

1996 iGeo – The Hague, The Netherlands

The Quiz

Introduction

The third part of the International Geography Competition was a quiz. The quiz consisted of thirty questions, arranged in three sets of ten questions each. There were three categories of questions: the first set of questions was about maps, the second about water and the third about regional geography. Maps were chosen because they are key tools for geographers. As Hartshorne said in 1969: "If a geographical problem cannot be studied fundamentally with maps, then it is questionable whether or not it is geography".

Water was the central focus for the second set of quiz questions because the main theme of the IGU congress in 1996 was 'Land, sea and human effort'. Water is a vital element in life on earth. The distribution and use of water are of great importance to nature and to society and therefore geographically very interesting.

The third and last set of quiz questions concerned regional geography. Area studies on different scales are typical for geography. Every region tells its fascinating story about how the interaction between man and nature shapes and changes the landscape and society.

The authors of the quiz intended to develop a test that requires basic geographical thinking skills. They wanted to avoid all too obvious quiz questions like: 'What is the capital of Denmark?' or 'What is the main export product of India?' The idea is to ask the contestants to analyse information in maps, diagrams or photographs. Thus, the quiz does not intend to test the ability of the contestants to reproduce geographical facts but to test their skills in geographical analysis.

Another reason to stress skills in stead of knowledge, is the fact that the five teams came from different countries (Belgium, Slovenia, Poland, Germany and the Netherlands) and the geography curricula in these countries vary considerably. So testing geographical skills that form the core of practically every curriculum is more appropriate than asking questions about isolated geographical facts.

To organise and stage a quiz with contestants speaking five different languages and to at the same time involve a big audience proved to be quite a job. A multiple choice test was preferred because it allows asking a large number of questions in a relatively short time. The results could be checked immediately by the computer. To make the quiz attractive for the audience, an experienced quiz master and a native speaker of English - the common language of communication between teams - was needed. We found Rex Walford, a renowned British geographer willing to perform the task. A jury with three respected geographers was installed to oversee the quiz. The maximum time for the whole happening was planned to be 50 minutes. Every team had its own computer and the questions were presented in their own language. The questions were also projected on a big screen in the convention hall for the audience.

Each assignment consisted of a map, diagram or a (set of) photograph(s) and a multiple choice question. There was a time limit set for every question: depending on the complexity of the question, the contestants had 30 to 120 seconds to answer. No bonus was given for a fast answer. The correct answers and the team scores were given by the quiz master after every set of five questions. To get the tests translated in the languages of the competing countries was a huge work. A second problem was to get (and keep) the computer program running. The teams had a try-out session two hours before the quiz: this proved to be very useful. However, to operate a computer network providing the questions for the five teams, each in their own language, and for the audience on a projection screen, was not easy task. Everything worked fine until the last set of five questions, when the network broke down and, after a restart, failed to register the scores of last set of questions. The jury determined the scores for the final five questions in a way that was acceptable for all.

On the next pages you will find some examples from this geography quiz. The examples given are assignments with maps or diagrams. It was not possible to copy a set of coloured photographs for this booklet. These assignments consisted of three photographs of one country and a multiple choice question. Students had to analyse the photographs and to decide which country was shown.

Summary: The third part of the geography competition was the Quiz. The thirty questions fall in three categories or themes.

Themes of the quiz:

1. maps
2. water
3. regional geography

There were ten questions in each category. For every category three examples of questions will be given.