What is globalisation?

KS3 KS4 Ages 11-16 ⏰ 2 min read

Your smartphone was designed in California, its chips made in Taiwan, assembled in China, and shipped to a warehouse in your country before ending up in your pocket. Welcome to **globalisation** — the process that connects countries, businesses, and people around the world like never before.

The Shrinking World

Globalisation means that countries have become much more connected through trade, technology, travel, and communication. It's as if the world has shrunk, making it easier for ideas, products, money, and people to move from one place to another.

Think of the world like a giant spider's web. Each country is a point on the web, connected by invisible threads of trade, communication, and travel. When something happens in one part of the web — like a factory closing in China or a new app being created in India — the vibrations travel along all the threads, affecting other countries too.

This web has been growing stronger and more complex over the past 50 years. Container ships now carry millions of products across oceans, the internet lets you video call someone on the other side of the planet instantly, and aeroplanes make it possible to have breakfast in London and dinner in New York on the same day.

Why Does It Happen?

Countries specialise in what they do best, then trade with others. Bangladesh makes clothes efficiently and cheaply, so clothing companies from around the world manufacture there. Silicon Valley in California became brilliant at creating technology, so tech companies cluster there. Meanwhile, your local farmers might export grain to countries that struggle to grow enough food.

This specialisation means products can be made more cheaply and efficiently than if every country tried to make everything itself. It also means you have access to tropical fruits in winter, Japanese video games, and Swedish furniture.

The Flip Side

But globalisation isn't all smooth sailing. When factories move to countries with cheaper labour, workers in richer countries might lose their jobs. Local businesses can struggle to compete with giant international companies. And if one part of that global web breaks — like when a pandemic stops travel and trade — the effects ripple everywhere.

Environmental problems also spread more easily in our connected world, and it can be harder for individual countries to solve global challenges like climate change on their own.

Globalisation has made the world smaller, richer, and more connected, but it's also made it more complicated. Understanding how this invisible web works helps explain why your breakfast banana from Ecuador affects farmers thousands of miles away.

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