

TEACHING & LEARNING JOURNAL - EDITION 21

Improving Geographical Knowledge through Reading

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According to National Geographic, 'Geography is the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments. Geographers explore both the physical properties of the Earth's surface and the human societies spread across it. They also examine how human culture interacts with the natural environment and the way that locations and places can have an impact on people.'

One of my favourite parts of the day at Westbourne is Stop and Read. I love it! I have always loved to read and my own geographical knowledge has been greatly enhanced by the books I have read. Very often, students have said 'Miss, you must have been to loads of places!' My response is always 'Not really, but I've read a lot of books.' I really enjoy reading fiction and I decided to try to put together a reading list for Year 8 students which would link to our geography curriculum and enhance our students' knowledge. This would also link to Westbourne Academy's own plan for improvement, particularly in helping to provide students with the broad knowledge needed to progress in life (KL2) and to improve reading comprehension (KL7).

According to Berson, Ouzts and Walsh, 'the use of quality literature brings geography to life. Literature may bridge the gap between geographically distant worlds and gives a better understanding of how and where people have lived in the past and present, and how they might live in the future'. Thorpe in 1967 wrote 'Literature, with its integrated triad of person, place and plot is an essential field for geography no less than for any other discipline attempting an explication of the human condition.' After all, every story you read is set in a location.

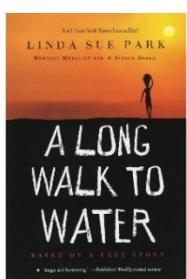
GCSE examiners report that high ability students need to develop extended writing skills to include place specific responses. While they also stress the fact that simply recounting facts does not give access to higher marks, they encourage students to try to include specific location knowledge within their answers. Learning about a place within a story helps students to understand more about that place and helps them to see the place from the point of view of the characters in the story. This skill could be invaluable in 'to what extent' and 'evaluate' questions, where students are encouraged by the examiner to try to 'get a bit of a discussion going'.

Increasing knowledge through reading increases a child's cultural capital and also acts as a social equaliser.

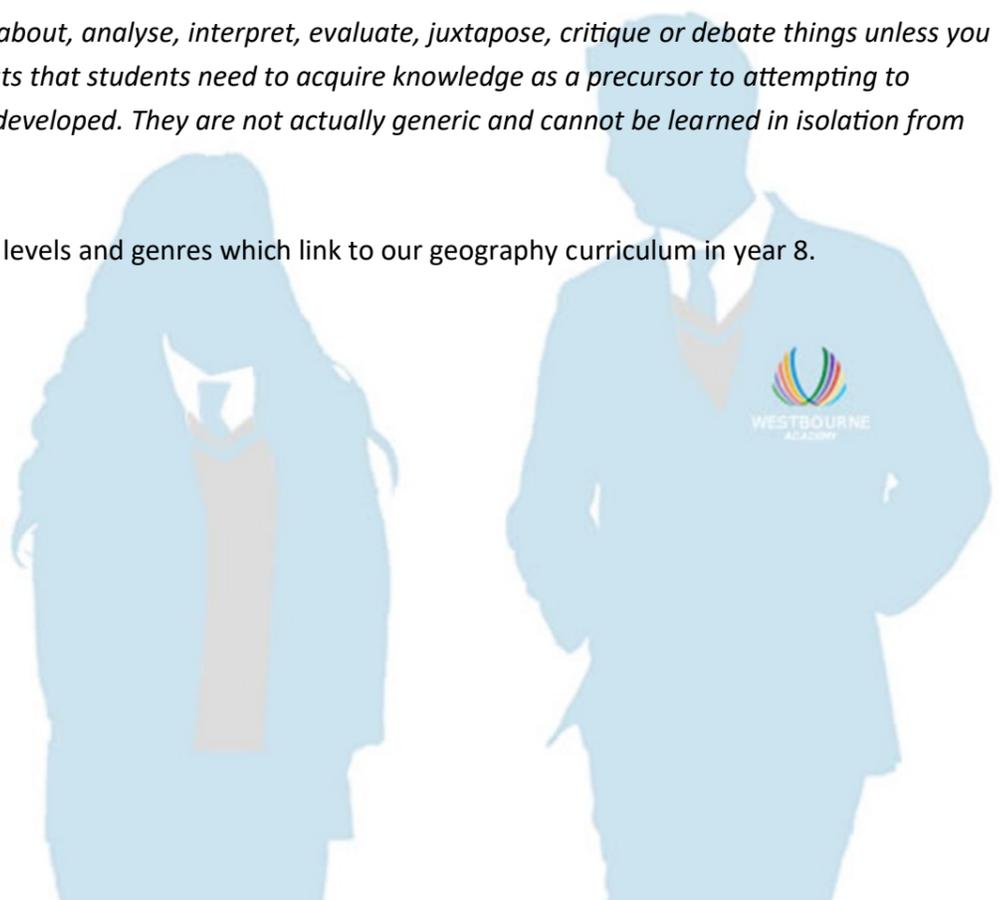
- * **E.D. Hirsh:** "...only by systematically imparting to **all** children the knowledge that is commonly possessed by successful citizens can all children gain the possibility of success – 'success' understood as becoming a person with autonomy, who commands respect, has a communal voice that can write and speak effectively to strangers, can earn a good living, and can contribute to the wider community".
- * **Ofsted:** "It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement."
- * **Tom Sherrington:** "Typically, students with the most advantages in their home environments are going to have the greatest access to cultural capital with the exponential accumulation that follows. The Matthew Effect comes into play just as it does with literacy in general – the more you know, the more you can know"
- * "Factual knowledge precedes skills... it means that you can't think about, analyse, interpret, evaluate, juxtapose, critique or debate things unless you have factual knowledge on which to base those things. This suggests that students need to acquire knowledge as a precursor to attempting to engage in activities where those seemingly generic skills might be developed. They are not actually generic and cannot be learned in isolation from content; they emerge from a body of knowledge."

So, in line with these ideas I have put together a list with books of various levels and genres which link to our geography curriculum in year 8.

Kenya, an LIC

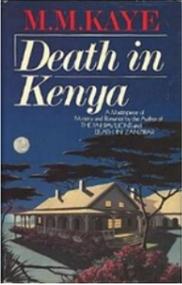


A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park is based on the true story of Salva Dut, one of the Lost Boys from Sudan during the second Sudanese Civil War in 1985. The book also includes a separate narrative about a girl named Nya, which takes place in Sudan as well, but beginning in 2008.



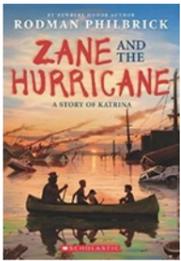


The Pursuit of the Ivory Poachers by Elizabeth Singer Hunt
Jack is whisked away to the sweltering savannah of Kenya where, a wise and kind Masai chief alerts Jack to a series of elephant killings where the corpses have been robbed of their tusks. Jack must find the malevolent ring of poachers responsible before more of these endangered species are destroyed.

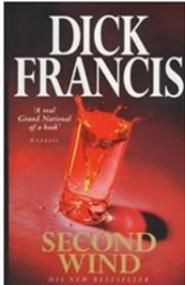


Death in Kenya by M.M. Kaye The Mau Mau terrorist uprising is now over, but when Victoria joins her family on their beautiful Rift Valley estate, the horrors continue. What began as the malicious persecution of a poltergeist has ended in brutal murder. In the small community passions run deep - but deeper still is the mind of a ruthless killer.

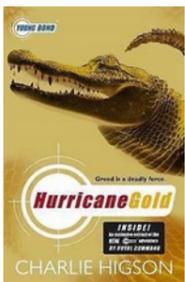
Weather and Climate



Zane and the Hurricane: A Story of Katrina by W. Rodman Philbrick
A twelve-year-old boy and his dog become trapped in New Orleans during the horrors of Hurricane Katrina.



Second Wind by Dick Francis When a hurricane-chasing plane is downed on a Caribbean island, TV meteorologist Perry Stuart barely escapes with his life. But he can't escape what he saw on the island--and if the people who've tracked him back to England have their way, Stuart will have a zero percent chance of survival.

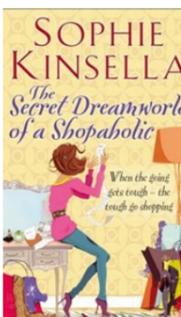


Hurricane Gold by Charlie Higson is the fourth novel in the Young Bond series depicting Ian Fleming's superspy James Bond as a teenager in the 1930s. The novel is set in Mexico and the Caribbean while a devastating hurricane rages. James and two other children hide from both some thieves and the storm, but later, as they try to escape from the wrecked town, Precious and her brother are kidnapped. James joins the gang masquerading as a young pickpocket who bore a close resemblance to him and who recently died.

Retail and Settlement



The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow by Katherine Woodfine A girl named Sophie is recruited to work in a new department store called Sinclairs. She wants to do well and she's pretty, so not every girl she's working with is friendly to her. When someone steals a precious artefact from the store, Sophie has to find out what happened.

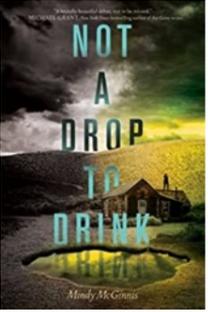


The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic by Sophie Kinsella Meet Rebecca Bloomwood. She has a great flat, a fabulous wardrobe full of the season's must-haves, and a job telling other people how to manage their money. She spends her leisure time ... shopping. Retail therapy is the answer to all her problems. She knows she should stop, but she can't. She tries cutting Back, she tries making more money but neither seems to work. The letters from the bank are getting harder to ignore. Can Becky ever escape from this dreamworld, find true love, and regain the use of her credit card?

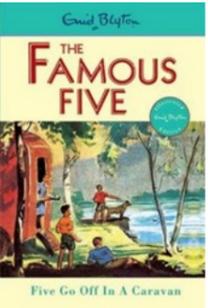


The Book of English Place Names by Caroline Taggart This is the only non-fiction book in the list, but reads a bit like a collection of short stories. In it, the reader takes a journey down winding lanes and Roman roads in a witty and informative guide to the meanings behind the names of England's towns and villages. From Celtic farmers to Norman conquerors, right up to the Industrial Revolution, deciphering our place names reveals how generations of our ancestors lived, worked, travelled and worshipped, and how their influence has shaped our landscape.

Water and Desertification

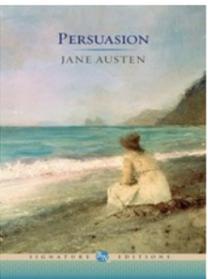


Not a Drop to Drink by Mindy McGinnis is the story of a sixteen year old girl living alone on a homestead in Ohio with her mother. It is set at some point in the future the Earth's supply of fresh drinking water has all but run out. Lynn and her Mother who live alone and survive as they protect their only source of water – their pond, they have killed to protect it and will kill again if necessary. Everything changes for Lynn after a coyote attack and then strangers appear

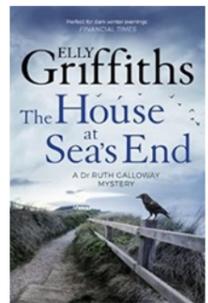


Five go off in a Caravan by Enid Blyton is an old fashioned story about a group of children who go on a caravan holiday. When they stumble across a circus troupe, the gang are thrilled. But some of the circus people have more sinister plans than just clowning around. This story includes a description of a limestone cave system created by a river.

Coasts

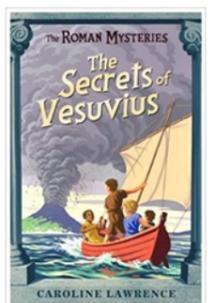


Persuasion by Jane Austen revolves around a young Englishwoman named Anne Elliot and her family who are forced to move into a smaller house in order to ease their debt. They rent their house to an Admiral and his wife, whose brother turns out to have been engaged to Anne seven years previous. The scene is set for humorous situations and the promise of a rekindling of old flames. There is a great description of the Cob at Lyme Regis.



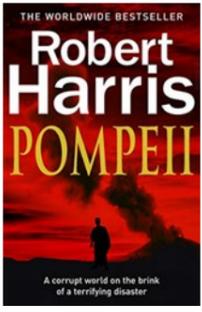
The House at Sea's End by Elly Griffiths Dr Ruth Galloway is called in by a team of archaeologists investigating coastal erosion on the north Norfolk coast, when they unearth six bodies buried at the foot of a cliff. They seem to have been there a very long time. Ruth must help discover how long, and how on earth they got there. Tests reveal that the bodies have lain, preserved in the sand, for sixty years. The mystery of their deaths stretches back to the Second World War, a time when Great Britain was threatened by invasion. Ruth thought she knew the history of Norfolk - she's about to find out just how wrong she was, and how far someone will go to keep their secrets buried.

Tectonics



The Secrets of Vesuvius by Caroline Lawrence It's the summer of AD 79 and Flavia Gemina and her friends, Jonathan, Nubia and Lupus, set sail for the Bay of Naples where they are going to stay with Flavia's uncle near Pompeii. Once they arrive, they are soon absorbed in a quest to solve a riddle that may lead to treasure. But then tragedy strikes: Mount Vesuvius erupts and the friends must flee for their lives!





Pompeii by Robert Harris A sweltering week in late August. Where better to enjoy the last days of summer than on the beautiful Bay of Naples? But even as Rome's richest citizens relax in their villas around Pompeii and Herculaneum, there are ominous warnings that something is going wrong. Wells and springs are failing, a man has disappeared, and now the greatest aqueduct in the world - the mighty Aqua Augusta - has suddenly ceased to flow. One of the most famous natural disasters in human history: the explosion of Mount Vesuvius is described through the eyes of four characters - a young engineer, an adolescent girl, a corrupt millionaire and an elderly scientist.

