NELSON KEY GEOGRAPHY

Connections

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Key skills: maps and diagrams

How can we use an atlas?

An atlas is a book containing many different maps. Some maps show very large areas, such as the entire world or whole continents. Others show smaller areas such as a country or part of a country. Atlases also contain a number of different types of map. These include physical maps, political maps and a variety of other maps showing many different features as in drawing A. Maps like these are called thematic maps because they show a particular topic, or theme, in a specific area.

Atlases have changed over recent years. Many now show much more data on maps and include diagrams and tables of statistics. To use an atlas properly you need to look carefully at the contents page. This can be found at the front of the atlas and gives the page number for every map, table and diagram in the book. The index at the back of the book shows exactly where a particular place may be found.

Types of atlas map

Physical maps show natural features such as mountains, rivers and vegetation. Climate maps may also be included in this group.

Political maps only show countries with their main towns and cities. Sometimes main roads and railways are also drawn.

Other maps may show information on topics such as population, land use, industry and employment.

Activities

1. a. Look at the contents page shown in drawing D.
   b. Physical
   c. Political
   d. Others

2. Use an atlas to add three further maps to each group.

3. a. How many countries are there in South America?
   b. For each country, name the capital city.
   c. Copy and complete table E below for Buenos Aires, Lima, La Paz, Manaus and São Paulo. Use the information on atlas maps B, C, F and G. Use an atlas to collect the same information about three places in Europe, including where you live.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Natural vegetation</th>
<th>Annual rainfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Grassland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

An atlas provides us with all sorts of information, both physical and human. Using the contents and index helps us make the best use of an atlas.
How can we describe physical features on a map?

Knowing how to describe features on a map is an important and useful skill in geography. Maps, however, show a large amount of information and it can be difficult to identify and describe the main features of an area. Using a simple checklist or set of key questions can make the task easier.

In physical geography we need to describe the relief, drainage and vegetation, as shown in drawing A. To describe the relief on a map you need to use contour lines and spot heights. Contour lines show the height of the land and what shape it is. Spot heights give the exact height of the land at that location. Vegetation is sometimes difficult to identify but is usually shown by symbols which are explained in the map key.

Look at the key questions below and see how you could use them to describe the physical features of map C opposite.

1. What is the overall relief of the area? Is it mainly flat, hilly or mountainous?
2. What height is the land? What are the highest and lowest points?
3. Are there any valleys? If there are, how many, and what shape are they? Do they lie in a particular direction?
4. Are there any rivers? If there are, what size and shape are their channels?
5. Are there any other surface water features, such as lakes and marshes? If there are, how many, and what are they like?
6. Is the coastline flat or steeply sloping? Are there any beaches or cliffs?
7. Is the coastline flat or steeply sloping? Are there any beaches or cliffs?
8. Does the coast have bays or headlands? Is it broken by river mouths or estuaries?
9. Are there any other coastal features to identify?
10. Are there any other coastal features to identify?

Activities

1. Look at the eight places circled on map C. Match the letters to each of the following relief features:
   1. Gentle slope
   2. Steep slope
   3. Narrow ridge
   4. Rocky outcrops
   5. Flat valley floor
   6. Steep-sided valley
   7. Round hill
   8. Smooth shoreline

2. Read description D of the area shown on map C above. Copy and complete the description using the following words:

   The area is part of the Lake District and is rugged and mountainous. The land is generally ... sloping and is a mixture of rounded ..., and narrow ... . The highest peak, High Dodd, is over ... metres in height.

   Most of the valleys in the area are ..., and steep-sided. The southern part of the area is drained by three ... which flow into Ullswater. Most of the area is rough ..., with a few small areas of ... . The north shoreline of Ullswater is mainly ..., and has some ... .

Summary

Physical features on a map include relief, drainage and vegetation. They may be described using a simple checklist.
How can we describe human features on a map?

Maps usually show both physical and human features. Physical features are the natural part of the environment, such as mountains, rivers and lakes. Human features are those that have been made by people. These include settlement, communications and how people use the land.

As we have seen on page 108, a simple checklist or set of key questions can make the task of describing map features much easier. Look at the key questions below and see how you could use them to describe the human features on maps B and C.

1. **What is the pattern of settlement?**
   - Are there a lot of towns and villages or only a few?
   - Are they spread evenly throughout the area or grouped together in certain places?

2. **What are the towns and villages like?**
   - Where are they located?
   - What is their site and situation?
   - Are they on high land, low land, by a river or the sea or close to resources?

3. **What communications are there?**
   - Are there roads, railways or other forms of transport?
   - Is there a good coverage of main roads or is the area poorly served?

4. **What is the land used for?**
   - Is the area mainly urban or mainly rural?
   - Are there any farms, forests, industrial areas or tourist facilities to be seen?

Activities

1. Look at the nine places circled on map C. Match the letters to each of the following human features:
   1. Farm (Fm)
   4. Ferry
   7. Tourist facility
   2. Main road
   5. Woodland
   8. Coastal walk
   3. Minor road
   6. River Dart
   9. Water activities

2. Read description D of the area shown on map C above. Copy and complete the description using the following words:

   - This part of south Devon has few ............ but many small farms scattered across the area. The largest town is ............ . It is on the ............ bank of the river Dart.
   - Communications are poor with only one ............ serving the area. A few ............ give access to other parts of the area. A number of ............ cross the River Dart.
   - The area is mainly ............ with most of the land given to farming. ............ is also important, with several ............, walks and ............ available.

Summary

Human features on a map include settlement, communications and how people use the land. They may be described using a simple checklist.