

# THE PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY

## Interview

Amy and Ella Meek

Amy and Ella Meek, aged 16 and 14, are the founders of Kids Against Plastic. This is a youth action charity project that seeks to address plastic waste through learning, doing and mapping. In this interview Amy and Ella share their thoughts on what geography means to them and consider how geography has empowered them to take action for the environment.

### What does geography mean to you?

**Ella:** For me, geography is all about understanding Earth and the complexity of it, but also how fragile it all is. And that understanding can really give you more of an appreciation for the planet that we live on.

**Amy:** Yes, similar to Ella, what geography means to me is just understanding more about how the world works so looking at the different processes that help to keep us and the other species alive and also looking at how Earth has evolved over time to become the planet that it is today.

### What is your most memorable experience of geography at school?

**Amy:** Well my most memorable experience of geography wasn't actually when we were officially at school. It was when we



Amy and Ella Meek. Images all courtesy of Kids Against Plastic.

were being home-schooled by our parents for about three years. I remember we went to East Yorkshire and we were looking at the coast there. We were looking at coastal erosion. I remember seeing these pictures of this house that a couple of decades ago was on top of the cliff and yet now when you looked at it there was no house there. There was some bits of rubble and some bricks, drainpipes, and things, but the house was somewhere at the bottom of the cliff in the ocean. That was really memorable to me because we could see first-hand the impact that coastal erosion is having on coastal communities and the defences we are developing against it.

**Ella:** It is the same for me in terms of my most memorable experience was probably also whilst we were being home-schooled. For me it was probably when we were learning to read maps, learning about contours, grid references, co-ordinates, everything like that. It was really interesting for me, and an important skill for later on in life that I'll never forget.

### What is your favourite place?

**Ella:** My favourite place that we have been to is probably the Azores. It is a group of islands that are a thousand miles away from Portugal and any other land, which is incredible as a fact on its own. But also, the culture there is amazing. They still actually cook in the ground because there's

still geothermic activity there. It is also still volcanically active, which really added an amazing experience when we were there. Also, when you are going to different parts of the islands the landscape is completely different. It is crazy to think that it can be so different just on such a small group of islands.

**Amy:** My favourite place has to be France. When we were travelling we had an amazing trip where we went from in the North around near Paris. Then we went through the Alps and then down to the south coast. The Cote D'Azur, in particular, that was breath-taking. You would be driving along the coast and you would see these incredible red rock features and stony beaches and just to see how much the landscape changes in one country, it was so incredible. Then we even got a chance to go through the Pyrenees, down to Spain to explore some of the mountains around Madrid. That was really memorable for me and France and Spain have to be at the top on my list of favourite places.

### What is your favourite geographical activity?

**Amy:** I think my favourite geographical activity is picking up litter then logging it on our app that we have got. So, we developed it last year in collaboration with ESRI. It is really interesting because it creates a map of different types of litter around the UK and around the world.



It is also freely accessible for students so you can collect litter and log it on the app as part of your GIS work in geography in school.

**Ella:** My favourite activity would have to be geocaching. I think it is a really fun activity because it mixes in the skills of map reading and trying to find out where the object is through co-ordinates and grid references. But it also mixes that with a bit of technology, which can make it really fun and also more engaging for you and your kids.

## How important is geography?

**Ella:** I think geography is really important because it helps the younger generation really understand our planet and how it works. I think through that understanding they can develop a real care and respect for it. So hopefully as they grow up, they will want to protect and preserve the planet in any way they can.

**Amy:** Also, I think geography shows how interconnected so many things on Earth are. Geography is so closely

linked to environmental issues, like climate change, because some of the key issues of climate change are more extreme weather patterns, storms and the need to develop more sustainable cities. So, I think in order to think of solutions for this and to combat our negative effects on the planet we need to be able to understand it in the first place.

## What have you learnt from geography?

**Amy:** Geography has taught me what my place on the planet is, I think, as just one person on the planet. Geography really shows you all the different complex systems there are on Earth, things like the different weather patterns, different landscapes, ocean currents and you know it really shows how complex all of these systems are and how vital they are for our life on Earth and other species as well. I think it has really shown me how important it is to try to combat environmental issues and to protect the planet.

**Ella:** We both grew up with an understanding and care for the environment. Some of that came through the learning that we did from geography. It has really given us this passion we have developed about these environmental issues facing the planet. So that's probably now why we do what we do – Kids Against Plastic.



## Web Resources

Kids Against Plastic website: <https://www.kidsagainstplastic.co.uk/>  
 Ted talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVxtlqHjxvo>  
 PowerPoint links to videos of this interview: [www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography](http://www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography)

Inspired by the UN's Global Goals and concerned by the impact of single-use plastic on the environment, Amy and Ella launched the Kids Against Plastic campaign. This group has three key aims:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the problems caused by plastic misuse
- Encourage and support others to become 'Plastic Clever' and reduce single-use plastics
- Empower children and young people to believe they can make a difference.

Find out more at the website.