

ANSWER KEY & MARKING SCHEME · CBSE CLASS 12

Human Geography — Nature and Scope

Geography · Chapter 1 · Use this with the Board Paper · Companion to Quick Drill

HOW TO USE

Attempt the Board Paper first (closed-book, full time). Then come here. For 2-mark+ questions, compare your answer to the model. For 3-4 mark questions, also consult the **Topper Templates** below — these show the exact step-by-step structure that scores full marks per CBSE marking-scheme conventions.

MODEL ANSWERS · BOARD PAPER
Section A — VSA (1 mark × 4)
Q1. Who proposed environmental determinism? [1 mark]

Ans: Friedrich Ratzel, in his 1882 book 'Anthropogeography'.

Q2. Define possibilism in one sentence. [1 mark]

Ans: Possibilism is the view that nature offers a range of possibilities, and humans choose among them based on culture, technology, and history.

Q3. Who is associated with 'stop-and-go determinism'? [1 mark]

Ans: Griffith Taylor (Australian, 1880-1963).

Q4. Name 2 subfields of human geography. [1 mark]

Ans: Any two from: urban, rural, economic, political, social, population, settlement, behavioural, historical, medical, transportation, agricultural geography.

Section B — SA-I (3 marks × 2)
Q5. Distinguish between environmental determinism and possibilism. [3 marks]

Ans: ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM (Friedrich Ratzel, 1882): the natural environment DETERMINES human life, culture, and society. Humans are PASSIVE products of climate, soil, and terrain. Rigid view. POSSIBILISM (Paul Vidal de la Blache, ~1900): Nature OFFERS POSSIBILITIES; humans CHOOSE among them through technology, culture, and historical context. Humans are ACTIVE AGENTS. Same environment can give rise to different societies. Possibilism is a middle position — neither dictates nor ignores the environment.

Q6. Name 3 thinkers in human geography with one contribution each. [3 marks]

Ans: (1) FRIEDRICH RATZEL (Germany, 1882) — founded ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM; argued environment shapes societies. (2) PAUL VIDAL DE LA BLACHE (France, ~1900) — proposed POSSIBILISM; nature offers possibilities and humans choose. (3) GRIFFITH TAYLOR (Australia, ~1947) — proposed NEO-DETERMINISM ('stop-and-go determinism'); synthesised the two earlier views.

Section C — SA-II (5 marks × 3)
Q7. Explain the three schools of thought in human geography. [5 marks]

Ans: The central debate in human geography is: HOW MUCH does the natural environment shape human life and culture? Three schools answer differently. (1) ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM (Friedrich Ratzel, Germany, 1882): nature DETERMINES human life. Climate, soil, terrain dictate societies. Humans are PASSIVE products. Critiqued for being too rigid. (2) POSSIBILISM (Paul Vidal de la Blache, France): nature OFFERS POSSIBILITIES; humans CHOOSE among them based on technology, culture, and history. ACTIVE human role. Same environment can yield different outcomes. (3) NEO-DETERMINISM (Griffith Taylor, Australia): 'STOP-AND-GO DETERMINISM' — a SYNTHESIS of the two earlier views. Humans can INNOVATE (possibilism applies) but face ULTIMATE NATURAL LIMITS (determinism applies). When natural barriers are absolute (e.g., extreme cold of Antarctica, desertification), STOP; when nature is adaptable through technology, GO. This is the most accepted view today. CONCLUSION: The three schools represent an evolution of thought — from rigid environmentalism, through human-centric possibilism, to a balanced synthesis.

Q8. Define human geography. Explain its scope by naming 5 subfields with one sentence each. [5 marks]

Ans: DEFINITION: Human geography is the branch of geography that studies the INTERRELATIONSHIP between human society and the physical environment — the spatial dimension of human activities, settlements, cultures, economies, and political systems. Nature: TWO-WAY — naturalisation of humans (adaptation to nature) + humanisation of nature (transforming nature through agriculture, cities, etc.). SCOPE (5 subfields): (1) URBAN GEOGRAPHY — studies cities, urbanisation, slums, urban hierarchies. (2) RURAL GEOGRAPHY — studies villages, agricultural patterns, rural-urban migration. (3) ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY — distribution of agriculture, industry, services, trade, regional inequality. (4) POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY — boundaries, geopolitics, electoral mapping. (5) POPULATION GEOGRAPHY — density, age structure, migration patterns. (Other subfields: settlement, behavioural, social, cultural, historical, medical, transportation, agricultural geography.) Significance: human geography helps us understand modern problems — climate change impacts, urbanisation, migration, inequality — all of which have SPATIAL dimensions.

Q9. How does human geography differ from sociology? [5 marks]

Ans: Although both study human society, they differ in FOCUS, METHOD, and SCOPE: (1) FOCUS: Human geography emphasises the SPATIAL DIMENSION — where things happen, why they're located where they are, how spatial patterns emerge. Sociology focuses on SOCIAL RELATIONS — how individuals relate, group dynamics, social structures, institutions. (2) CORE QUESTIONS: Geography asks 'WHERE?' and 'WHY THERE?'; sociology asks 'WHO?' and 'WHY THEY?'. (3) METHODS: Geography heavily uses MAPS, GIS, SPATIAL ANALYSIS, fieldwork in specific places. Sociology uses INTERVIEWS, surveys, statistical analysis of social variables. (4) UNITS OF ANALYSIS: Geography studies regions, cities, settlements, landscapes. Sociology studies individuals, groups, classes, organisations. (5) OVERLAP: They overlap in topics like urban sociology / urban geography, demographics, cultural patterns. Both contribute to understanding human society — geography's contribution is the SPATIAL framework that sociology often lacks.

★ TOPPER ANSWER TEMPLATES

3 TEMPLATES · MEMORISE THE FORMAT

★ TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'Explain the three schools of thought in human geography.'

Annual

Step 1 [1 mark]	Setup — human-environment debate	The central debate in human geography is: TO WHAT EXTENT does the natural environment shape human life and culture? Three schools answer differently.
Step 2 [1.5 marks]	Environmental determinism (Ratzel, 1882)	ENVIRONMENT DETERMINES human life and culture. Climate, soil, terrain dictate where people live, what they eat, what tools they invent, even their cultural traits. Friedrich Ratzel (German, 1882) developed this view in his book 'Anthropogeography'. Critics call it overly RIGID — implies humans are PASSIVE products of their setting.
Step 3 [1.5 marks]	Possibilism (Vidal de la Blache)	Nature OFFERS POSSIBILITIES; humans CHOOSE which to develop based on culture, technology, history. Same environment can give rise to different societies. Paul Vidal de la Blache (French) championed this view. ACTIVE human role acknowledged. But critics say possibilism doesn't fully explain why some choices are made over others.
Step 4 [1 mark]	Neo-determinism / stop-and-go determinism (Griffith Taylor)	Griffith Taylor (Australian) proposed a SYNTHESIS: humans can innovate (possibilism), but nature ULTIMATELY sets limits (determinism). When you can adapt, GO (possibilism applies). When nature draws a hard line, STOP (determinism applies). Hence 'stop-and-go determinism'.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Confusing Ratzel with possibilism (or vice versa).
- Missing the thinker names (Ratzel, Vidal de la Blache, Griffith Taylor).
- Not stating what 'stop-and-go' means.
- Listing schools without explaining the differences.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'Define human geography. Explain its scope.'**

Annual

Step 1 [1 mark]	Definition	Human geography is the branch of geography that studies the INTERRELATIONSHIP between human society and the physical environment — the spatial dimension of human activities, settlements, cultures, economies, and political systems.
Step 2 [1 mark]	Nature — interdependence	Two-way relationship: NATURALISATION OF HUMANS (humans adapt to nature — e.g., Bedouin tents, Inuit igloos) + HUMANISATION OF NATURE (humans transform nature — agriculture, cities, irrigation).
Step 3 [3 marks]	Scope — 5+ subfields	(1) URBAN — cities, urbanisation, slums. (2) RURAL — villages, rural-urban migration. (3) ECONOMIC — agriculture, industry, services, trade. (4) POLITICAL — boundaries, geopolitics. (5) SOCIAL/CULTURAL — language, religion, race distributions. (6) POPULATION — density, growth, migration. (7) SETTLEMENT — patterns, hierarchies. (8) BEHAVIOURAL — perception of place. (9) HISTORICAL — past landscapes. (10) MEDICAL — disease spread. (11) TRANSPORTATION — networks, accessibility. Scope is WIDE because human activity is varied.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Vague definition ('it's about humans and earth').
- Listing only 2-3 subfields.
- Not naming the two-way relationship (naturalisation + humanisation).
- Mixing up scope of human geography with physical geography.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 3-mark: 'Name 3 key thinkers in human geography and one contribution each.'**

Most years

Step 1 [1 mark]	Friedrich Ratzel	FRIEDRICH RATZEL (German, 1844-1904) — Founded ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM. His 1882 book 'Anthropogeography' argued environment shapes societies. Considered the founder of modern human geography.
Step 2 [1 mark]	Paul Vidal de la Blache	PAUL VIDAL DE LA BLACHE (French, 1845-1918) — Proposed POSSIBILISM. Argued that nature offers possibilities; humans select among them through culture and technology. Founded the French school of geography.
Step 3 [1 mark]	Griffith Taylor	GRIFFITH TAYLOR (Australian, 1880-1963) — Proposed NEO-DETERMINISM ('stop-and-go determinism'). Synthesised determinism + possibilism. Argued humans can innovate but face ultimate natural limits.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Spelling errors in thinker names.
- Reversing which school belongs to whom.
- Missing the time period / nationality.
- Not stating each thinker's key idea in one line.

MARKING SCHEME — GENERAL NOTES

- Thinker names + nationalities + key idea: each is worth marks. Spelling errors deduct 0.5.
- Use of real-world examples (places, situations) earns extra in scope questions.
- Defining technical terms in one's own words = better than rote.
- Concluding statement on 5-markers (synthesis, judgement) = 1 mark.
- Mixing up schools of thought (e.g., calling Ratzel's view 'possibilism') = lose 2 marks.