

GLOSSARY OF GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

A	
abrasion	a type of erosion involving rock particles being scraped against, and wearing away, the surface of other rocks
active	a volcano which is constantly or frequently erupting
air mass	a very large body of air with relatively uniform temperature and moisture characteristics
air pressure	the weight of the air above a reference point, measured in millibars
anticyclone	an area of high air pressure bringing clear skies
arch	a coastal feature created by the erosion of back to back caves
atmosphere	the layer of air round the earth
attrition	a type of erosion involving rock fragments being ground together to become smaller, smoother and rounder
B	
backwash	the outgoing water from a coastal wave
bay	an area of sea between two headlands
beach	material which the sea deposits on the coast
biodiversity	the number and variety of all living things within an ecosystem
birth rate	the number of babies born per thousand of the population per year
braiding	a river feature consisting of islands of sediment deposited in the river channel in its middle course
BRIC countries	countries with rapidly expanding economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
brownfield site	disused or derelict urban land which is available for redevelopment
business park	a development of offices and industrial units
bypass	a road built round a town
C	
CBD	Central Business District: the commercial and business centre of a town or city, with highest land values
climate	the average weather over many years
collision boundary	where continental plates collide, forming mountain chains
compass	an instrument used to identify direction
condense	gas becoming liquid
confluence	the point where two rivers (including tributaries) meet
conservative boundary	where two tectonic plates slide past each other, but where crust is neither formed nor destroyed
conserve	not to waste resources
constructive boundary	where two tectonic plates move apart from each other and new crust is formed
containerisation	to transport goods in standard-sized, sealed containers
continent	a large land mass (a total of seven)
contour line	a line on an OS map joining all points of the same height
convection current	heated plumes of magma which create crustal plate movement
convectonal rain	rain formed by the sun heating the land surface causing moist air to rise, condense and produce heavy rainfall
core	the centre of the Earth
corrosion	a chemical process involving the dissolving away of sedimentary rocks, e.g. chalk, limestone; a type of erosion by water involving the dissolving away of rock, particularly limestone and chalk

crust	the thin outer layer of solid rock round the Earth's surface
D	
death rate	the number of deaths per thousand of the population per year
delta	a depositional landform created where a river splits into numerous outlets
desert	an area receiving less than 250 mm of precipitation per year
destructive boundary	where an oceanic plate slides underneath a continental plate or another oceanic plate
detached	a house which is completely separate from other houses
dispersed	spread out
distribution	the spread of places, people or data
dormant	inactive
drainage basin	an area of land which is drained by a single river and its tributaries
drought	a prolonged period of below average precipitation
E	
earthquake	a sudden and violent shaking of the ground caused by tectonic movements
easting	a vertical grid line on an OS map
ecosystem	an area displaying a distinctive interaction between plants, animals and the physical environment
eco-tourism	low impact tourism aimed at protecting the natural environment and local cultures
environment	the air, land, water, plants and wildlife
epicentre	the point on the Earth's surface directly above the focus of an earthquake
Equator	the imaginary line running round the middle of the Earth
erosion	the wearing away of land by material carried in rivers, glaciers, waves and wind
estuary	the final section of a river, subject to tides
ethnic group	people of the same cultural background
evaporate	liquid turning to gas
exploit	to seek and to use a natural resource for human benefit
extinct	no longer in existence (of animals); no longer active (of volcanoes)
F	
fault	a line of weakness in rock
fetch	the maximum distance over which wind can blow to form a wave
fieldwork	an enquiry which takes place outside the classroom
floodplain	the flat area either side of a river which is regularly flooded
focus	the point underground where the rock breaks and the energy of an earthquake is released
fog	cloud at ground level (reducing visibility to less than 1km)
front	the boundary between warm and cool air masses
frontal rainfall	rain formed when warm, moist air rises over cold air, causing condensation and precipitation
function	the activities of a settlement
G	
geothermal energy	heat and electricity produced from hot, underground water
gorge	a deep, steep-sided valley
greenfield site	land which has not previously been built on
grid reference	a number which locates an area on a map
globalisation	the ways in which companies, ideas and lifestyles spread round the world

	and interact with one another
H	
habitat	an area in which plants and animals have adapted in order to survive there
headland	a promontory of resistant rock which juts out into the sea
hemisphere	half of the globe
hierarchy	a ranking of settlements according to their size, functions or importance
high order settlement	a settlement which contains top- level shops and services
HS2	High Speed Railway 2 - a planned high-speed railway proposed to run between London (Euston) and the Midlands and the North of England
humidity	the moisture in the air
hydro-electric power	electricity produced by water being released through dam turbines
hydraulic action	a process of erosion involving water and air trapped in cracks and crevices
I	
igneous	a type of rock/process/landform involving magma
impermeable	not allowing water to pass through
infiltration	the movement of water from surface into the soil
interception	precipitation landing on plants, trees or buildings
irrigation	the artificial watering of crops
isotherm	a line on a map joining points of equal temperature
J	
jet stream	a fast-flowing, narrow air current found in the atmosphere
joint	a crack in bedrock
K	
key	a list giving the meaning of symbols on a map
L	
lahar	a product of volcanic eruptions, composed of a mixture of ash and water
land use	the way in which land is put to use by humans
landfill	the disposal of waste in natural or man-made holes in the ground
lava	molten rock at the Earth's surface
LEDC	Less Economically Developed Country
levée	an embankment next to a river channel, raised above the flood plain
life expectancy	the average age which men and women may expect to reach in a particular country
linear	extending in a line
longshore drift	the movement of sand and pebbles along a beach by wave action
low order settlement	a settlement which contains few basic shops and services
lower course	the stage of a river as it nears the sea, dominated by the process of deposition
M	
magma	molten rock beneath the Earth's crust
mantle	the semi-solid mass of rock beneath the Earth's crust
market	the place/point where goods and services are sold
meander	a bend in a river found in its middle and lower courses
metamorphic a rock	that has undergone transformation by heat and/or pressure
MEDC	More Economically Developed Country
microclimate	the local climate of a small area e.g. a garden

middle course	the stage of a river between its upper and lower sections, containing a mixture of erosion and deposition
migration	the movement of people from one place to another
mouth	the point where a river enters a sea, ocean or lake
N	
national park	an area of countryside of outstanding beauty which is protected from development
natural increase	a rise in population caused by a greater number of births than deaths
NIC	Newly Industrialised Country
North Atlantic Drift	an ocean current which warms coastal areas in western Europe
northing	a horizontal grid line on an OS map
nucleated	clustered together
O	
oxbow lake	the cut-off remnant of a meander found in the lower course of a river
OS	Ordnance Survey
P	
permeable	allowing water to flow through, e.g. joints in rocks
plate boundary	the point where two tectonic plates meet
plate tectonics	the theory explaining how the Earth's crust is able to move
plunge pool	a deep pool which is formed by erosion at the base of a waterfall
pollution	damage to the environment as a result of human activity
porous	able to hold water like a sponge, allowing it to flow through
precipitation	rain, snow, hail or sleet
prevailing wind	the most common direction of wind e.g. SW in the British Isles
primary industry	an economic activity involving the collecting of food and raw materials from the Earth
primary data	information gathered in person through fieldwork
pull factors	reasons why migrants are attracted to a destination
push factors	reasons why migrants leave their homes to go elsewhere
pyroclastic flow	a cloud of superheated gas and ash ejected from a volcano
Q	
quaternary industry	a high-tech industry involving research and manufacturing, employing highly- skilled workers, e.g. computer chips, pharmaceuticals
R	
rapids	fast-flowing, white-water section of the upper course of a river
raw material	mineral and agricultural resources which can be processed to make something else
recycling	the reuse of waste material
relief	the height and shape of land
relief rainfall	rain formed when moist air is forced to rise over highland, causing cooling, condensation and precipitation
renewable energy	a sustainable source of power which can be used indefinitely (e.g. wind, solar, tidal)
reservoir	a lake behind a dam
resource	any product of the environment which can be used for the benefit of people
retail	the sale of products to the public
river basin	an area of land drained by a river and its tributaries
river cliff	a steep, undercut area on the outside of a river meander

route	a line of transport, e.g., road, rail, sea or air
run-off	the movement of water across a surface
rural	relating to the countryside
S	
saltation	the transport of sand in a hopping fashion in water or air
science park	a development of high-tech industries often close to a university
scree	piles of broken rock found beneath steep rock faces
secondary data	information collected by a third party
secondary industry	an economic activity involving the manufacturing of goods
sedimentary rock	layered rock formed by the deposition of sediments
seismic wave	a shock wave produced by earthquakes
seismometer	a sensitive instrument used to measure earthquakes
semi-detached	a house joined on one side to another
service industry	an economic activity such as retail, administration, education, healthcare or tourism
settlement pattern	the shape and spacing of settlements
settlement	a place where people live
site	the exact location of a settlement
situation	the location of a settlement in relation to the surrounding area (its environs)
slip-off slope	a gently-sloping area formed on the inside of a river meander
solution	the transport of a soluble load in water
spit	an extended beach which grows by deposition across a bay or river mouth
social	relating to society
source	the beginning of a river
stack	a pillar of rock which stands in the sea
stewardship	looking after resources in a sustainable way for the future
subduction zone	the downward movement of crust at a destructive plate boundary
suburb	the residential and commercial development at the edge of a city
sunrise industry	a newly-developed, growing business sector
sunset industry	a long-established business sector in decline
suspension	the transport of silt in water
sustainable	using resources in a manner which allows them to be available for future generations
swash	an incoming coastal wave
symbol	an image, letter or number used on a map to indicate a particular landscape feature
T	
tectonic plate	a large, rigid section of the Earth's crust
terraced	a house joined to another on both sides, forming rows
tertiary industry	an economic activity providing a service (as opposed to a product) for their customers
throughflow	the movement of water through the soil as part of the water cycle
tourism	a tertiary economic activity involving the commercial organisation of holidays and visits to places of interest
traction	the transport of boulders in a rolling motion in water
transpiration	the release of water vapour into the air from plants
transportation	the movement of eroded material
tributary	a river joining a larger river
tsunami	a sea wave caused by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions

U	
upper course	the section of a river near its source, dominated by the processes of erosion
urban	relating to a town or city
urbanisation	the increase in the percentage of people living in cities
V	
volcano	a mountainous vent or fissure in the Earth's crust which emits lava and other igneous products
volcanic bomb	lava exploded into the air which solidifies as it falls
W	
waterfall	a point on a river where water falls vertically
watershed	an area of highland separating river basins
water table	the upper surface of water in the ground
weather	the day-to-day condition of the atmosphere
weathering	the breakdown of rocks in situ by mechanical, chemical or biological means