

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

---

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

**There are number of things you can do:**

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

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

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

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

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

## DEVELOPING AS A GEOGRAPHER

---

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

### i. ONLINE NEWS ARTICLES

---

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

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

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

## ii. PODCASTS

---

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

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

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

## iii. ONLINE NEWS ARTICLES

---

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

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

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

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

## iv. GEOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTARIES

---

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

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

- **David Attenborough Box Sets** – there are 9 amazing boxsets available on iplayer from David Attenborough exploring our amazing world <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p06m42d9>
- **The Americas with Simon Reeve** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m00095p0/the-americas-with-simon-reeve>
- **Simon Reeve around the world** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p06rrnkm>
- **Mediterranean with Simon Reeve** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b0bnb6tt/mediterranean-with-simon-reeve>
- **The Ganges with Sue Perkins** - not on iPlayer at the moment but most can be seen on Youtube <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09blcw9>

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

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

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

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

## **v. GEOGRAPHICAL FILMS**

---

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

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

# PREPARING FOR A LEVEL GEOGRAPHY AT STM

---

At STM we follow the AQA A Level. You will have two examined units and one NEA (Non-Examined Assessment) i.e. an independent geographical investigation.

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

If you want to know where to start, in the September of Year 12 we start with Coasts & Contemporary Urban Environments; moving on to Global Systems & beginning our Independent Enquiry. Then in Year 13 we investigate Changing Places & Water & Carbon Cycles, then finally, Natural Hazards.

If you have any questions whilst exploring the following please do not hesitate to contact me:  
[lmurray@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:lmurray@stmacademy.org.uk)

## UNIT 1 - PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

At STM, we cover the following three topics for Paper 1.

### Topic 1 - Natural Hazards

---

*In this unit you will explore various hazards within the atmosphere and lithosphere (the solid layers on our planet's exterior) including: volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical revolving storms and wildfires. We will investigate the origin and nature of these hazards, along with the impacts they have on differing societies and the eventual responses of various nations to these events.*

#### **Starting points...**

**Video: Power of the Planet (volcanoes)** <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5af4kg> - a GREAT introduction to the work we will be doing on plate tectonics and volcanoes in year 12.

**Video: Power of the Planet (atmosphere)** <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5ah6gl> - a good introduction to the work we will be doing on weather related hazards such as tropical revolving storms as well as covering aspects of climate change which feeds into many of the topics at A Level.

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

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

### Topic 2 - Coasts

---

*Coastal zones are dynamic environments with distinctive landscapes formed by the interaction of a range of wind, marine and terrestrial processes. Coastal environments are important to us as people, with about half of the world's population living within 50km of the sea. This makes these environments a crucial part of our studies as future life depends so heavily on their management.*

### Starting points...

**Reading:** How does the geological structure of the coast influence the development of coastal landscapes? <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

**Reading:** What effect will sea level rise have on coastlines?  
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/sea-level>

**Reading:** Coastal erosion and its future effects  
<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/climateChange/general/coastalErosion.html>

**Reading:** Why is Bangladesh so at risk from coastal flooding? [http://coolgeography.co.uk/A-level/AQA/Year%2012/Rivers\\_Floods/Flooding/Bangladesh/Bangladesh.htm](http://coolgeography.co.uk/A-level/AQA/Year%2012/Rivers_Floods/Flooding/Bangladesh/Bangladesh.htm)

### Topic 3 - Water and Carbon cycles

---

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

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

**Reading: Introduction to the Carbon Cycle**  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology/ecology/biogeochemical-cycles/a/the-carbon-cycle>

**Reading: Introduction to the Water Cycle**  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology/ecology/biogeochemical-cycles/a/the-water-cycle>

## UNIT 2 – HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

At STM, we cover the following three topics for Paper 2.

### Topic 1 - Changing Places

---

*Place is an everyday word and a key term within the study of Geography. As Geographers, we traditionally focus on the description of place and its locality using maps and statistics but a more accurate reading and writing of place must also include experience of place, whether through direct interaction or indirect representation. This unit discusses all aspects of 'place', focusing on 2 case studies of places that have undergone change to a large degree.*

### Starting points...

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

<https://focusschoolwilton.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f10c512164d0498d8f3bcbfad8ae61d39>

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

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

**Video: The Full Monty** - looks at the effects of deindustrialisation on a community.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Full-Monty-Robert-Carlyle/dp/B00FYHUTCS>

## Topic 2 - Global Systems and Governance

---

*Our world is more connected now than it ever has been. The global economy and society have altered significantly in recent years as a result of the process of GLOBALISATION. This is especially important given the current situation. The COVID-19 virus would have spread nowhere near as quickly had the globe not been as interconnected as it was/is. As a geographer, being able to recognise and explain links between economic, political and social change as well as engaging with contemporary world issues, is important for understanding both international trade and the workings of the global community.*

**Starting points...**

**See the 'cross topic' themes of climate change and migration at the bottom - these are 2 key themes that run through this topic**

**Reading: Human Rights** - a good starting point read

<https://pmt.physicsandmathstutor.com/download/Geography/A-level/Notes/OCR/Human-Rights/Set-A/Notes%20on%20Human%20Rights%20-%20OCR%20Geography%20A-level.pdf>

**Video: Seven worlds, one planet (David Attenborough)** - Antarctica - a large case study

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0009tt8>

**Video: World's worst place to be a woman?** (Stacey Dooley Investigates)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b06mvwhb/stacey-dooley-investigates-worlds-worst-place-to-be-a-woman>

**Video: Why climate change is a threat to Human Rights (TED Talk)**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/mary\\_robinson\\_why\\_climate\\_change\\_is\\_a\\_threat\\_to\\_human\\_rights](https://www.ted.com/talks/mary_robinson_why_climate_change_is_a_threat_to_human_rights)

**Video: What if a single human right could change the world? (TED TALK)**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/kristen\\_wenz\\_what\\_if\\_a\\_single\\_human\\_right\\_could\\_change\\_the\\_world](https://www.ted.com/talks/kristen_wenz_what_if_a_single_human_right_could_change_the_world)

## Cross topic themes - Climate Change

---

*"Climate Change is considered by many to be the planet's greatest threat" (OCR). Climate change is a theme that carries through a few of our units... most notably the 'population and the environment' 'global systems and governance' and the 'water and carbon cycles' topics.*

**Starting points...**

**Video:** Climate Change the Facts – David Attenborough

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

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

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

**Video:** The Disarming case to act right now climate change – Greta Thunberg (TED TALK)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/greta\\_thunberg\\_the\\_disarming\\_case\\_to\\_act\\_right\\_now\\_on\\_climate\\_change](https://www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_the_disarming_case_to_act_right_now_on_climate_change)

**Reading: Climate Change – The Guardian** have an excellent section on Climate Change which is frequently updated with articles and is well worth dipping into

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-change>

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

## Cross topic themes - Migration

---

*Migration is another theme that crosses various topics. Most notably ‘changing places’ & ‘global systems and governance’.*

**Reading:** Introduction to Migration short notes)

<https://www.tutor2u.net/geography/reference/introduction-to-migration>

**Reading: Global Migration** – a good starting point read

<https://pmt.physicsandmathstutor.com/download/Geography/A-level/Notes/OCR/Global-Migration/Set-A/Notes%20on%20Global%20Migration%20-%20Geography%20A-level.pdf>

**Video:** Escape to Europe: The migrant’s story – BBC Newsnight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZqdUBpHmhM>

**Video:** The truth about immigration in the UK 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHplEJgevqM>

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

**Video:** Between Borders – America’s migrant crisis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxFOt-SMEXA>

**Video:** Fleeing Climate Change – The real environmental disaster (forced migration due to climate change) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4Uv9\\_7KJE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4Uv9_7KJE)

## Topic 3 - Contemporary Urban Environments

---

*This part of the specification focuses on urban growth and change which are seemingly ubiquitous processes and present significant environmental and social challenges for human populations. The section examines these processes and challenges and the issues associated with them, in particular the potential for environmental sustainability and social cohesion. Engaging with these themes in a range of urban settings from contrasting areas of the world affords the opportunity for students to*

*appreciate human diversity and develop awareness and insight into profound questions of opportunity, equity and sustainability.*

### **Starting points...**

Video: most urbanisation is happening in Africa & Asia

<https://www.geography.org.uk/Urbanisation-videocast>

Video: Causes of suburbanisation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2dY5Nde3RE&t=69s>

Video: Megacities of the World (season 1 – complete)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2dY5Nde3RE&t=69s>

Video: Ted Talk (14 mins) 7 principles for building better cities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFjD3NMv6Kw>

Video: Top 10 futuristic cities being built right now

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGeCcl4d2t0>

Video: Europe's first carbon-neutral neighbourhood (Malmo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yZYXsSwnsg>

Video: Welcome to Masdar City (Abu Dhabi UAE)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyghLnbp20U>