

Real Geographers series



Meet Binah Cooper, Project Coordinator at the Royal Geographical Society and real-world Geographer!



What do you love about geography?

Geography can be related to everything and anything, and in terms of employment, it provides a wide range of opportunities across lots of different sectors. I have always loved geography because it's all about learning more about the world we live in. Although at school I was mostly interested in learning about physical geography, as I continued to study the subject at A level and university, I really enjoyed the breadth of the subject, especially sciences, politics and economics, and learning about the interconnectedness that is integral to geography as a subject.

Why does geography matter in the world?

Geography is a subject of the past, present and future, and geographers will undoubtedly play a vital role in how we deal with the future issues we face. Not only does geography help you to understand the world we live in, but it also involves learning about multiple perspectives, which is an integral part of unravelling and solving the complex issues that the world faces, especially in terms of climate change.

Why should students get excited about geography as a subject?

Geography is not only an exciting subject in terms of the knowledge you gain about the world, but it also provides you with a wide-ranging set of skills that can be applied to many situations. It's really important that students are interested and excited about geography as the subject is relevant to every part of our lives, across all scales, from how societies will change following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, to why a local housing development may be built in a certain area of your local town, to understanding where the food on our plates has come from.



What is the Royal Geographical Society's Ambassadors programme?

The Royal Geographical Society's Geography Ambassador scheme runs sessions with students in schools, to enthuse young people about the subject and inform students about the opportunities that geography presents when you choose to study the subject at GCSE, A Level and university.

The scheme is really important in providing young people with different perspectives on why individuals choose geography as well as communicating the opportunities associated with studying the subject. Not only does the ambassador scheme include workshops and classroom sessions for students, which cover a range of topics that they may/may not have learnt about, the ambassadors also discuss their own pathways to studying geography, bridging the gap between school and university.

To find out more about the ambassador scheme, visit: <https://www.rgs.org/schools/geography-ambassadors/>

What are your most pressing environmental concerns?

Sadly there are lots of pressing environmental issues and it's difficult to see one as more important than another. Plastic pollution is definitely a big concern in terms of the environmental impact of its production and distribution, the waste and its deeply negative impacts on biodiversity. Although measures have been put in place to reduce the amount of plastic we use in everyday life, sadly this is not enough. However, we can start to change this, by considering whether we want to change our diets, using reusable containers for food/drink and using your own bags for shopping.



Air pollution is also not only a pressing environmental concern, but a public health issue. The introduction of electric vehicles, as well as a push to use more public/active transport is definitely a step in the right direction, but we all need to work together to change the way we build communities, to reduce car dependency into the future and create inclusive, liveable neighbourhoods for everyone.



What tips do you have for schools, teachers and pupils on being more sustainable / eco-friendly?

It's quite easy to feel overwhelmed when you're thinking about how you can do your bit to be more sustainable and reduce your carbon footprint. The best way to start is to look at your everyday life, think about the way you travel. Could you switch a flight for a train journey? Could you cut a car journey to use public transport or do a car share? Even better, could you walk or cycle instead? It's a really easy way of reducing your carbon footprint and also improving your mental and physical wellbeing!

Where is your favourite destination in the world from the point of view of a geographer?

Iceland. Seeing the geographical processes that you learnt about in the classroom happening before your eyes is amazing. Not only can you see volcanic and geothermal activity, but you can see a range of glaciers, including the glacial lagoon where James Bond was filmed! Visiting Iceland as a student definitely was a contributing factor in my continued interest in geography.

What would you say to students passionate about the world and thinking about taking their geography studies further?

Go for it! Geography is a really wide-ranging and ever-changing subject. More than ever, we need more geographers to be actively involved in solving the problems for future generations – from environmental degradation, to the refugee crisis, to public health, geographers have the skillset required to solve these issues. Studying geography is about piecing together elements of the subject that interest you – every option is open to you!

To find out more about Binah Cooper and the Royal Geographical Society visit: <https://www.rgs.org/>

For more inspiration on why Geography matters in the world, and our Real Geographers series, go to: [Historians and Geographers of the future](#)