Did you know?

◆ The lowest ever recorded temperature was –89.2 °C, in Antarctica, on 21 July 1983.

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geography for key stage 3
<rosemarie gallagher> <richard parish>
Contents

1 Using GIS  4
  1.1 John Snow, doctor and detective  6
  1.2 Meet GIS  8
  1.3 GIS in fighting crime  10
  1.4 More about the data  12
  1.5 Other uses for GIS  14

2 Population  16
  2.1 Our numbers are growing fast  18
  2.2 So where is everyone?  20
  2.3 The population of the UK  22
  2.4 Population around the world  24
  2.5 Our impact on our planet  26
  2.6 What does the future hold?  28

3 Urbanisation  30
  3.1 How our towns and cities grew  32
  3.2 Manchester’s story – part 1  34
  3.3 Manchester’s story – part 2  36
  3.4 Urbanisation around the world  38
  3.5 Why do people move to urban areas?  40
  3.6 It’s not all sunshine!  42
  3.7 Life in the slums  44
  3.8 A city of the future?  46

4 Coasts  48
  4.1 Waves and tides  50
  4.2 The waves at work  52
  4.3 Landforms created by the waves  54
  4.4 The coast and us  56
  4.5 Your holiday in Newquay  58
  4.6 Under threat from the sea  60
  4.7 How long can Happisburgh hang on?  62
  4.8 Protecting places from the sea  64

5 Weather and climate  66
  5.1 It’s the weather!  68
  5.2 So what causes weather?  70
  5.3 Measuring the weather  72
  5.4 More about rain … and clouds  74
  5.5 Air pressure  76

6 Our warming planet  88
  6.1 Earth’s temperatures through the ages  90
  6.2 Global warming  92
  6.3 Climate change  94
  6.4 It’s happening already!  96
  6.5 Who will suffer most?  98
  6.6 So what can we do?  100

7 Asia  102
  7.1 What and where is Asia?  104
  7.2 Asia’s countries and regions  106
  7.3 A little history  108
  7.4 What’s Asia like?  110
  7.5 Asia’s physical features  112
  7.6 Asia’s population  114
  7.7 Asia’s biomes  116

8 Southwest China  118
  8.1 China: an overview  120
  8.2 The rise of China  122
  8.3 China’s Southwest region  124
  8.4 Chongqing  126
  8.5 Life in Chongqing  128
  8.6 Tops for biodiversity!  130
  8.7 Tibet  132
  8.8 All change in Tibet  134
  8.9 The rivers and dams  136

Key for OS maps  138
Map of the British Isles  139
Map of the world (political)  140
Glossary  142
Index  144
Asia’s biomes

Because of its size, Asia has a wide range of biomes. Find out more here.

A biome is a large region with its own distinct climate, plants, and animals. The climate dictates what the biome is like. Asia stretches from above the Arctic Circle to below the Equator. It has mountain ranges too. So that means it has many different climate zones – and biomes. Look at these photos. The colours of the circles match the map on the next page.

In the far north is the tundra biome. It is bitterly cold here, and the ground is deeply frozen. But in summer, the surface thaws. Then ponds form everywhere, and low plants grow.

South of the tundra is the taiga biome. It has thick coniferous forests with trees such as spruce and fir. Winters are long, and very cold. Summers are short, warm, and damp.

Next, in the middle of the continent, are the steppes: plains of grassland. Summers are hot, winters very cold. There are few trees, because there is not enough rain to support them.

Further south you’ll find more desert. But now it is hot desert. It is usually very hot during the day, and cold at night. As in the cold desert, vegetation is sparse since there’s so little rain.

Mountain ranges have the mountain biome. The higher you go, the colder it is. After a certain point it’s too cold and dry for trees. Go high enough and you will find glaciers.

Further south, in and near the tropics, is the warm moist forest biome. The forests include tropical rainforests, and mangrove swamps like this one. (See the map key.)

Asia’s biomes on the map

This simplified map shows the main biomes. The colours match the circles in the photos.

As you saw earlier, much of Asia is densely populated – and this has affected the biomes. For example, 8000 years ago, nearly all of Southeast Asia was covered by forest. Now half has gone – cut down for fuel, or cleared away for farmland, and roads, and settlements.

Asia’s tropical rainforests are Earth’s oldest, and the richest for biodiversity. But they are vanishing very fast.

Your turn

1. What is a biome?
2. Asia has a wide range of biomes. Why?
3. Name the biome in Asia: a) which lies furthest north b) where you are most likely to find large flocks of sheep c) coniferous
4. Write down what each word means. (Glossary?) Then name the biome it is linked to a) temperate b) tree line c) coniferous d) mangroves e) permafrost f) deciduous
5. Using the map above and the one on page 106, name: a) a country with tundra b) a country where you’ll find dense coniferous forests c) three countries with hot deserts d) two countries with cold deserts e) two countries where you may find rainforest f) three countries with mangrove swamps along the coast
6. Now look at X on the map above. The population density here is low. (See page 114.) Explain why.

Key
- tundra
- taiga
- steppes
- temperate forest
- cold desert
- mountain
- warm moist forest
- mangrove swamp

Mountain ranges have the mountain biome. The higher you go, the colder it is. After a certain point it’s too cold and dry for trees. Go high enough and you will find glaciers.

Furthest south, in and near the tropics, is the warm moist forest biome. The forests include tropical rainforests, and mangrove swamps like this one. (See the map key.)

Did you know?
- They say the Abominable Snowman (or Yeti) lives around the Himalayas.
- Tall, hairy, walks on two legs, big feet.