



Journey to Mesoamerica

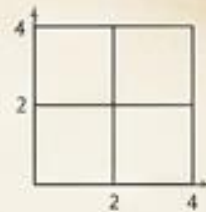
Year 5 Autumn Geography: A Parent's Guide to building young geographers, cartographers, and global citizens.

Field Note

This term, Year 5 is traveling beyond Europe. We are not just learning facts about the ancient Maya; we are training your children to think like geographers—mastering complex map skills, exploring global trade, and understanding how humans settle in extreme landscapes.



The Elevation of a Young Geographer



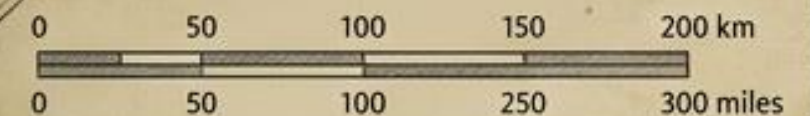
Base Camp
(Prior Knowledge - Year 4)
Comparing our local area to Italy, learning basic 4-figure grid references, and understanding physical features like volcanoes.



The Ascent
(Currently in Year 5)
Pinpointing exact locations using 6-figure grid references, reading complex map scales, in elevations, studying the contrasting biomes of Mesoamerica.



The Summit
(Future Learning - Year 6)
Deep dives into the Industrial Revolution, global environmental challenges, and complex worldwide trade networks.



The Destination: Exploring Mesoamerica

The Land (Physical)

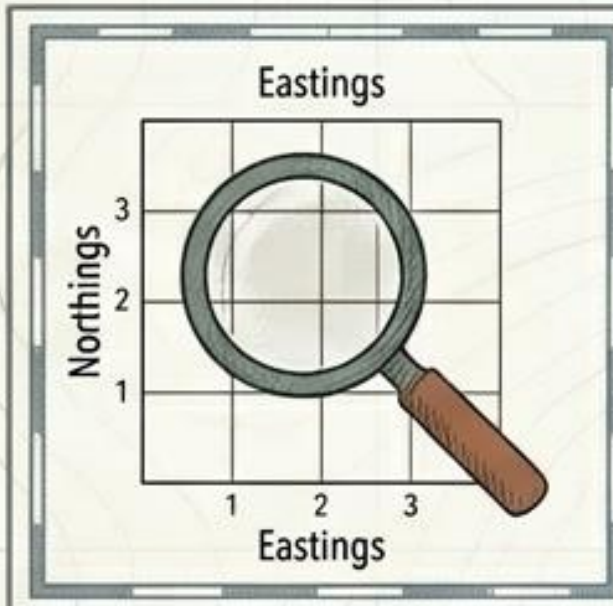
- Navigating dense tropical rainforests and lowland plains.
- Understanding how extreme elevation and highlands shape the climate and vegetation.



The People (Human)

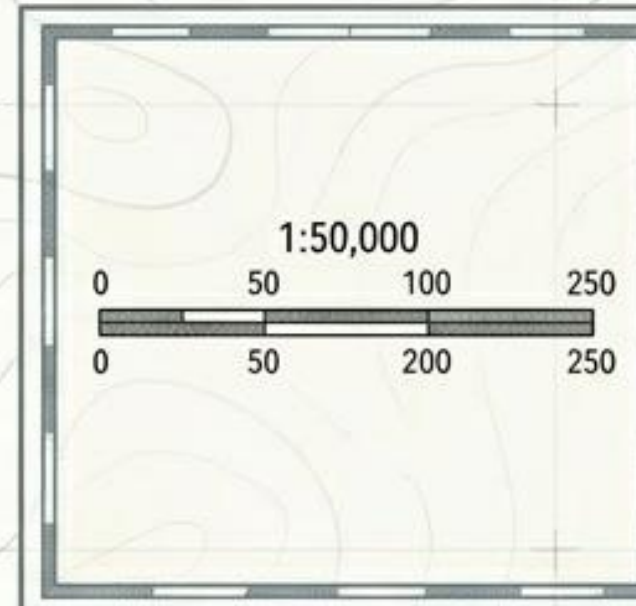
- Uncovering ancient Maya cities like Chichen Itza, Tikal, and Palenque.
- Understanding how humans built massive, sophisticated settlements within these challenging environments.

The Geographer's Toolkit



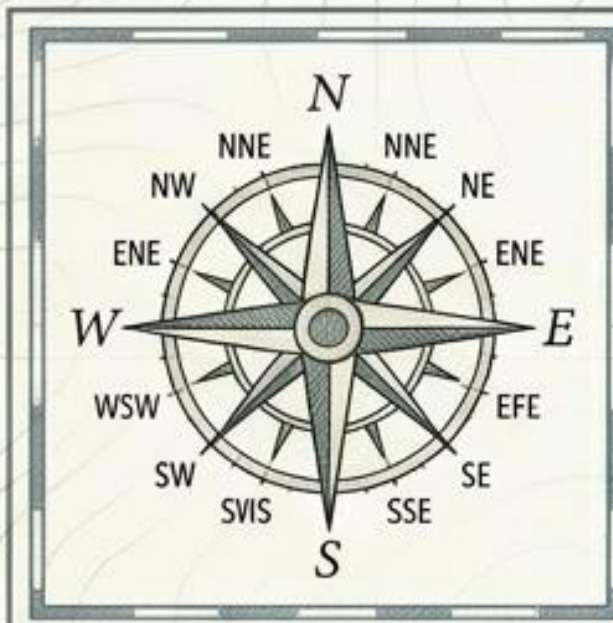
6-Figure Grid References

Pinpointing exact locations on Ordnance Survey maps. (Along the corridor, up the stairs—now with pinpoint, six-number accuracy!)



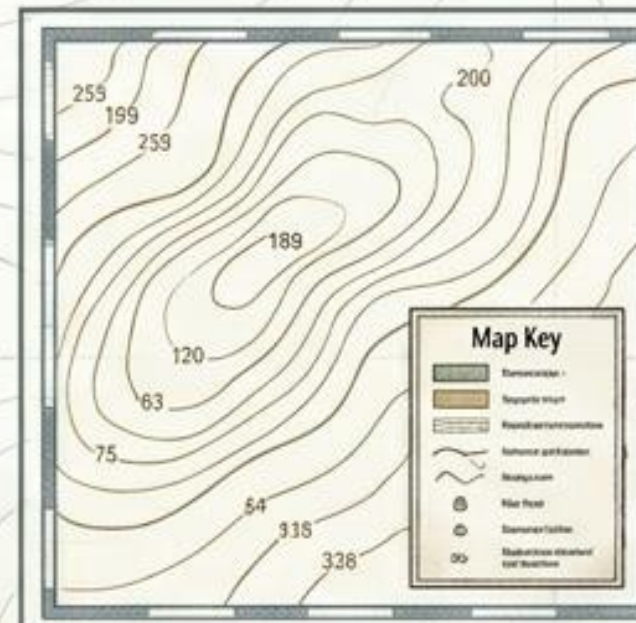
Scale & Distance

Converting map distance to real distance to calculate the vast journeys between ancient Maya cities.



Compass Directions

Moving beyond North, South, East, and West to master the 16-point compass for tracking historical trade routes.



Elevation & Legends

Decoding map keys to identify ruins and reading spot heights to understand the shape and height of the land.

The Story of Chocolate: Economic Geography



Farming & Biomes

How the physical geography of the humid, tropical lowlands allowed Cacao to thrive.



Cacao as Currency

How the ancient Maya valued chocolate so highly that the beans were traded as actual money between cities.



Ancient Trade Networks

Tracing how goods moved across Mesoamerican rivers, footpaths, and major trade hubs like Tikal and Copán.



Global Interdependence

How we use this ancient history to understand modern economic activity—how goods are distributed globally and reach our supermarkets today.



0 50 150 200 km
0 50 250 300 miles

Heart & Mind: Geography and Character

Stewardship of Creation

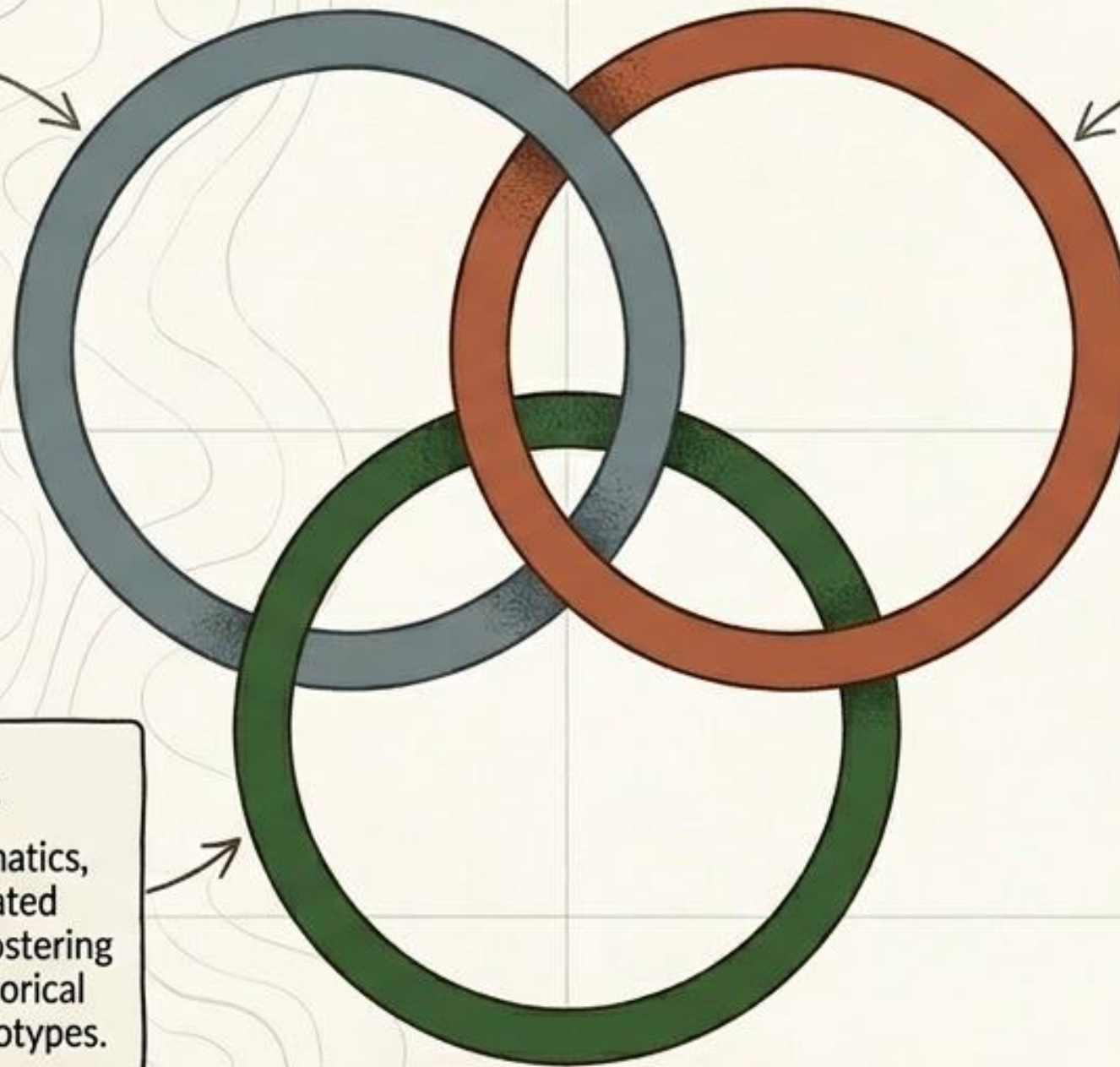
Exploring the fragile rainforest biomes of Mesoamerica.
Recognizing our shared duty to protect the natural environment and global ecosystems from deforestation.

Solidarity & Fair Trade

Looking at the chocolate trade, from ancient times to modern supply chains.
Understanding human dignity, the importance of fair pay for farmers, and recognizing that we are one interconnected global family.

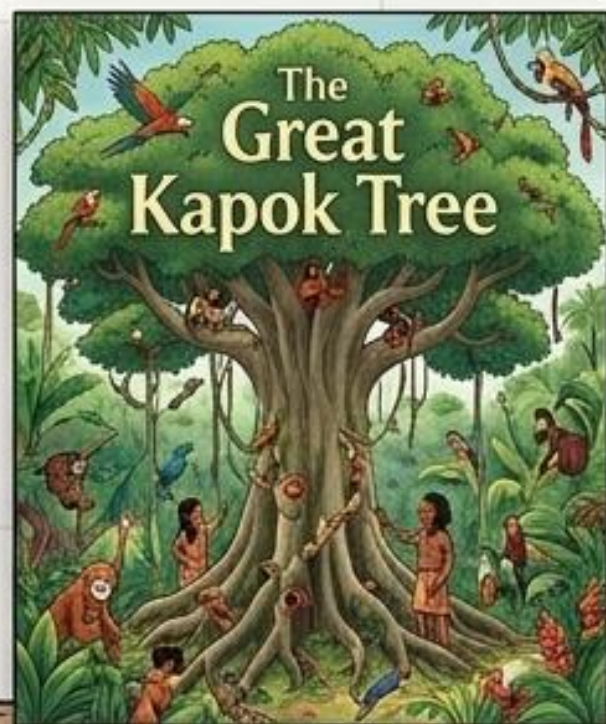
Mutual Respect

Studying the brilliant mathematics, architecture, and sophisticated culture of the ancient Maya. Fostering deep respect for diverse, historical cultures and challenging stereotypes.



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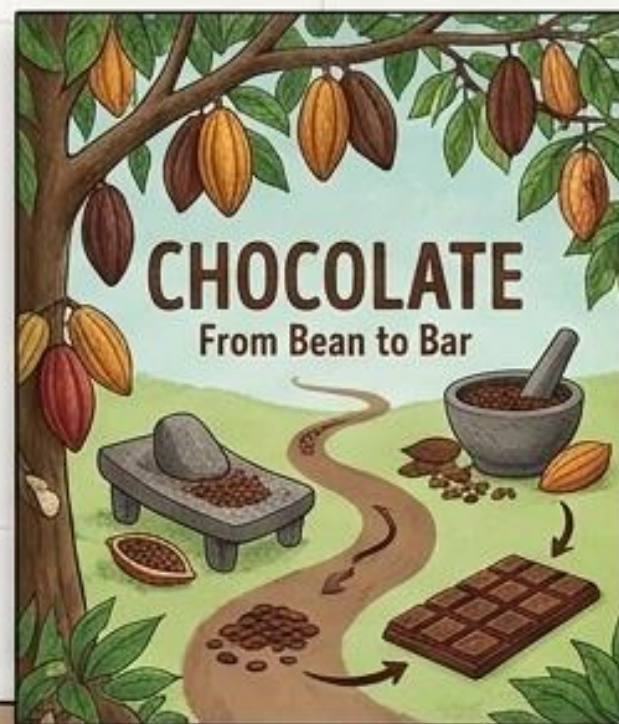
The Geographer's Library



Library index

Why read this?

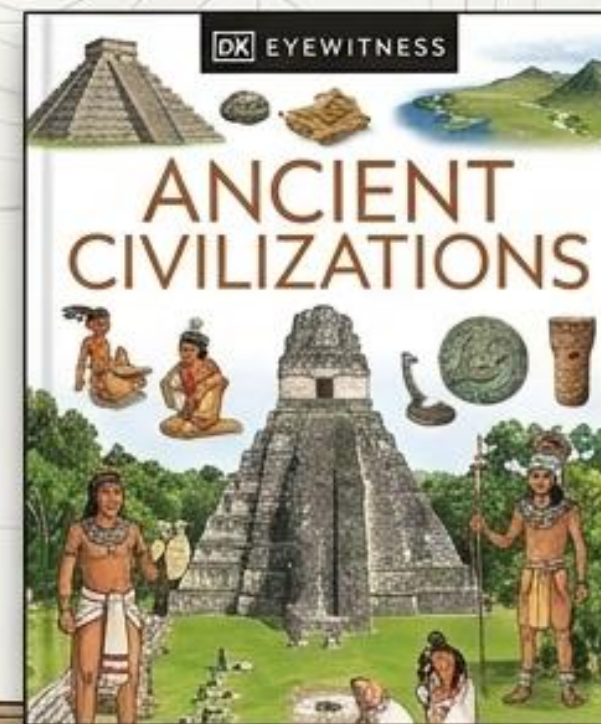
A stunning fiction book perfect for understanding the layers of the rainforest biome and sparking conversations about the Stewardship of Creation.



Library index

Why read this?

A fantastic non-fiction link to our economic geography focus. Use it to trace the journey of trade from a tropical farm to your kitchen cupboard.



Library index

Why read this?

Great for visual learners. Packed with high-quality photos to help children spot human landmarks (pyramids) and physical features.

Talk Like a Geographer Cheat Sheet



Mesoamerica



The historical region in North and Central America where the ancient Maya lived.

Elevation



How high the land is above sea level. (Crucial for understanding why the Maya farmed where they did).

Grid Reference



A system of numbers used to pinpoint exact spots on a map. We are mastering both 4-figure and 6-figure codes.

Legend (Key)



The part of a map that tells us what the symbols mean, helping us easily spot human and physical features.

Bring the Journey Home



The Fairtrade Search

Look for the Fairtrade logo on chocolate or bananas during your next shop. Talk about global trade links and the long journey your food took to get to the UK.

Local Map Navigators

Open Google Earth or an OS map of your local town. Ask your child to point out Human Features (buildings, roads) and Physical Features (parks, rivers, hills).



Documentary Detectives

Watch a nature documentary about Central America. Ask your child to put on their geography glasses and point out different biomes or vegetation belts.

The Family Geography Challenge!

Mission Name: The Local Grid Reference Treasure Hunt

- ☐ **Step 1:** Open an Ordnance Survey map or use Digimap online together as a family.
- ☐ **Step 2:** Locate your house, your child's school, and your favourite local park on the map.
- ☐ **Step 3:** Can you and your child work out the exact 6-figure grid reference for each location? Remember the golden rule: Along the corridor, then up the stairs!

Bonus Discussion

Look at the route between your house and the school. Are the landmarks you pass Human Features or Physical Features? How does the elevation change on your journey?