

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Inspiration for introducing People and Economic Activity

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Trends in the HSC Geography examination indicate that we can expect one short answer question that will involve a skills construction and/or ask students to apply one of the 'learn to' dot points of our syllabus. Asking students to recommend a management strategy for an ecosystem presented in the stimulus seems quite achievable as the syllabus requires students to do an overview of Ecosystems at Risk before launching into their case studies. But what about People and Economic Activity? In this topic, teachers generally launch straight into a chosen economic activity and work through the 'learn about' dot points. Examples include viticulture, chocolate, coffee, dairying and tourism.

The syllabus doesn't require a general overview of what economic activity is, or the relevance of Geography to economic activity, however the 'learn to' points of the syllabus expect students to apply a range of skills to a variety of stimulus on this topic. This poses the question of how to prepare students to respond to stimulus on an economic activity they haven't studied in the HSC examination.

In the 2016 HSC Student Lecture series, I presented on this possibility; focusing on construction of precis maps and using stimulus to describe factors affecting the nature, spatial patterns and future directions of any economic activity and possible impacts. This article describes how this could be broken down into a series of exercises that could be used in the classroom when introducing the topic 'People and Economic Activity'.

Activity One: So what is economic activity and why are geographers concerned with it?

The students could write the following up as notes, or use the information as a discussion starter to get them thinking about the topic.

So what is economic activity?

Economic activity is any action that involves the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services at all levels within a society. We generally divide economic activity into a number of sectors:

- Primary – hunters, gathers, mining, agriculture, forestry
- Secondary – auto production, construction, textiles (value is added to a raw material eg making furniture)
- Tertiary – service industries, infrastructure to transport goods and services.

- Quaternary – the knowledge economy, a high percentage of population working in research
- Quinary – services that focus on the creation, re-arrangement and interpretation of new and existing ideas; data interpretation and the use and evaluation of new technologies.

Why are Geographers concerned with Economic Activity?

- We are Geographers so naturally we are concerned with any economic activity that uses the physical environment to produce/consume goods and services.
- We want to know the spatial dimension – what and where?
- We want to know the ecological dimension – how does the environment affect us producing or consuming the activity, how do we affect the environment by producing or consuming the activity?

Geographers are concerned with spatial associations; the study of the location, distribution and spatial organisation of economic activities across the world. Often it is this spatial association that will have a close tie to political links, cultural integration, urban agglomerations, human development and ecosystems at risk. In addition, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy rely on physical environments and the resources they yield to produce goods and services. Finally Geographers are also concerned with the impacts these activities will have on ecosystems, how they will inform culture and ultimately improve quality of life.

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Activity Two: Introducing economic activity in your classroom

When starting this topic a quick overview of what economic activity is, and why we are studying it in Geography is essential. Introducing a piece of stimulus such as the one below, is a good way to get students thinking about the spatial and ecological dimensions of economic activity.

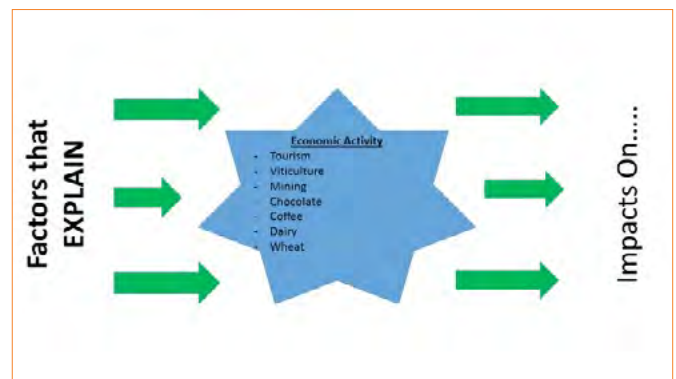


Source: https://www.google.com.au/search?q=economic+activity+map&espv=2&biw=1093&bih=510&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiRL_Tbi6zQAhXEjZQKHcV0B7IQ_AUIBigB#imgsrc=JmFtSBUEeqklhM%3A

Using this image you can ask students to:

- List the types of economic activity presented and divide them into the different sectors of the economy eg rice farming – primary sector.
- List five inquiry questions they would like answered about the economic activities presented eg
 - “What climatic conditions are needed to grow rice?”
 - “How do they mine copper?”
 - “What resources are used in the manufacturing of cement?”
 - “What impact does petrol refining have on the environment?”
 - “How many people are employed in the steel mill?”

At this point you can introduce the syllabus dot points and use a series of diagrams, similar to those below, that will support student’s understanding of how this topic is studied and how Geographers study economic activity.



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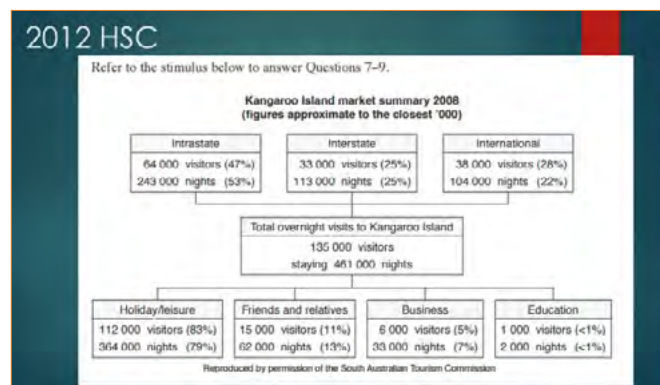
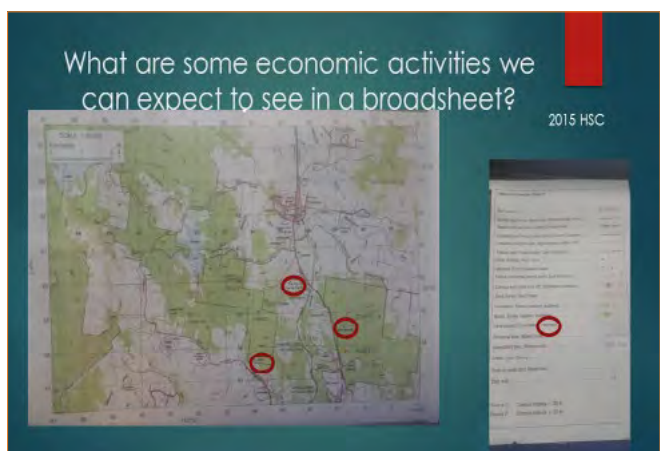
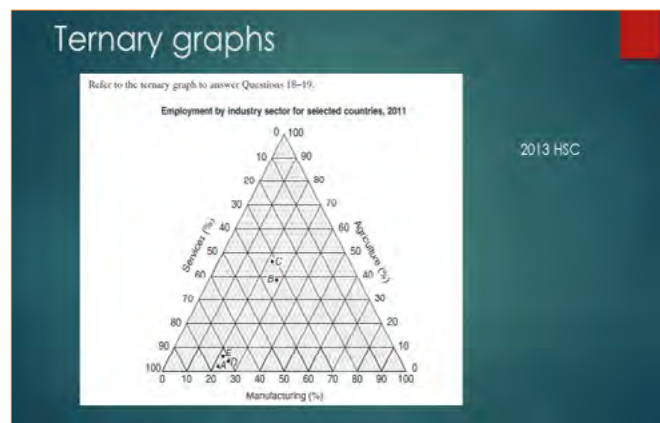
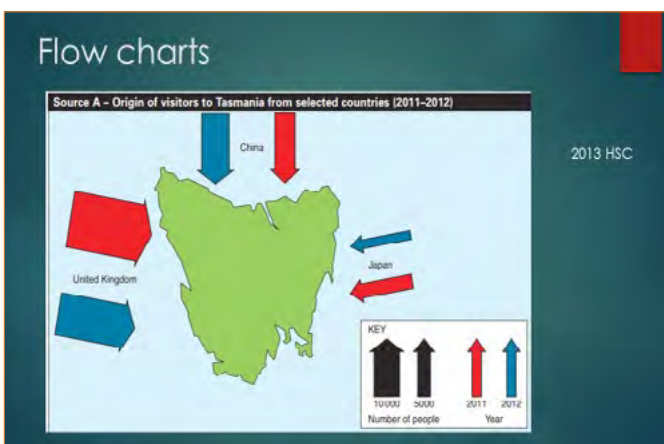


Spending time explaining the syllabus terms and providing students with explanations of what each factor is and how it might affect the spatial patterns, nature and future directions of different economic activities will not only help students apply stimulus to the topic in an examination situation, it should provide them with a solid understanding of how their learning for this topic will be structured.

After going through these elements ask students if their inquiry questions (from activity 2) reflect the syllabus dot points and ask them to match each question with a syllabus dot point. For example "What climatic conditions are needed to grow rice?" is to do with a biophysical factor affecting the nature and spatial patterns of rice farming.

Activity Three: What sort of stimulus based questions could I be asked in the HSC examination?

At this point of the introduction show the students examples of a variety of stimulus that has been presented in HSC examinations in relation to People and Economic Activity. Examples include:



Show students an example a stimulus based question such as that in the 2010 HSC examination in which they had to describe factors affecting and impacts of an economic activity, in the stimulus material, most likely an economic activity they have little knowledge of.

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As a group discuss and scaffold an answer to this question.

Question 21 (7 marks)

Identify an economic activity from the sources on page 4 of the Stimulus Booklet.

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(a) Describe ONE factor related to the nature of this economic activity. 3

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(b) Describe TWO environmental impacts of this economic activity. 2

(i) 2

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(ii) 2

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Demonstrate that in previous years examiners have asked students to identify an economic enterprise from a stimulus piece. Talk through and scaffold an answer to this question as well.

Question 18 (8 marks)

Refer to Source E on page 3 of the Stimulus Booklet to answer parts (a)–(d).

(a) Identify an economic enterprise operating in Vancouver. 1

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(b) State the location of this economic enterprise. 1

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(c) State TWO locational factors for this economic enterprise. 2

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(d) Outline possible human impacts on the biophysical environment of the economic enterprise identified in part (a). 4

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2007 HSC

- locational factors
- ecological dimensions including environmental constraints, climate, and human impacts on the environment such as pollution and ecological sustainability

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Source E – Vancouver topographic map (1986)



Activity Four: Application

It is at this point, I've had success in asking students to focus their attention back on the original piece of stimulus that we used for activity two and complete the following questions:

1. Identify one economic activity
2. Identify TWO factors that affect it's nature
3. Describe how ONE factor determines the spatial pattern of the economic activity
4. Outline how ONE factor will determine the future directions of the economic activity
5. Discuss TWO impacts of this economic activity

Activity Five: Skills construction

A final activity in the introduction of People and Economic Activity could be to ask students to use a topographic map to create a precis map of the economic activity on the map.

- A precis map is designed to summarise the features of an area shown in the map.
- It is usually a simple map showing one feature eg vegetation type, land use, land reclamation (2009 HSC examination question)

Précis maps have not been used in past HSC exams for this topic but have been in the Catholic trial exam paper. They have however been used for ecosystems at risk.

Example: Use a topographic such as the map of Coffs Harbour from the MacMillan 'Keys to Geography' textbook (page 55). Photocopy your selected map and mark in some plantations and sand mines. After completing the construction of the precis map, run students through a series of questions, similar to the ones they have already discussed.

Part A

1. Outline the spatial distribution of economic activity in Coffs Harbour
2. Identify ONE economic activity operating in Coffs Harbour and explain ONE factor that explains the nature of the activity
3. Outline one social, environmental and economic impact of this economic activity

Part B

1. Identify ONE economic enterprise operating at a local scale in Coffs Harbour
2. State the location of the economic enterprise
3. State TWO locational factors that explain the location of the economic enterprise
4. Describe ONE environmental constraint that could affect the operation of this economic enterprise.
5. Outline TWO possible human impacts on the biophysical environment of the economic enterprise identified.

Conclusion

By completing this series of activities, students should have a more thorough understanding of what the topic is about, the syllabus specifications, the learning structure they will follow when they study an economic activity in class, and more importantly how they could be asked stimulus based People and Economic Activity questions in the HSC examination.

This series of exercises is also very useful at the end of the topic (especially for low to middle ability groups), when there is time to complete revision on your case study and ask students to apply what they have learnt to a new stimulus.

NOTE: All screen captures by Alexandria Lucas.