

Geographical enquiry: using data

Geography teachers are fortunate in the wide range of information and the variety of forms of secondary data they have available to them to help students understand the complex world in which we live.

Students can collect first hand data through fieldwork; one common form of evidence collected is through questionnaires and surveys. Other types of data¹ include:

- reports
- newspaper articles
- advertisements
- brochures
- photographs
- paintings
- film
- cartoons
- Google Earth
- Google Street View
- atlas maps
- OS maps
- weather maps
- statistics
- graphs
- personal knowledge
- artefacts.

The key role for the teacher is to identify what sources of geographical information they want students to use. Decide whether you will ask students to find the data themselves, or provide the sources and expect them to select information that is relevant. Often an important consideration in selecting the information to use is whether you can provide students with access to different viewpoints?

Reading

- Roberts, M. (2013) *Geography Through Enquiry: Approaches to teaching and learning in the secondary school*. Sheffield: Geographical Association. Chapter 6 'Using source materials: an evidence-based approach'

Questions to consider as you read and explore resources

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources of data?
- What criteria do you use to select the data you ask your students to use?
- What are the disadvantages of summarizing information or data for your students? Are there any advantages?

¹ This list is taken from Margaret Roberts' presentation at a GA lecture in 2009. You may also wish to refer to the GA webpage on *Using resources* for further teaching ideas and information about resources you can explore.

- What is the advantage of including 'red herrings' or irrelevant information in source materials?
- Can a video provide evidence?
- What role do literacy and numeracy play in students' access to data? [It is important to take account of the accessibility of source materials to all students in the class and any difficulties individuals might have with specific types of source material.]
- How do you encourage students to consider potential bias in data?
- How can layers of inference be used to help students to make inferences from the data?

Further reading

- Taylor. E. (2004) *Re-Presenting Geography*, London: Chris Kington Publishing

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