When you see three, use SCE!

One very common type of exam question is the three mark question we'll call the SCE question. There is a particular way you need to answer it, and we're going to look at it now to teach you how to be successful with it in the exam.
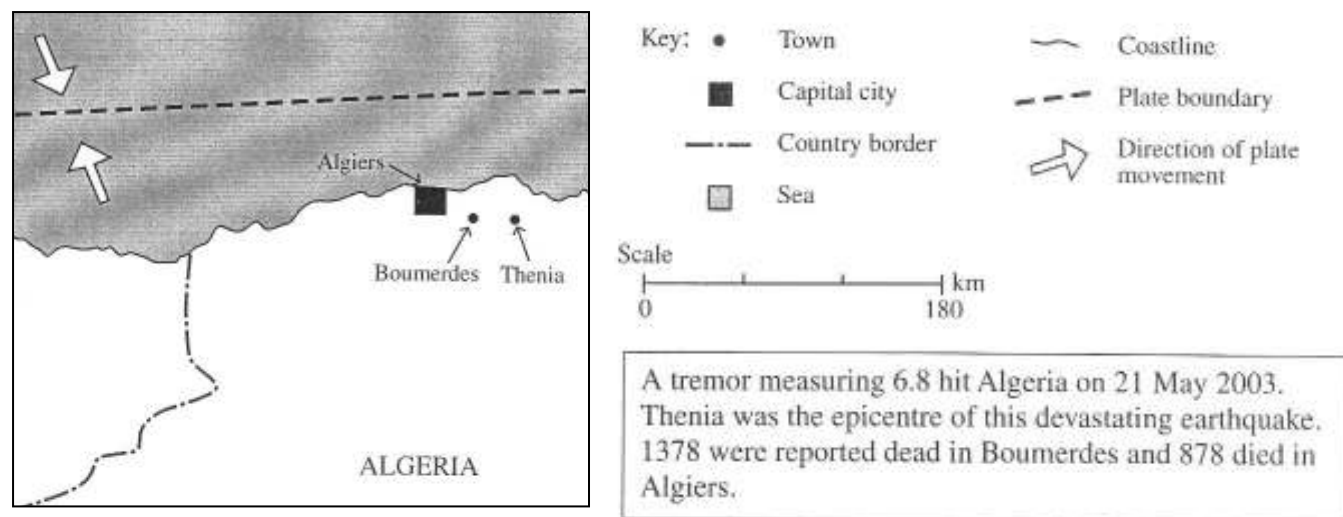
1. Spotting SCE questions
There are two clues:
- The question will be worth **three marks** (or six marks but with two parts)
- The command phrase may be '**State fully one**'

2. What is SCE?
Let's use this SCE question as a worked example.

Key:
- Town
- Capital city
- Country border
- Sea
- Coastline
- Plate boundary
- Direction of plate movement

Scale 0 — 180 km

A tremor measuring 6.8 hit Algeria on 21 May 2003. Thenia was the epicentre of this devastating earthquake. 1378 were reported dead in Boumerdes and 878 died in Algiers.

Using evidence from the figure, state fully one reason why there were more deaths in Bourmerdes than Algiers. (3)

What does SCE stand for?	What do these words mean?	Example of an answer
Statement	What is the main point of your answer?	The earthquake caused more deaths in Boumerdes because it was closer to the epicentre.
Consequence	So what?!? *It's often a good idea to start this second sentence with the word 'SO'.*	So, the shaking would have been much stronger here than in Algiers.
Elaboration	Tell me more!	This would have caused more buildings to collapse or be damaged and so would have caused more deaths.

2. Have a go

Try completing this alternative answer to the above question:

S = There are fewer deaths in Algiers because it is the capital city.

C = So this means that there would have been more emergency services such as fire men and police available to deal with the aftermath of the earthquake.

E = They would have been on hand to search for and rescue victims of the earthquake and so fewer people would have died.

3. Common SCE errors

What's wrong with these answers?

S = There are more deaths in Boumerdes because it is closer to the epicentre.
C = Therefore the shaking will be more severe here.
E = Also, Boumerdes is not the capital city so there may not be as many rescue services here.

S = There are more deaths in Boumerdes because it is closer to the epicentre.
C = Therefore the shaking will be more severe here.
E = That's why there are more deaths there.

Score: 2 out of 3

Score: 2 out of 3

These types of questions will ask you to state fully ONE reason. One common mistake is for the last sentence of the answer to move on to a completely different point. That's what's happened here.

The main point of the answer was about the distance from the epicentre. The second sentence develops this a bit more. But look what happens in sentence three: the answer veers off to discuss the point about Algiers being the capital. Now, we know this is a valid point, but it doesn't earn any marks because the answer doesn't state fully one reason (as asked for in the question), rather it states partially two reasons.

Beware this mistake – it's very common and you can be sucked into it because what you're saying is true, it's just not answering the question!!

This one's a bit easier to spot. The problem here is that the answer runs out of steam in sentence three. Rather than adding anything new, the last sentence simply repeats the wording of the question. This is GCSE now – you're not going to get any credit for simply being able to copy out a question!!