers are not happy about the working and living conditions. It would then be in Apple’s interest to improve the living and working conditions in order to increase their sales. But, in order to boycott the brand we must realise that, yes, we can live without Apple.

Jess Pandian is a L6 geographer

After an exhausting 12 hour shift at the factory, the workers return to their dorms to sleep on ice-cold, hard, steel beds.
For two and a half weeks in 2013, the US Government shutdown. Agencies, public services and buildings were shut. Emily Bushnell investigates the causes and impacts.

The U.S. federal government entered a shutdown from October 1 to 17. This 16-day shutdown was the third-longest in U.S. history after the 21-day 1995-96 shutdown and the 18-day shutdown in 1978. Most federal government operations were suspended or only partially running and consequently approximately 800,000 federal employees were indefinitely furloughed while 1.3 million were deemed essential and had to work without known payment dates.

Why? The U.S. Constitution requires that government spending is approved in bills passed by Congress, called appropriations legislation. Congress often passes ‘Continuing resolutions’ in order to extend existing spending law at or near current levels. If Congress fails to pass budgetary approval by the end of the fiscal year, it causes a ‘funding gap’ when the amount of money needed could not be provided. This was caused when the House of Representatives and the Senate failed to agree on a new budget for the 2013-14 financial year. The Republican-led House opposed the Affordable Care Act or ‘Obamacare’ and only passed a continuing resolution which would fund the government until mid-December but would defund Obamacare. The Democratic-led Senate then
removed the amendment which was then added in again for the second time by the House. This led to President Obama threatening to veto in order to push the bill through in time without any amendments. However, the day before the deadline the House speaker refused to bring the ‘clean’ bill to vote and a bill was passed stating that only the majority leader can bring the bill to a vote. Because of this, no decision was made before midnight on September 30th 2013, causing the government to shut down due to lack of appropriated funds.

What is the Affordable Care Act or ‘Obamacare’?
The bill attempts to reform the healthcare system by providing more Americans with affordable quality health insurance and by limiting the growth in healthcare spending in the U.S.. Reforms include new benefits, rights and protections, rules for insurance companies, taxes, tax breaks, funding, spending, the creation of committees, education, new job creation and more.

How does this link to the debt ceiling?
Although the debt ceiling and the shutdown are separate issues, the shutdown was raising fears over the debt ceiling as the U.S. looked likely to hit its legal limit of borrowing in mid-October. If a deal was not reached in time among congress then the U.S. would not have been able to borrow anymore and so the world’s biggest economy would have defaulted on its debt. The shutdown is only worsening this problem as it is taking time away from fixing the debt ceiling. Also, Republicans trying to argue

*Furlough – temporary period of unpaid leave from work*

*Fiscal year – financial year*

that healthcare reforms are unaffordable is causing problems for pushing legislation to raise the debt ceiling.

Why doesn’t this happen in Britain?
In Britain, spending policies are outlined in the budget which is presented to parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and then become law in a finance bill in the House of Commons. It is extremely rare and unlikely that the MPs would rebel against it as it is more a confidence vote than a decision. Also, the House of Lords don’t have the power over the House of Commons to reject a finance bill, only to delay it for a month.

How was it ‘resolved’?
On the 16th, a proposal which would fund the government until mid-January and suspend the debt limit until February 7th was passed with unanimous support from all of the Democrats in the Senate as well as from 60% of Republicans. In the House, the bill was again supported 100% by Democrats and 38% of Republicans. Despite all the attempts to defund the Affordable Care Act made by republicans, the only concession made was for stricter income verification rules for citizens accessing health insurance through Obamacare.

What effect has this had?
The shutdown led to most federal services considered non-essential to be suspended. This meant that hundreds of thousands of workers were furloughed indefinitely including National Park workers as well as Pentagon employees. Services deemed essential such as social security and Medicare benefits continued although may have suffered delays. Some services have continued
using some other funds or are self-funded such as the United States Postal Service.

On October 5th 2013, the House passed a bill to provide payments lost during the shutdown to all furloughed federal employees after it was resolved.

Tourism took a hit as the closing of the National Parks cost the U.S. $76 million per day due to the loss of some 700,000 visitors spending money in the surrounding area every day. Shortly after the shutdown began states were allowed to use their own money to pay for park operations. Utah jumped at the opportunity and reopened all five of its National Parks such as Arches National Park as well as Colorado who reopened the Grand Canyon to tourists as soon as it was possible.

Most security and law enforcement workers carried on as normal, however, 20% of FBI employees were told to take unpaid leave and longer-term investigations and training was suspended. In the CIA a ‘significant’ number of agents were furloughed but most brought back as it was considered to be a threat to the safety of human life and the protection of property. The federal courts were running on fees and other funds to operate but were predicted to run out of funds by October 17 and so in order to cut down each court was to decide what and who were essential and furlough those appropriately.

The State Department pilots and aircraft repair stations on hold as more than 2,900 inspectors were furloughed but then gradually brought back in as they were needed for the safety of the public. However, air traffic controllers and airport screeners still continued with their jobs.

Not only were transport inspectors furloughed but several inspectors of food, drugs and consumer goods were also affected. The Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were put under pressure as discovering potential high risk outbreaks was made more difficult due to furloughs and routine food inspections at home and abroad for supplies coming into the U.S. were suspended. There was no one to screen goods at ports of entry which would prevent potentially dangerous products from reaching store shelves for example children’s toys containing too much lead.

The shutdown has also negatively impacted the environment as there was no
One checking that vehicles were meeting emissions standards which caused delays in the release of new car models. The Environmental Protection Agency was also unable to certify that polluters were complying with agreements to reduce their pollution levels. Imports and production of pesticides came to a halt as reviews of their health and environmental impacts were suspended due to lack of staff.

Federal funding to Native Americans was interrupted, disturbing programmes involving health, nutrition, foster care and improvements to irrigation systems. The Red Lake Band of Chippewa of Minnesota had to stop all non-emergency medical procedures due to the suspensions of programmes.

How much has this cost the economy?

$24 billion, according to an estimate from Standard & Poor’s.

Small businesses suffered from delays in loans and frozen government contracts meaning that they would have to find alternative funding sources with higher interest rates. A reduction in consumer confidence such as experienced during and after the shutdown would also cause small businesses to suffer. U.S. consumer confidence dropped to a six-month low in October, as the shutdown left many Americans worried about the economy’s resilience. The decline could weigh on consumer spending, which accounts for 70% of economic activity in the U.S. The shutdown already caused a drop this month in the University of Michigan’s measure of consumer sentiment. Americans made more negative references to the federal government’s impact on the economy in October than in the last 50 years in which the survey has been conducted. This decreasing confidence can cause Americans to spend less, causing companies to be unable to meet essential financial commitments and would slow the economic growth.

While federal workers will receive back-pay under the bill, several contractors may not get their wages and the halt in cash-flow may affect Christmas shopping spending, again affecting businesses across the country.

Not only would this impact the U.S. but because America is the world’s biggest economy, ripple effects will be felt all around the world. Before the resolution, Japanese Finance minister Taro Aso said that the debt limit would have an “internationally significant impact”.

Emily Bushnell is an U6 geographer.

Follow the CLFS Geography Department on TWITTER:

@CLFSGeog

The department uses the twitter account to tweet geographical news stories, interesting blog posts and other information to enhance the geographical learning of pupils, not just at CLFS but anywhere!

Anyone is welcome to follow us, and to keep up to date with the goings on in the geography department.
City of London Freemen’s School is always lucky to attract high quality speakers to lecture to the geography society. Dr Hughes spoke to the Sixth form geographers on ‘fracking’, and agreed to be interviewed for Think Geo.

**What was your best memory from geography A level?**
I was very fortunate to have an outstanding geography teacher, who taught me at GCSE and A level. He had a genuine passion for the subject and his lessons were memorable. I clearly remember him standing on a desk with box of tennis balls to demonstrate potential energy in a waterfall! My best memory though was actually conducting my A level geography project up in the Brecon Beacons. I decided to do my own study, not the one recommended by the school, and had a great day measuring an upland river with my Dad in glorious summer sunshine.

**What do you enjoy most about teaching geography?**
I love the variety of the subject and the fact that you can base lessons around events that have happened that very day. I also really enjoy spending time in the field; I am lucky that geography is a subject that becomes much more enjoyable and relevant when you step out of the classroom and 'live it!'

**When has geography helped you in your life?**
I’ve been lucky enough to have visited many countries in my life (I'm currently been to around 20% of all countries) and I've had some wonderful, horizon-expanding experiences in unusual countries such as Guyana, Tanzania, Cambodia, Japan and Ecuador. As St. Augustine is often quoted, 'Life is a book, and those that don't travel read only one page'. Studying geography from a young age has given me the desire to see the world and in that regard, it has helped me considerably...

**What’s the biggest issue geographers will have to face in the next 100 years?**
I think there are two key issues. The first is energy security. With so many emerging economies reliant on fossil fuels as the driver of development, and with those fuels becoming increasingly scarce and expensive, something is going...
to have to give. The shift to nuclear and large scale renewable energy is certainly underway, but will it happen in time? The second key issue is the economic repercussions of an ageing population in the developed world. The cost to governments of supporting people who are living longer, combined with the declining fertility rates in many developed countries and the associated decline in tax revenue, is a situation that will come to a head in the next couple of decades. I hope that I don’t have to work until I’m 80!

Dr Hughes is Head of Geography at Radley College, and spoke to the CLFS geography department as part of the sixth form revision conference.

Geographer Interview: Dr Julian Leyland

City of London Freemen’s School is always lucky to attract high quality speakers to lecture to the geography society. The School welcomed Dr Julian Leyland from Southampton University to speak on the application process to undergraduate degrees and he was interviewed for Think Geo.

When did you become keen on Geography?
My geography teacher in my Middle School was big into glaciers and river beds and at our school in the West Midlands we were lucky enough to travel to North Wales to field centres for geography weekends. We were able to go and walk up to the corries and glacial basins. This was when I first saw the physical processes, and it sounds a bit geeky, but where it lit a spark and I thought this is actually really cool and interesting. Whereas before it was abstract and boring, and without seeing it I can’t apply it to things. It is still the same now when I go out in to the field and I see the stuff happening it’s like, wow, and I think that’s where my love for geography began.

What makes a good University admission?
Well as an admissions tutor at Southampton I see thousands of admissions each year for geography. I good admission begins firstly by doing well and getting your predicted grades required for the course you want to study followed, achieving those grades in the exams. For candidates who are border line and don’t quite make the grade doesn’t mean the student won’t get it, but this is really where the personal statement comes into play. When the student can demonstrate a passion for the subject and talk about experiences related to your subject they have got up and
done outside the curriculum makes it easy to right a good statement as they can focus their statement around the experiences and are easily able to convey the passion they have for their subject as it shows they are really interested and have got up and gone out looked at it and want to study it further. It is so easy when reading the statements to see this coming across or how easily it doesn’t and is a bit contrived.

Dr Julian Leyland is lecturer in physical geography, and undergraduate admissions tutor at Southampton University. He spoke to the CLFS geography department as part of the sixth form revision conference.

Photo courtesy of the University of Southampton.

Interviewed by Hannah Bailey and Freya Hallett, both L6 geographers.

Top Geography reads!

Sixth form geographers, especially those wanting to continue with the subject or closely related discipline at university should be actively reading and engaging with books, articles and magazines. The library at CLFS contains a number of up to date texts, and these are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure the most contemporary ideas, at the forefront of the academic discipline of geography, are available freely to students.

Here are a few of the top books to get you started, along with their library reference. Do remember, if you read one of these we are always interested in book reviews and we hope to publish a number of these in future Think Geo editions.

Subject philosophy:
Alastair Bonnett [2008]: What is geography? - Sage 910 BON

Global issues:
Fred Pearce [2010] People Quake: Mass Migration, Ageing nations and the Coming Population Crash – Eden Project 304.6 PEA

Mike Berners-Lee [2010]: How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything – Profile Books 363.73 BER

Physical environments:
James Lovelock [2010]: The Vanishing Face of Gaia; A final warning - Basic Books 333.7 LOV

Bjorn Lomborg [2003]: The Skeptical Environmentalist – CUP 363.7 LOM

Human environments:
Dambisa Moyo [2010]: Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa – Penguin 338.9 MOY


Fiction:
Monica Ali [2004]: Brick Lane - Black Swan FIC ALI

Marina Lewycka [2008]: Two Caravans – Penguin FIC LEW

This is a tiny selection of the books on offer; see the full reading list in the CLFS library.
Where are they now?
Charlotte Fryer

Each year a number of top geographers leave Freemen’s to study geography at Universities around the world. Here, Olivia Sabin catches up with one such ex-pupil to find out what life is like as a ‘post-Freemen’s’ geographer.

Which University are you currently studying Geography at, and which year are you in?
I am currently in my second year at Durham University, studying BSc Geography (Physical side). At Durham, it is collegiate (similar to Oxford and Cambridge) and I am part of St Mary’s college. This means that I lived there in first year, all the sport I play is for the college and I go to formal dinners and socials such as the midsummer ball in college as well.

Why did you decide to study Geography at University?
I decided to study geography, mainly due to the fact that it was my favorite subject at school. I took Biology, Chemistry, Geography and Maths for AS and then dropped Maths for A2. I weighed up doing biology for quite a while, but I didn’t enjoy the subject as much.

What really answered it for me was going on the Iceland fieldtrip, I had a great time and I loved seeing the volcanic landscape. I then utilized these experiences that I gained on the trip, to begin my personal statement. I also went on the Peru expedition, which I loved and got to see a completely different country with glaciers and mountains and deserts - so for a physical geographer it was pretty cool!

At school I really didn’t enjoy human geography, it always seemed too wishy washy - though be aware: Geography at university is very different to what is taught at school so do take that into consideration. At most universities, your first year is spent doing both human and physical and I really enjoyed
the human areas which really surprised me!

What have you studied so far in your course in terms of core and options?
Year 1:
**Physical Geography:** Quaternary Glaciation, Sea level Change, Mountains, Fluvial (Rivers) and Global climate change.
**Human Geography:** Thailand and social development and economic change, the geographies of food, the geographies of health (spread of disease and medicines) and the geographies of home (for example migration and borders).

**Introduction to geographical research:** This was a double module and is designed to teach you a wide range of skills, which you might need to use in geography. We had a lot of computer lessons using mapping software, teaching how to do interviews properly, using statistical methods.

**Understanding Earth’s Challenges:** This was a physical optional module and was aimed at making sure that we all had similar understanding of areas, which are important in geography. Some very brief examples are as follows: physics of how water moves, chemistry such as eutrophication, bio ecology, weather and understanding land sliding.

**Geographies of Crisis:** This was a human optional module and was focused on different ‘crises’. We studied the energy crisis, sanitation crisis, financial crisis, asylum crisis and the geopolitical crisis (such as 9/11 terrorism).

Year 2: In year 2, I have taken all physical modules, though I could of taken on human modules if I wanted to. The only compulsory module I had to take was scientific research in geography (a follow on from Introduction to geographical research in year 1).

**Scientific research in geography:** This year has been around writing dissertations and ideas to start us thinking about what we might want to write about in the third year. We are now also doing mini projects which are meant to give us different insights to areas of geography which you could take for dissertation.

**Fluvial systems:** This module is around rivers landscapes, focusing on flooding, the hydraulics of how water moves, quaternary history of rivers and then river modifications and engineering.

**Mountain landscapes:** This module is around looking at mountainous regions, looking at the physics of how a landslide occurs, debris flows, how mountain ranges form and how they are eroded (which has turned out to be extremely complicated).

**Global climate change:** This module has focused on atmosphere and water interactions and how the climate is formed, the effects of sunspots, then into times in history when there have been different climates such as little ice age and why all the mega fauna died out. We have now moved on and we are looking at how the climate has affected the movement of human civilizations e.g. Looking at the Mayans and the evidence surrounding humans beginning in Africa.

**Geochemistry:** This module has looked at using chemistry to understand the environment. For example we have been looking at chemistry of a peat bog and how the variations in percentage carbon can tell us about the climate, how wet it was, the flora and fauna. We have also done things such as investigating into the movement of chemicals down a river to understand the age of the sediment that is moving.
What has been your favorite/most interesting topic that you have studied?
My favorite has been geochemistry this year. It’s been really interesting and really hands on for a module, which I have missed in other modules, which are just a 2 hour lecture each week. I also find that it’s a really relevant module to the real world.

What interests you about Geography in general?
I love that it covers such a wide range of life; though I must say that geography has been very different to school geography. I thought that I would spend my time studying volcanoes and waterfalls and looking at population statistics!!

Do you prefer physical or human aspects of Geography, why?
As I said earlier, I chose to do physical geography though I did find human geography really interesting. At Durham after first year you have to specialize into physical / human.

What sort of fieldwork, skills and exploration activities have you undertaken?
In first year, the physical geographers went to Portugal in the first week of 2013. There we went to the coast and took leveling measurements, we went to an old quarry where a river use to flow through, we went to a marsh and we cored on the old floodplain to look at the different layers and how the floodplain has changed uses.

In second year, we are going on a physical trip at Easter to either the Lake District or the Isle of Skye. Then in third year we have the option to go to Iceland (glacial), Nepal (Mountains), California (Fluvial) or Switzerland, which is a mixture of rivers and mountains.

What other subjects or areas have you found which link with Geography?
This highly depends on which half of geography you want to do. Physical geography has links with biology, chemistry, physics whereas Human geography is more linked to economics, sociology and culture.

Do you know what you might like to do when you have left university/career you might like to take? Will it be Geography related?

At the moment, I have got an internship at Accenture, which is a consulting company. Though I do not have a firm idea on what I would like to do in the future. I would say that I quite like the idea of relating the sustainability areas of geography to my future career though I think it’s rather unlikely that I will study mountains or rivers for a living. University teaches you skills such as how to assimilate large amounts of information and how to work well in teams and presenting. The good thing with geography is that you can go into pretty much any career and many employees like geography because you study such a wide range of topics and learn a large number of skills.

Charlotte Fryer is a current undergraduate geographer and former A-Level student at City of London Freemen’s School. She was interviewed by Olivia Sabin, a L6 geographer.
The UK is “never more than a few days away from a significant food shortage”
Ellie Turner

“The challenge of extreme poverty has been greatly reduced and it is for the first time in history within our power to end it for good”.
Ben Leslie

Thanks to the Geographical Association Independent School’s Special Interest group for supporting this publication. The Geographical Association is the subject association for geography with the aim of furthering the learning and teaching of geography. The City of London Freemen’s School are members of the GA, the Head of department is on the GA ISSIG committee and the school host an annual GA cluster group for local schools each year.