

Practical strategies for succeeding in geography exams

Mark Jones
Geography Tutor
UWE, Bristol.

Geographical Association Bristol Branch
Wednesday 26 March 2014 4.30 - 6.30pm



GCE

Examinations from 2009

First AS Award: Summer 2009

First A Level Award: Summer 2010

Geography



GCE

AS and A Level Specification

Geography

Specification

GCE Geography



AS/A Level GCE

GCE Geography

OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Geography H083

OCR Advanced GCE in Geography H483

G1 : Changing Physical Environments (1. climate change, 2. tectonic and hydrological change)

G2 : Changing Human Environments
(1. population change, 2. settlement change)

G3 : Contemporary Themes and Research in Geography
(A)1 from Desert **and** Tundra; Glacial **or** Coastal; **or** Climatic hazards.
1 from Development; Globalisation; **either** India **or** China
(B) Individual research (10 themes)

G4 : Sustainability
Pre-release on one of Food , Water, Energy Cities,

Unit 1 Physical and Human Geography
Rivers plus 1of (Cold env. ; Coasts; Hot desert)

Population plus 1 of (Food supply issues; Energy issues Health issues)

Unit 2 Geographical Skills

Unit 3 Contemporary Geographical Issues
Plate tectonics; Weather and climate; Ecosystems
World cities; Development and globalisation
Contemporary conflicts

Unit 4 Fieldwork or Issue Evaluation

Unit 1: Global Challenges

- 1: World at Risk
- 2: Going Global

Unit 2: Geographical Investigations

- 1: **Extreme Weather**
- 2: Crowded Coasts
- 3: **Unequal Spaces**
- 4: Rebranding Places

Unit 3: Contested Planet

- 1: Energy Security; 2: Water Conflicts; 3: Biodiversity Under Threat; 4: Superpower Geographies; 5: Bridging the Development Gap; 6: The Technological Fix?

Unit 4: Geographical Research

AS Managing Physical Environments (Rivers, Coasts, Cold env.;Hot/semi-arid)

AS Managing Change in Human Environments (urban change, rural change, energy, tourism).

A2 Global Issues

- A. Environmental Issues (**earth hazards**, ecosystems, climatic hazards)
- B. Economic Issues (**population**, **globalization**, development)

A2 Geographical Skills

4:30 Introduction and big picture

Geography

Content specified by awarding body

Learning *about* (what)

Learning *through* (how)

Learning *for* (why)



Revision strategies
(knowledge, skills))

Revision checklist

Acronyms, Mnemonics

Flash cards and loop activities

Hexagons, Drawing, Diagrams,
Taboo,

Examination strategies
(knowledge , understanding skills,)
Familiarity with content/past papers
Practice: *short structured questions and essays*

Assessment Self/peer/teacher assessment
Practice: essay plans; Structure; Making an argument; Conclusions not summaries

What the examiners say

Practical strategies for succeeding in geography exams
4:30 Introduction and big picture

Practical strategies for succeeding in geography exams

4:30 Introduction and big picture

4:40 Take command

4:50 Terminology is key/ Planning essays

5:00 Introductions – what's my essay title

5:10 Structure , Paragraphs, Conclusions – PEEL

5:20 3D- essays

5:40 Short break and refreshments

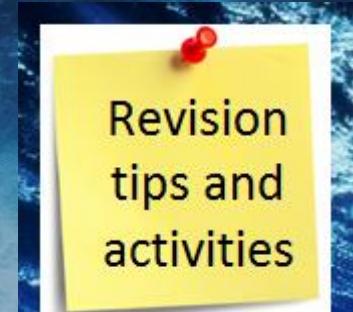
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6:00 Revision tip 2 Ropey revision

6:10 Revision tip 3 Hexagons: making connection.

*6:20 Revision tip 4 - 5 min mnemonic madness/
acronym sharing*

6:25 Final remarks





Better
written
responses

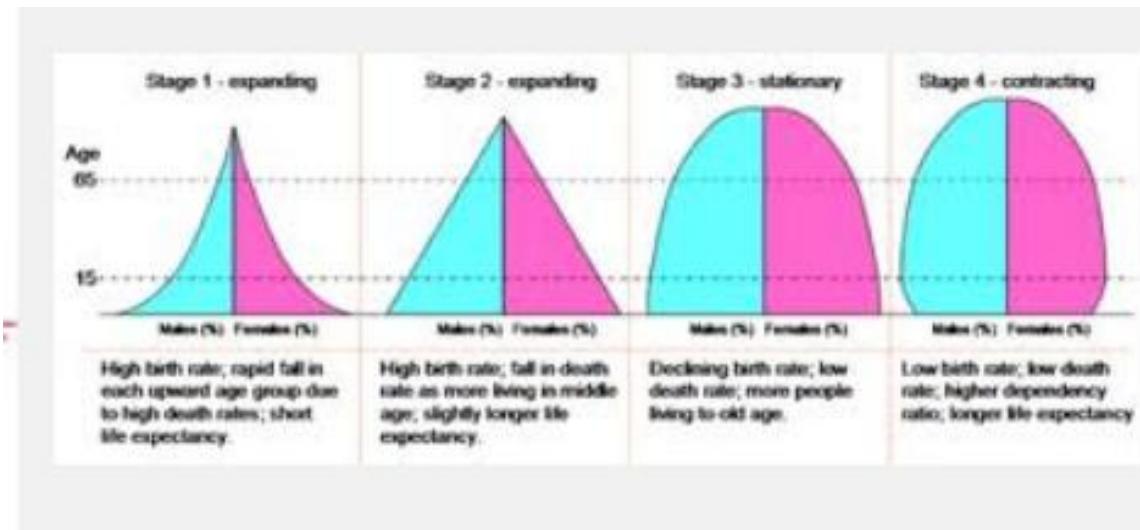
Take command

describe , analyse, explain, account for..,
state, identify, to what extent, discuss,
compare, contrast, examine, explain in detail,
using a named example, distinguish between,
outline the reasons for, assess, evaluate,
annotate, illustrate, comment on, give reasons
for..

Better
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responses

Terminology is key

With reference to named examples , discuss the geographical issues arising from changing population structure (15 marks)



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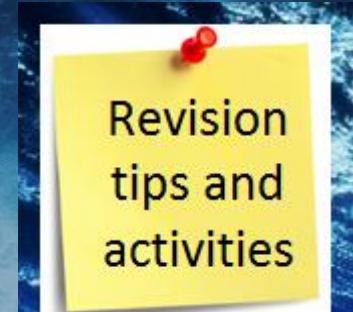
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Better
written
responses

Plan don't over plan

With reference to named examples , discuss the geographical issues arising from changing population structure (15 marks)

With reference to named examples , discuss the geographical issues arising from changing population structure (15 marks)

Analysis, give both points of view, argue the case, support your points

Population Increasing/decreasing – natural increase (+/-migration in/out)

(++) (+-) (- -) (-+)

Social-cultural ++/--

Economic++/--

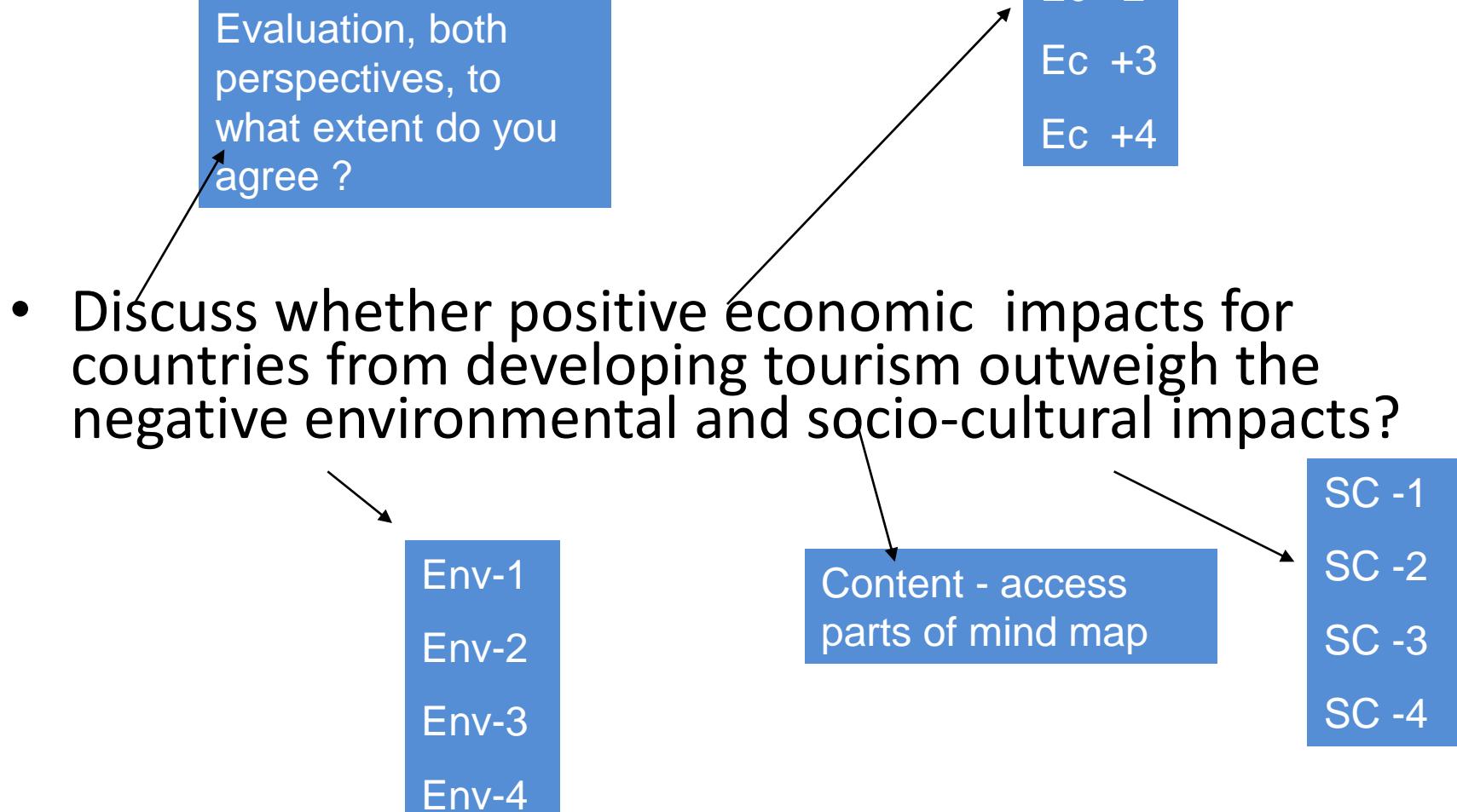
Environmental ++/--

- CS1 – (DRC)
Democratic Republic Congo
- CS2 - Singapore
- CS3 - UK
- CS4- Germany
- CS5 London Docklands

Better written responses

Better
written
responses

Plan don't over plan



What the examiners say

Candidates need to carefully read the full question or key terms in the question, especially at A2. Not doing this is the single biggest cause of under-achievement. Too many candidates offer pre-learnt answers that do not fit exactly the demands of the wording of the question

(OCR, June 2013)

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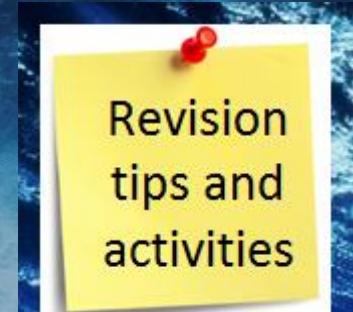
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Better
written
responses

What's my essay title?

AS Essay Title C

AS Essay Title D

AS Essay Title E

AS Essay Title F

A2 Essay Title A

A2 Essay Title B

Example of an
introduction

What's my essay title?

Essay A Evaluate how plate tectonics theory helps our understanding of the distribution of seismic and volcanic events.

Essay B 'The decentralisation of retailing and other services has had a major impact on urban areas.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Essay C Examine the effects of greying population on health and welfare services?

Essay D Choose one named area of the world and explain why it is considered a disaster hotspot?

Essay E Using a case study, assess the causes and consequences of coastal flooding?

Essay F Using a case study; assess how successful one country has been in managing population change?

What the examiners say

Introductions

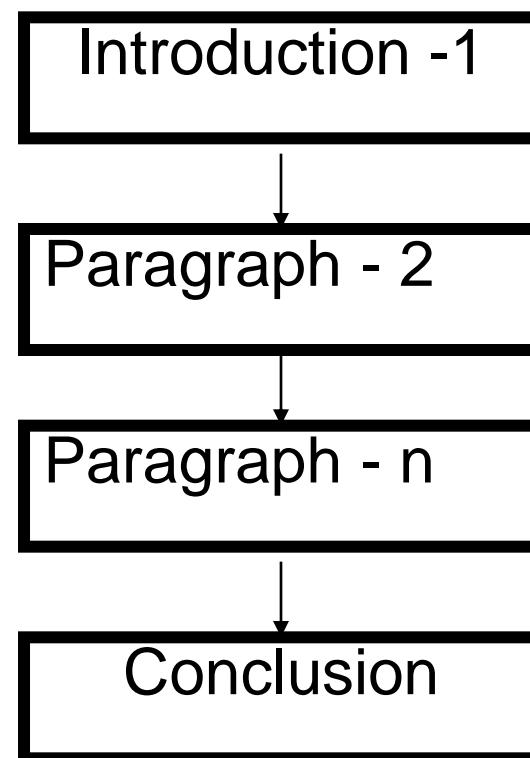
'Don't include irrelevant 'chat' or introductions that repeat the question.
(OCR Examiners' report June , 2013)

Clear
Unambiguous
Context overview

Better
written
responses

Structure -1

- Clear structure to response



Logical sequence

Internal coherency

Better
written
responses

Paragraphs

‘Free standing, self-supporting unit of text’

- A core statement of information or opinion
- A **context** to establish the significance of this statement to the point of the essay
- **Evidence** to support the statement
- **Examples** to illustrate the sources
- References for sources

PEEL

(**Point, Explanation, Example , Link back to question**)

- Discuss whether positive economic impacts for countries from developing tourism outweigh the negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts?

(-) ive
SC

Local people may adapt existing practices e.g. repeating religious ceremonies a number of times instead of just once on a significant day, in response to the needs of tourists wanting entertainment.

Spain's Alarde festival is an example of such staged authenticity which eventually led to its demise so undermining local people's traditions and creating a form of cultural commodification.

PEEL

(Point, Explanation, Example , Link back to question)

What the examiners say

Extended writing

Structure clear introduction, with one major aspect per paragraph and a conclusion. Evaluation

With the emphasis on suggesting that the viewpoint may vary over time, location and depending on who you are within the community.

a number of case studies at different scales and/or locations.

(OCR teacher support materials , 2013)

What is synopticity?

Tourism

AS
Rivers
Biomes

A2
Coasts

Natural (species) attracts Humans
Humans affect natural attractions
Interconnected

Links to structure of rainforest encouraging diversity of species as attraction

Sustainable development
How eco-friendly is ecotourism?

Ecotourism

Case studies from Australia (MEDC)
Costa Rica (LEDC)

Diverge coastal environments e.g. coral reef, mangrove swamps – how affected by building – down-drift implications of sediment supply – increased erosion – knock on effect on tourism

What the examiners say

Poor responses result where candidates:

- Provide answers based on pre-learnt case studies –
'answering the question they wanted to come up'
- Make uncritical use of case studies
- Poor use and spelling of terminology
- Identify synoptic elements 'Like I did...'
- Are more descriptive than analytical
- Offer no conclusion



What the examiners say

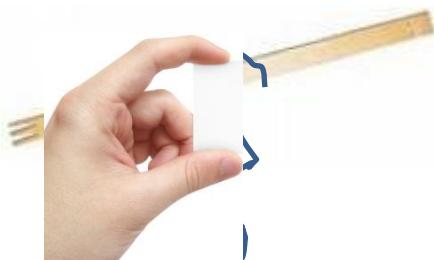
Conclusions

Advice from Principal Examiners from different awarding bodies

‘Show some attempt at a conclusion as the mark scheme rewards clear or effective conclusions’
(OCR Examiners’ report June , 2013)

‘Longer conclusions often simply repeat information already presented:

3D essays



GNP is only one measure and is economic, it fails to

Countries levels of development can be measured by a range of factors ...

In recent years composite measures such as the PQLI and the HDI have ...

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Revision
tips and
activities

5:40 Short break and refreshments

Better
written
responses

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Geography

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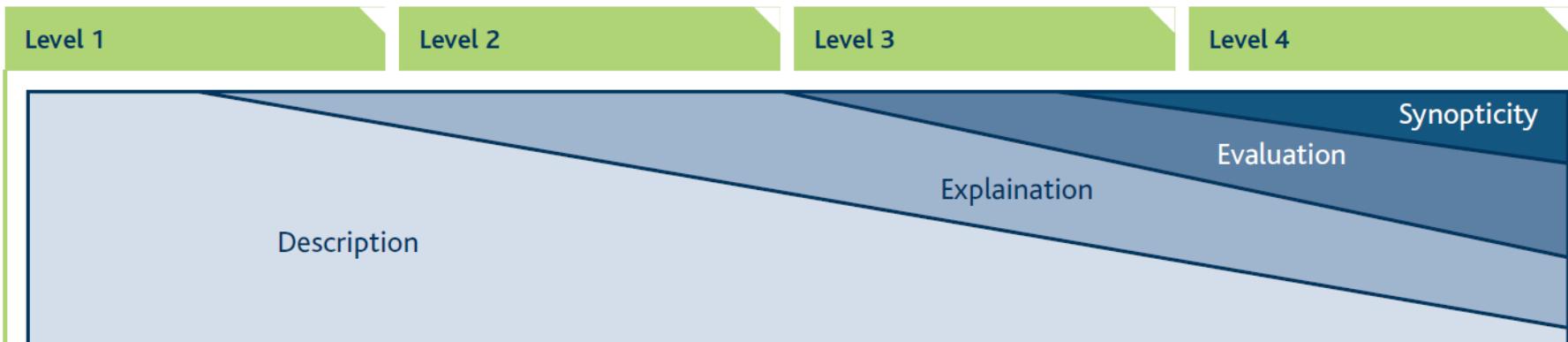
Revision
tips and
activities

Example of Revision checklist for AQA A2 topic

Plate tectonics and associated hazards		How well I understand			
Content		Poor	OK	Good	Excellent
The structure of the Earth in cross-section, and the theory of and evidence for plate tectonics and continental drift.	Key Terminology/case studies <i>Wegener, Sea floor spreading, Mid Atlantic Ridge</i>			Good	
The tectonic processes operating at plate margins and hotspots, and the causes and nature of <u>vulkanicity</u> , seismicity and associated landforms.	Key Terminology/case studies <i>Hawaiian islands; Nazca/S American</i>				Excellent
The relationship between types of plate margins and the type and frequency of volcanic activity	Key Terminology/case studies				Excellent

Practical strategies for succeeding in geography exams
4:30 Introduction and big picture

Reference: ***Getting Started GCE Geography*** (Edexcel , 2013)



As candidates move up the levels in the mark scheme, the balance of skills demonstrated in their answers changes significantly.

Answers rely, with varying accuracy and appropriateness, on the Resource Booklet to describe the situation, with some partial explanations.

Some aspects of the issue/ situation are explained, and descriptive material supports this. No attempt is made to move beyond the Resource Booklet.

Descriptive material is used selectively, and explanations are clear; evaluation begins but may be implied; some basic synoptic information is used, not fully appropriately.

Description is selective and explanations are concise and applied to the question, which supports evaluative judgements in a synoptic context.

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Revision
tips and
activities

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Revision
tips and
activities



Left midfield



Left-back

Centre forward



Centre midfield



Centre-back



Goalkeeper

Centre forward



Centre midfield



Centre-back



Right midfield



Right-back

It's a team game

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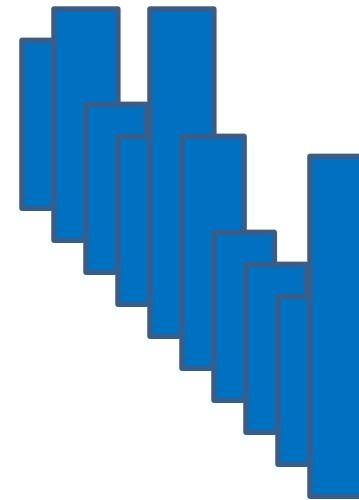
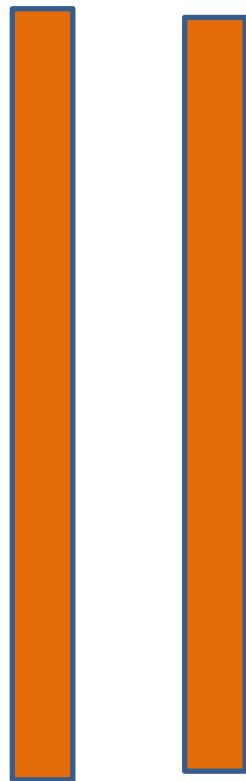
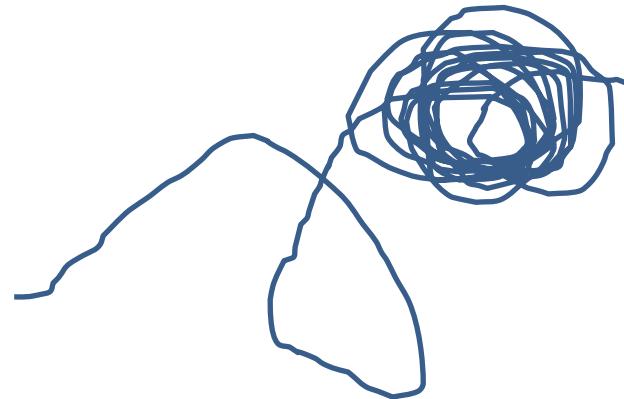
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Good
Geography

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Revision
tips and
activities

Ropey Revision



X axis
Y axis
Bars
Lines

DTM
TALC
Climate
Pop pyramids
???????????

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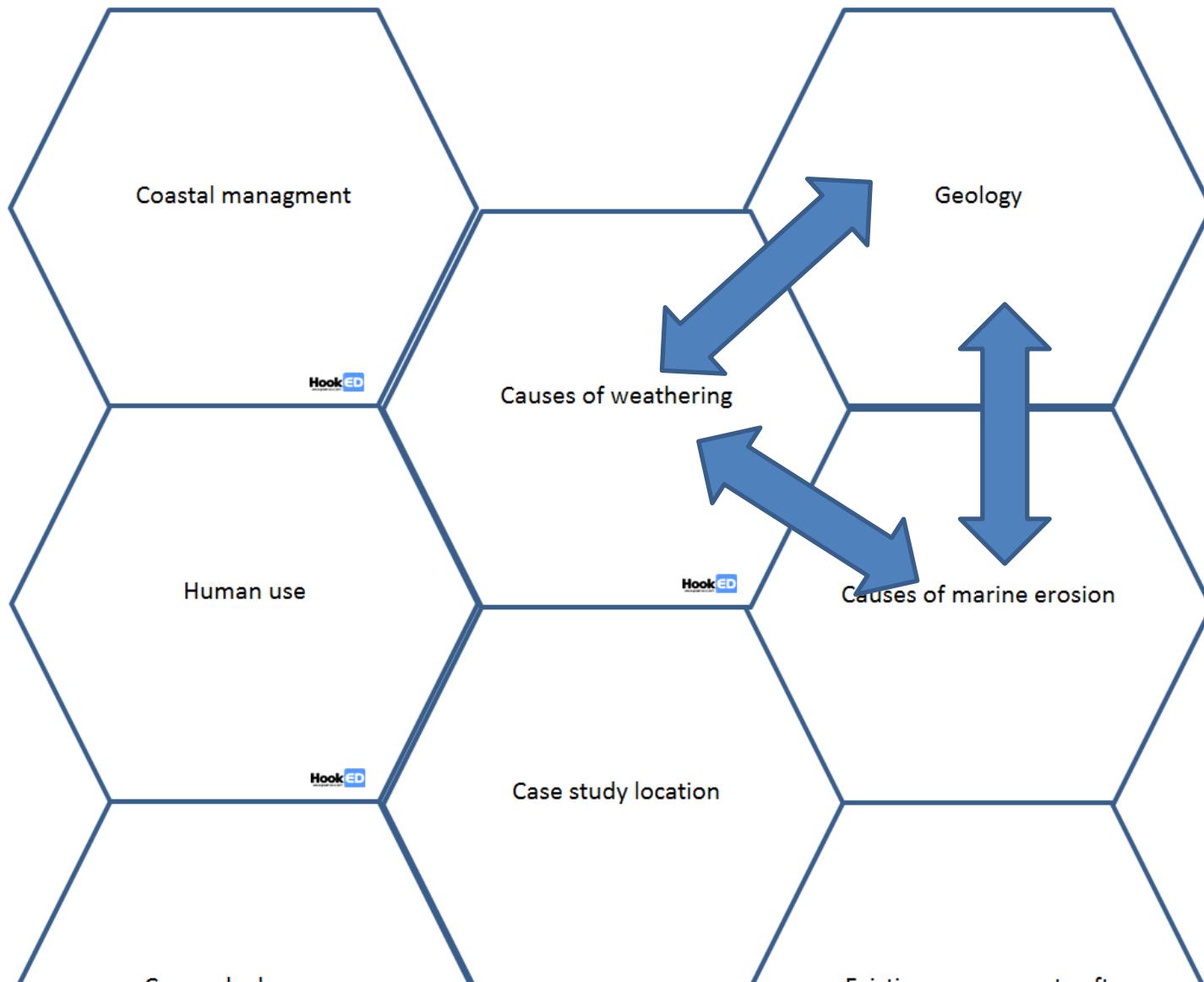
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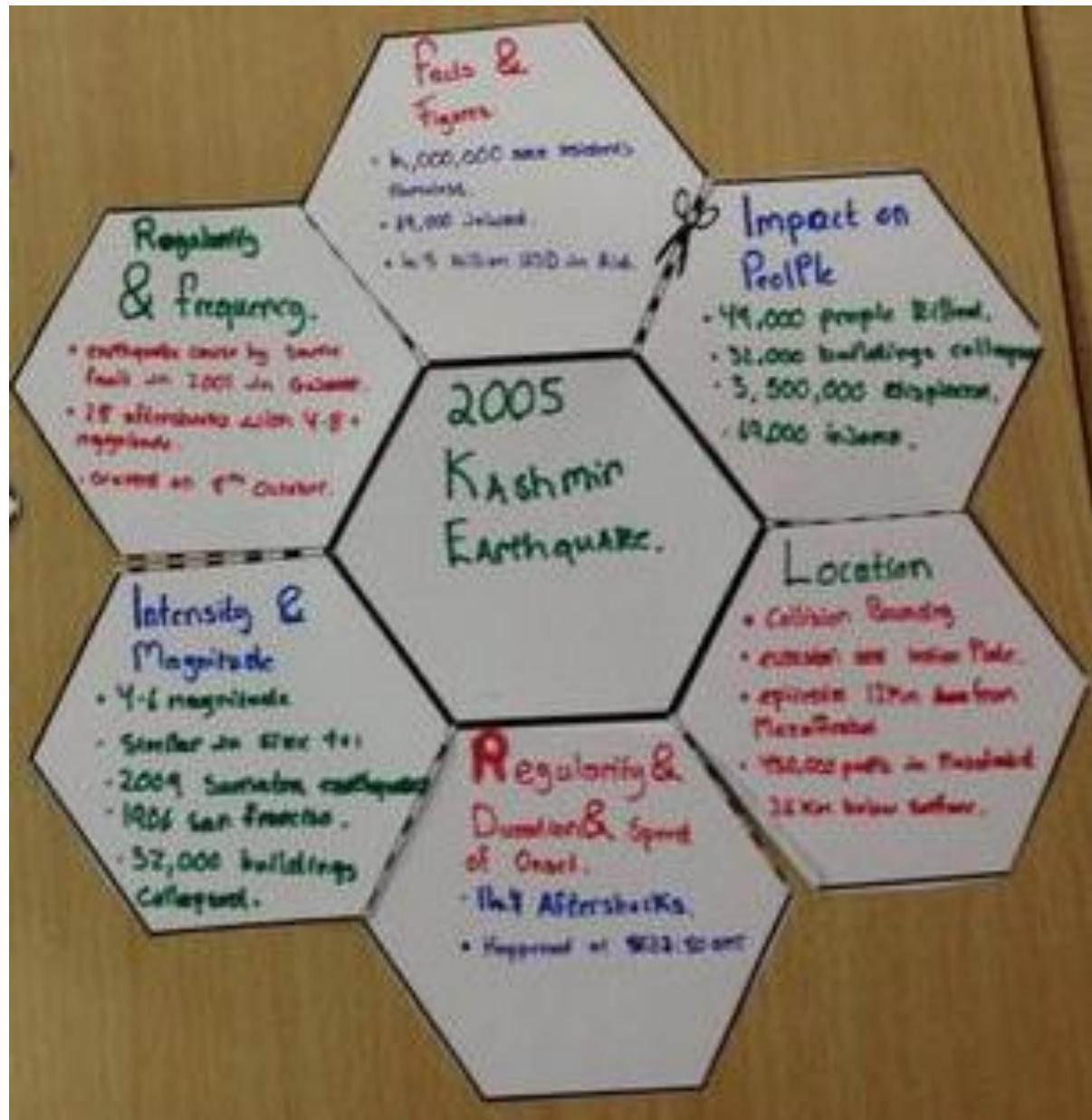
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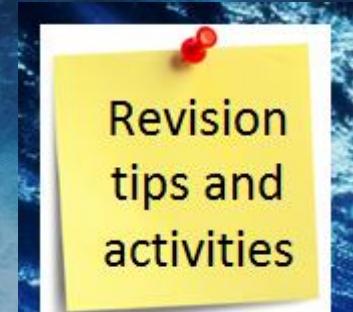
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Acronyms

- CLORPT



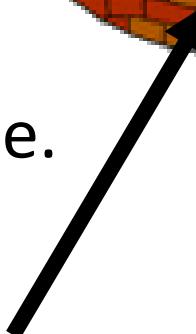
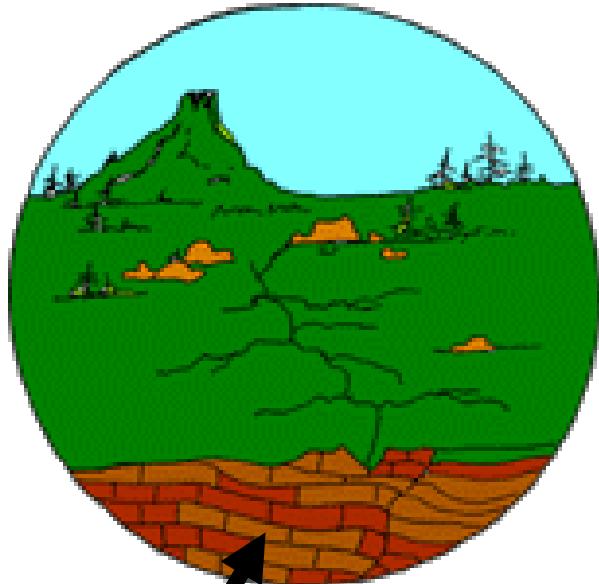
Acronyms

- CLORPT
 - Climate
 - Organisms
 - Relief
 - P _____
 - Time
-
- Types of volcanic eruption



Mnemonics

- Please Come On Sunday, Do Come Please.
Then John Clease Eloped
On My Prize Pony.....



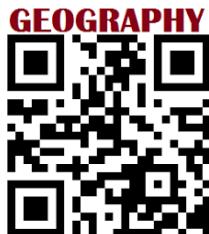
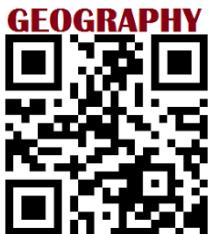
A level Geography

(d) Explain how personal and local data sources can be used to study population changes and people's roots. (5)

- Family history about people's roots may be passed down to each generation.
- Photos/videos of past relatives may exist proving where people lived
- National census results from 1911 will show where family members lived, how old they were and what their occupation was.
- Parish registers will show when family members got married or when they died. ↓
- Old registers of ships may prove when past relatives migrated to different areas.

(Total for Question 5 = 10 marks)

What am I worth?



PEEL

BRIC

MINT

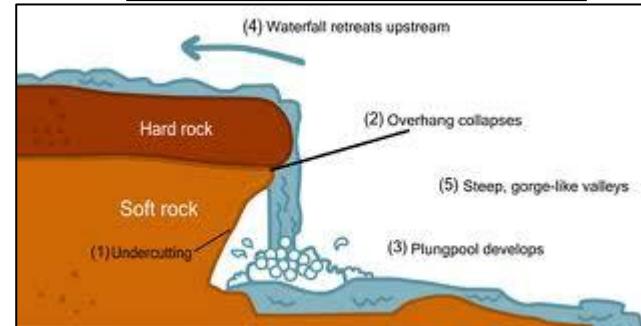
CASH

Synopticity In the news



KEEP
CALM
GEOGRAPHY
REVISION
BOARD

Diagram of the week



Well done you have survived 2 hours and 5 minutes of geography revision and examination preparation.

