

A Sense of Place

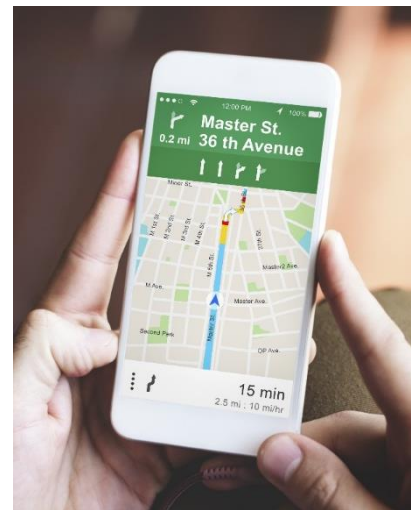
Fun Ways to Teach Geography

~ Sujata C



Students often consider geography to be all about locations, boundaries, maps and atlases. It is the teachers' responsibility to explain the link between geography and human life. We learn many things about ourselves through geography. It also helps us to pursue our passions like travelling and photography, and research on subjects like environmental science, geology, anthropology, geophysics, geopolitics, meteorology, etc.

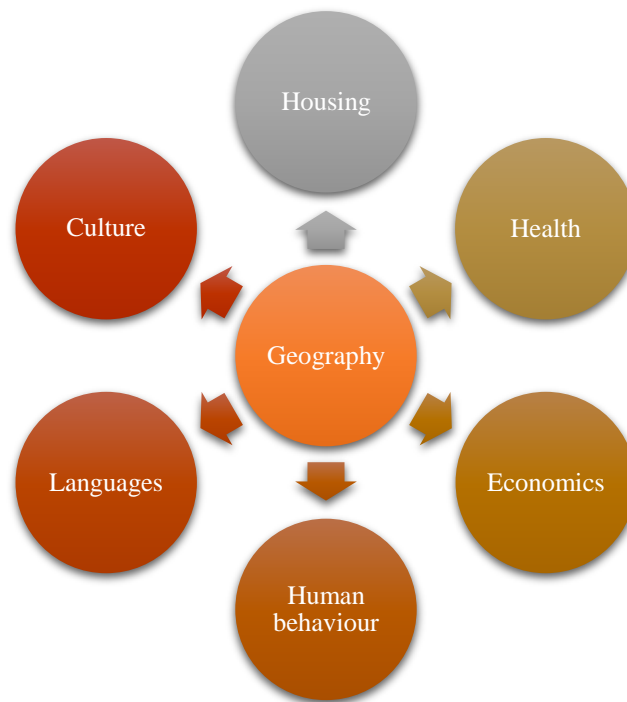
Geography requires students to engage with questions about people, society, environment and the universe. It involves understanding maps, diagrams and graphs, often using technology. Teachers should help students to develop inquiry-based learning skills and guide them to think from both the local as well as global perspectives. Practical lessons in geography also enhance their spatial ability. As a result, students learn to have a comprehensive understanding of the locations they visit, their history and geographical features, and the people of that region, through inquiries and observation. It is a fact that the layout of a land determines the way people live there, the homes they build, as well as their



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livelihoods, food, language, and behaviour.

Technology has pushed the boundaries of geographic studies and opened new possibilities. GPS or Global Positioning System (in the picture) is a popularly used technology today. It is a digital navigation process that prevents travellers from getting lost. Geotagging helps to assign a geographical location to a photograph, a video, or a social media post. New smartphones have cameras that support geotagging of pictures.



Places shape people: Geography can mould human behaviour and bring out the best in people. The natural or physical features of a place make certain demands from its inhabitants. While establishing a new civilization, the settlers had to first assess the geographical features of the locations and then blend their lifestyle accordingly. When a group of people live in a particular environment for decades together, they gradually adapt to it and become an integral part of the land. For example, hill people are



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used to climbing as they need to walk uphill and downhill for their daily needs. This exercise has made them physically fit and mentally agile. The Sherpas of Nepal are known for their hardy physique and indefatigable stamina. Mongol invaders were aggressive warriors because the harsh weather and living conditions in Mongolia had made them practical and fiercely competitive. Similarly, people living in desert are habituated to the extreme weather conditions. Such environmental influences on human behaviour have been developed into a distinct field of study.

Urban-rural interface: Cities and villages are geographic creations of mankind. City dwellers are different from villagers due to the differences in the socio-economic factors that govern the two. Urbanisation has a negative influence on human behaviour which can be seen in the increased levels of stress, lifestyle-related diseases and crime rates. On the other hand, villagers tend to be trusting, helpful, and high on environmental awareness, even though they may have to deal with other issues like lack of basic living standards and education along with poor infrastructure. But cities and villages are interdependent. Cities depend on villages for their food and water, and villages need cities for markets to sell their daily produce.

Geography and housing: The type of shelter a man builds depends on the climatic zone in which they live. Bamboo houses



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are common in tropical places where the growth of the giant grass is abundant. Bamboo also works as an ideal material to make housing structures that are light yet sturdy. Mud houses are seen in the hot plains as mud has a cooling effect and can endure harsh heat. Sloping roofs are ideal for snowy conditions.

Geography and health: The geography of a place also determines the health of the people who live there. Altitude, temperature and pollutants in an area affect public health. For example, people living in Andhra Pradesh are exposed to drinking water infected with fluoride, and that is why people there become frequent victims of endemic fluorosis¹. The relationship between geography and health is throwing up many new topics for research, and geoscientists are now using *remote sensing*² to study what causes an outbreak of a certain disease in different locations. Geographic Informative System (GIS) is also being used to predict the



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spread of disease depending on the distance and connectivity of places. In future, Earth Observing Systems will be

sought to predict outbreaks.

Geography and economics:

Geography determines the economic activities that the people of a particular place will partake to make a living. The plains are ideal for farming crops and vegetables because the soil, rainfall and temperature are suitable for their growth. Since hilly slopes are ideal for farming spices, condiments and medicinal herbs, people living there grow and trade them for their



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¹ http://nutritionfoundationofindia.res.in/pdfs/BulletinArticle/Pages_from_nfi_04_84_2.pdf

² The scanning of the earth by satellite or high-flying aircraft in order to obtain information about it. (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/remote_sensing)

livelihood. In the same manner, fishing is a common occupation near seas and rivers.

Geography and linguistics: Languages and dialects have been used to demarcate zones across the world. Dialectology, the study of dialects, is a century old discipline. If we look at our country's history, Madras Presidency, which included parts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh (now Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) and Tamil Nadu, occupied most of the southern part of pre-independent India. Later, three states were created out of it based on the languages spoken: Karnataka (Kannada), Tamil Nadu (Tamil) and Andhra Pradesh (Telugu and Dakhini). Many countries including China, Japan, Italy, France, Germany and Switzerland have linguistic atlases that map the dialects spoken in different regions. These atlases provide valuable information about the popular culture of those places.

Geography and culture: Human cultures also emerge from the geographical features of a place. The layout of a land determines the way its inhabitants express



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themselves. Living traditions, food habits, folk songs, folk arts and crafts are all parts of this. *Madhubani* paintings (in the picture), an art form practised in the Mithila region of Bihar in India, and Nepal, mostly depict the association of human beings with nature and natural objects. The songs of the desert are inspired by the arid land. The fishermen's songs of Konkan have the flavour of the sea. The blankets woven in Ladakh come

from yaks' wool, while the rough blankets (Gongadi) of Telangana are made from the wool of sheep found there. If a region is rich in certain metals, it becomes known for its metal crafts. *Dokra* metal craft, popular in West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, is nearly 4000 years old.

Geography and natural heritage: The Earth is home to many natural wonders. The United Nations has identified 209 places as UNESCO World Natural Heritage

Sites.³ It is our responsibility to preserve them for future generations as they are legacies of wonder and beauty. Among these are the coral reefs (e.g., *Great Barrier Reef* in Australia), mountain ranges (e.g., *the Himalayas* in the Indian subcontinent), etc. The quality of soil can also elevate a place to the



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status of a heritage. For example, the Red Sand Hills of Bheemunipatnam near Vizag are a rare and ancient geomorphological wonder. They are believed to be 12,000 years old and have been notified as a National Geo-heritage Monument by the Geological Survey of India.

Geography is indeed a fascinating subject. We should help our students discover how far it can take them in life. Once they start loving geography, it will indeed open a number of avenues for them to decide on their future career goals. It is our responsibility to help them make the right choices.

Sujata C is a writer and editor with more than thirty years of experience. She writes on children, environment, society, as well as technology. She has also been a copywriter with an advertising agency for almost fifteen years.

³ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/?&type=natural>

Lesson Plan: Fun Ways to Teach Geography

~ Sujata C

Geography is a subject best taught outside the class. Field trips and excursions are essential parts of a geography lesson. Despite its many exciting possibilities teachers will still find pupils who consider geography a dull and boring subject. Adopting a unique way of teaching geography can change the perspective of such students and make them curious learners. To break the classroom monotony, teachers are recommended to throw away the yoke of the traditional uses of blackboard and chalk, and instead embrace innovative ways and technology to teach geography.



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1. **Give lessons through GI tags:** Geographic Indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are unique to that place. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given location (e.g., *Madurai malli*, *Basmati rice*, *Nagpur orange*, *Agra petha*, *Kolhapuri chappal*, *Bikaneri bhujia*, *Nirmal toys*, *Tirupati laddu*, *Chennapatna toys*, etc.). From a GI tag, pupils should learn to identify the location of a product's origin as well as the nature of soil, topography and climatic condition of that place. Ask students to find out the complete list of GI products and prepare a presentation on any one of them.



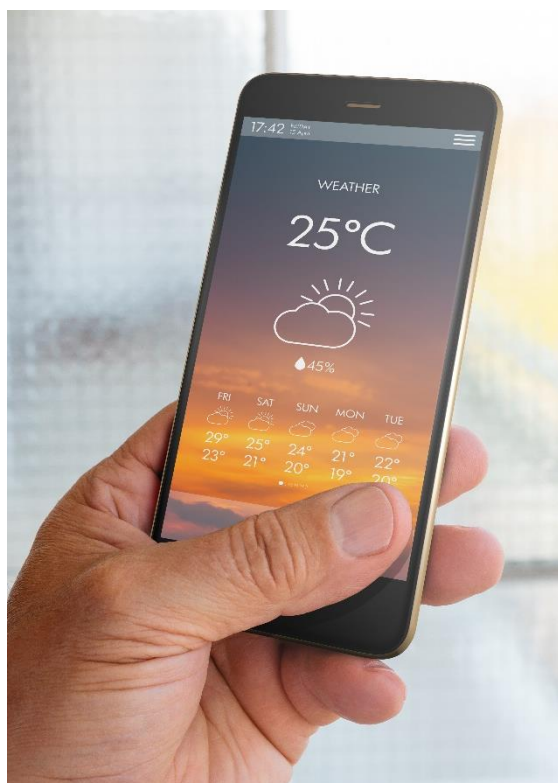
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2. Encourage students to **map the places where they and the other members of their families were born**, and make them describe each location with geographic detail.
3. **Explain the concept of time zones using display clocks** that show the times of different countries around the world.
4. Help students **make sentences with different geographical terms related to their curriculum**.
5. **Let pupils learn about the world map while playing catch with a globe ball**. Each student while holding the ball can identify the place where their index finger is.
6. Divide students into groups and **make them collaborate and design travel brochures**. Show one or two samples and give a few places as options to include in the brochures. When they are done, let every group present their work in front of the class.



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7. Ask students to **make a collage of the flags of different countries**.
When they are done, encourage them to say what they know about the geography of the countries selected.
8. Encourage students to **browse different places of the world on Google Earth** and let them describe what they found out from the app about those locations. They can also be taught to calculate the distance of the places from their homes.
9. **Show the weather forecast for the week** on a smartphone or a tablet and ask students to write what they understand from the prediction.



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10. **Bring to class a few pictures of the arts and crafts of different places of the world**. Divide students into groups, give one sample to each, and ask them to collaborate and make research-based presentations about the objects they have got.



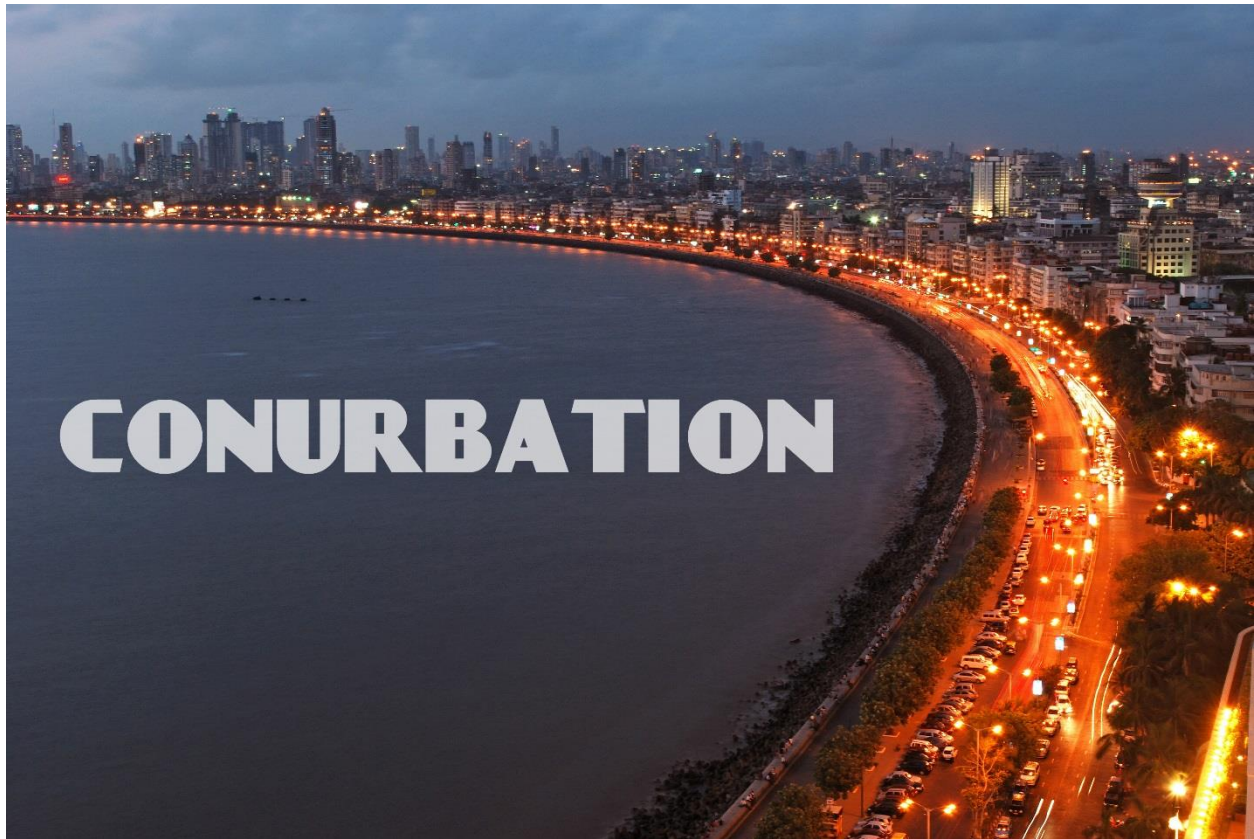
Madhubani Painting

Source: <https://dam.oup.com/share/page/site/asia-education/document-details?nodeRef=workspace://SpacesStore/89a561db-e4a4-4dfb-a705-ea5638724a89>

11. Divide students into groups to **work on presentations on the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites** of their choice.
12. **Embrace new technology** to bring excitement to your class. There are apps that use Augmented Reality (such as *Star Walk*, *Spacecraft 3D*, *Planets*, *Wikitude* and *Earth AR*) to teach about landforms, solar systems, volcanoes, etc.
13. Encourage students to **watch geography-related shows on educational channels.**

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Conurbation (noun)



Pronunciation: /ˌkɒnəˈbeɪʃ(ə)n/

Meaning: An extended urban area, typically consisting of several towns merging with the suburbs of a central city

Origin and additional information: The word was coined in early 20th century from prefix *con-* (meaning *together*) + Latin *urbs* (*urb-*: city) + suffix *-ation* by Patrick Geddes, a Scottish biologist and urban planner. He used this term for the first time in his book, *Cities in Evolution* (1915).

Usage over time for *conurbation*:



Usage over time for **Conurbation**

Word section: Conurbation is a specific kind of geographical expanse. After rapid increase in population due to industrial and technological developments across the globe, city boundaries started outspreading and gradually merged with other towns in a slow but steady process. Thus, conurbations were formed. In India, a popular conurbation is the National Capital Region (NCR), which is a coordinated planning area encompassing the entire National Capital Territory of Delhi along with several surrounding districts in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Similarly, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), another conurbation in western India, has developed over the last 20 years, and it encompasses Mumbai and its satellite towns.

Usage:

1. The stars in the sky glowed with an ambience only seen outside the urban **conurbations**.
(Source: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/conurbation>)
2. This isn't an entirely new thing; most German **conurbations** already have Umwelt (environmental) zones that bar cars incapable of passing the Euro 4 emissions test from entering them without risk of a sizable fine.
(Source: <https://www.caranddriver.com/news/alles-ist-verboten-german-court-says-cities-should-ban-diesel-engines>)

3. In Montana, 20 miles or so off Highway 90, lies the minuscule **conurbation** of Wilsall, population 178 as of 2010.

(Source: https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/10/a-brief-history-of-everyone-who-ever-lived/537942/?utm_source=feed)