

Geography for Beginners

The First Ten Pages

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FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM, 1993 - DAY

The Beach Boys song "Be True To Your School" plays on a small transistor radio as SID, a scrawny 17-year-old with dyed jet black hair straightens his tie.

He wears a black sweater to compliment his black slacks, which are cut a little short in the leg. A small red star pin rests on his sweater over his heart.

Sid tousles his hair so it's the perfect combination of messy and neat. On the sink counter next to him sits a pile of flyers, a megaphone, VCR, and a video projector and remote with the words "Humboldt High A/V Dept" stenciled onto it.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - LUNCH TIME

Sid enters the bustling cafeteria, struggling to hold all of the gear in his arms. No one pays much attention to him clumsily dropping his equipment on an empty table near the door.

He unwinds the power chord for the projector and stretches it to the nearest outlet. The chord comes up about a foot short. By now some of his peers at the next table have noticed him.

STUDENT 1

What are you doing?

Sid pulls harder on the chord.

SID

Can we switch tables?

The students, sporting the fashions of the mid-90s, watch Sid as he helplessly holds the end of the chord a foot from the outlet.

STUDENT 1

I guess so.

The students pick up their trays and move over to Sid's table. They stand around a moment waiting for Sid to clear away his stuff.

Sid tries to pick up everything at once and as a result, drops most of the flyers on the ground. He hesitates, then puts the gear down on the new table.

The kids sit down at their new table and laugh while Sid crawls around their feet, trying to gather up his flyers.

Finally Sid plugs in the projector and points it toward an empty wall on the other side of the cafeteria. He gathers his flyers, remote control and megaphone and walks to the opposite wall.

Along this wall are a bank of light switches for the cafeteria. Sid hits half of them, making the place dim, but not completely dark. He steps up on a table full of eating students. He turns on the megaphone and it emits a loud screeching noise.

The masses, especially those nearest him are getting angry. Sid points the remote back across the room to the projector. The rotten meat scene from Battleship Potemkin is projected on the blank wall behind him. Sid raises the megaphone to his lips and speaks.

SID

Greetings comrades! I ask you, how can society progress when we're constantly struggling to scrape together the money for a sloppy-joe? Capitalism has planted its own seeds of destruction. Now drive your cart and plow over the bones of the dead and join me in brown bagging it until school lunch is free! You have nothing to lose but some weight!

Scattered laughter and smirks encircle the room as Sid throws some of his flyers into the crowd. In response, several students throw food back at him. This doesn't faze him. A tubby old teacher named MR. SORENSON approaches.

MR. SORENSON

Sid! Get down from that table!

Sid responds into the megaphone.

SID

Never! The people are depending on me!

An apple hits him in the eye as a couple of school security guards come over and pull Sid off the table. He tosses the rest of his flyers and the remote into the air. They fall all around him as he is dragged out of the cafeteria.

SID (cont'd) (CONT'D)  
(to the students)  
Don't give up hope, comrades!

INT. OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Sid sits across from VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT'S RECEPTIONIST in the outer office. The receptionist is a disciple of the Martha Stewart school of style. Sid holds his hand over the eye that was pelted by the apple as she picks up the phone.

SID  
Are you calling my parents?

RECEPTIONIST  
You know the routine.

She dials and Sid waits.

INT. HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The sound of loud punk rock being played by three middle-aged guys and one middle-aged woman drowns out the ringing phone.

BILLY sits behind the drum kit and in front of his graphic design work space. He sports a towering blue pompadour with big, pork chop sideburns reaching down to his chin. The rest of his face hides behind thick, plastic-rimmed glasses. He wears a wife-beater shirt and dark blue jeans with the cuffs rolled half-way up his shins, exposing his chunky cherry red Doc Martens.

The rest of the group cultivates a similar "psychobilly" style. The phone stops ringing just as they finish their song.

INT. OFFICE WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist hangs up the phone and gives Sid an annoyed glance. She then picks up the phone again and dials another number. As she dials, VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT comes out of his office.

Vice Principal Albert wears a bad eighties suit topped off with hair permed a little too tightly and large glasses that accentuate his small physical stature.

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT  
Get in here Sidney.

Sid gets up and follows him into the office. The door closes and the receptionist continues to make her call.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

JANICE could pass for a middle-age Bettie Page look-a-like, with one major difference, every inch of her body below the neck appears to be covered by ink.

A square-jawed young man sits in the parlor chair. He evokes the fashion of a fifties greaser, offset by a tightly cropped flat-top.

Janice works on a tattoo of a large spider on the man's neck when the needle hits a sensitive spot and the young man cringes. She pauses a moment, then plants a big wet one right on his lips. She only stops to answer the phone.

JANICE

Rocks Off.

RECEPTIONIST

Excuse me?

JANICE

Rocks Off Tattoo Parlor!

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, um, could I please speak to Mrs. Pyn?

JANICE

What are you selling?

RECEPTIONIST

Uh, Mrs. Pyn, I'm calling from Humboldt High School. Could you please hold for Vice Principal Albert?

JANICE

Ah crap, what'd he do?

RECEPTIONIST

One moment Mrs. Pyn.

Janice is placed on hold.

JANICE

(To the guy in her chair)  
My fucking kid.

The young man just shrugs and examines his tattoo in the mirror.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

VP Albert stands behind his desk and leans in towards Sid, seated and looking very calm and sure of himself.

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT  
You're obviously a smart kid. Why do you insist on pursuing this communism thing?

SID  
First of all, Vice Principal Albert, I am a Marxist. Secondly, I believe the students deserve better than what they're getting. Thirdly, can I get an ice-pack for my eye?

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT  
Save it.

VP Albert pushes his intercom button.

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT (cont'd)  
(CONT'D)  
Florence, bring Sidney some ice.

SID  
The movement has to start somewhere.

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT  
Just who are you trying to save? Most of these kids drive a nicer car than I do.

SID  
I just think delicious food should be a right, not a luxury.

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT  
I ate bugs in a Vietnamese prison camp for two years! Do not tell me about bad food!

SID  
No way!

VP Albert scowls at Sid.

VICE PRINCIPAL ALBERT  
 You have a week of detention. Get  
 out of my office.

SID  
 (under his breath)  
 Geez, so sensitive.

As Sid gets up to leave, the receptionist pokes her head in.

RECEPTIONIST  
 Mrs. Pyn on line two for you.

Florence hands Sid an ice-pack as he brushes past her.

INT. SCHOOL COMMONS AREA - DAY

Some students are hanging around in the commons area talking and goofing around. A preppy looking kid named RON approaches Sid as he leaves the Vice Principal's office.

RON  
 Hey Sid, I saved you a banana from  
 lunch. I didn't realize you were  
 so hard up.

SID  
 I don't need your bourgeois banana.

Ron is confused by this response and Sid walks away quietly.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER THAT DAY

Sid walks to the parking lot and stops at a classic Vespa scooter to get his transistor radio out of his bag. "Fun, Fun, Fun" by The Beach Boys plays on the oldies station.

As the music starts, a black '55 Chevy pulls up next to him. He leans down to look in the window and sees RHONDA behind the wheel.

Rhonda has very short black hair in a bob that exposes a large surgical scar on the right side of her neck. She wears a black leather jacket and blue jeans. She lights a cigarette using a match tucked behind her ear before turning to Sid to talk.

RHONDA  
 Are you that kid from lunch?

SID  
Yeah, I've eaten lunch.

RHONDA  
The commie kid from lunch today,  
smartass.

SID  
Yeah, I'm him.

Rhonda takes a drag from her cigarette.

RHONDA  
You wanna go for a ride?

Sid looks around suspiciously for the hidden cameras.

SID  
Not really.

Rhonda is surprised by the rejection.

RHONDA  
I thought you were cool.

SID  
Well, I'm not.

RHONDA  
You sure?

Sid nods.

SID  
Not even close.

They look at each other for a moment, then Rhonda tosses her cigarette at him and peels out, leaving Sid in a cloud of smoke from the tires.

Sid watches her fade away. He leans down and picks up the still smoking butt of her cigarette and takes a shallow drag. He coughs, puts the cigarette out and stuffs the butt in his pocket.

Sid pulls out a helmet with a hammer and sickle painted on it from the scooter's saddle bag and straps it to his head. He revs up the Vespa and drives off.

INT. SID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sid lives in a big brick house, typical of his SOUTH ST. LOUIS neighborhood.

The inside is decorated like Arnold's drive-in from Happy Days. The sound of Eddie Cochran comes from strategically-placed speakers mounted in every corner.

Billy sits on the retro couch in the living room rolling a joint on top of a Ronald Reagan TV tray. Janice sits next to him drinking a martini, smoking a cigarette, and reading a tattoo magazine.

As Billy lights the joint, Sid enters the house. He quickly puts out the joint as Janice pulls out a small, hand-held fan from under the couch and blows the smoke around, trying to clear the air. Billy stashes the TV tray out of sight.

Sid walks into the living room with his helmet still on and immediately smells the weed. He takes a deep breath and glares at his dad.

JANICE

Sid, take your helmet off in the house.

BILLY

How was school today, son?

SID

Alright. I tried to organize my classmates, but it didn't work.

BILLY

Well, keep tryin', I guess.

SID

You too, Dad.

JANICE

What happened to your eye?

SID

I got hit by a fruit.

JANICE

Are you OK?

Sid nods.

BILLY

Did you hit him back?

Sid and Janice roll their eyes while Billy laughs at his joke, then has a coughing fit.

JANICE

How does meatloaf sound tonight?

Sid glares at his parents. His dad stares into oblivion thanks in part to the hit he just had.

SID

Mom, I told you a million times I don't eat meat anymore.

JANICE

Well, I guess you can have some mac and cheese or something.

Sid turns and walks down the hall.

INT. SID'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

His room is very neat and orderly with the exception of piles of books and papers scattered on his desk. A hand painted red star hovers on the wall above the bed, a Beach Boys poster circa 1966 hangs on the opposite wall and a Photoshopped image of Karl Marx shaking hands with Brian Wilson is visible on his computer monitor.

Inside the room, Sid hears and smells the joint being sparked up again. He takes off his helmet and puts the vinyl of *Pet Sounds* on his turntable. He lays down on his bed and pages through a school yearbook.

He looks for Rhonda in the pages and finds a girl with the same name and face as her, but very different in every other way. She has long unstylish hair, a pound of make-up, and a hideous dress.

Sid stares at the yearbook image. He pulls the cigarette butt from his pocket and places it next to the picture. The sound of knocking interrupts him. Sid closes the yearbook and stashes it under his pillow. He sits up straight on the edge of his bed.

JANICE

Sid, can I come in?

SID

Yeah mom.

She enters, martini in hand, and sits next to him on the bed.

JANICE

I got a call from your school today.

SID

I know. I already told you I tried to organize the kids.

She rubs her fingers through his hair in a loving, motherly way.

JANICE  
I have to punish you.

SID  
Gimme a break!

JANICE  
You have to go to your father's show tomorrow night.

SID  
Can't you just ground me?

JANICE  
No. Don't forget your earplugs.

She gives him a kiss on the forehead and leaves. Sid falls back in the bed and stares at the ceiling a moment before reaching under his pillow for the yearbook.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Students file into the school, all of whom ignore Sid, who still wears his scooter helmet and has developed a nice shiner under his eye. He passes through the door and slaps a red star sticker on the wall.

INT. A/V ROOM - MORNING

Sid walks down a long dark hallway full of pipes and mechanical sounds. He stops at a door with a nameplate that reads "Humboldt High School Audio Visual Department."

Sid walks into the room. He takes off his helmet and sets it on the floor near the door. The room is basically a large television studio with out-of-date video cameras set up and trained on a shabby news set.

A short, chubby teen with baby-soft skin named JIMMY stands behind the news desk. He struggles with a tie that he wears with a sport-coat and blue jeans.

A balding, middle-aged man with a patchy beard named MR. NIX emerges from behind the control board in the back of the room. His arms are wrapped up in a mass of tangled cables.

JIMMY  
Morning Sid, you're our lead story today.