

Mount Vesuvius Erupts

Key Words

pumice	light, volcanic rock
ash	powder-like substance that comes out of an erupting volcano
lava	hot, liquid rock that comes out of a volcano

In 79 A.D., Pompeii and Herculaneum were cities near Mount Vesuvius. Mount Vesuvius is a volcano in what is now Italy. The people living in those cities in 79 A.D. were not afraid, however. They did not know that Mount Vesuvius might **erupt**. The area sometimes had earthquakes. But at the time, people did not see a **connection** between earthquakes and **eruptions**. Besides, they had no record of Mount Vesuvius erupting. All of that changed on August 24, 79 A.D.

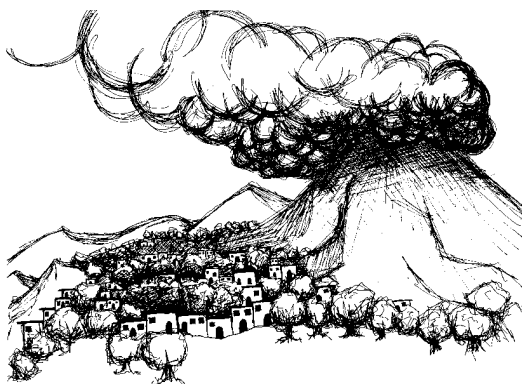
The morning of August 24 began as any other morning. But before long, the people **noticed** a **huge** black cloud coming out of Mount Vesuvius. As **pumice** and **ash** began to rain down on Pompeii, some people decided to leave. Others **remained** in the city, unconcerned about the strange **events**. Many of the people who stayed in Pompeii during this first **stage** of the eruption **survived** it. But some people and animals were buried beneath the sometimes 20 feet of pumice and ash. The

downpour also destroyed many homes and buildings.

Herculaneum, although closer to Mount Vesuvius, did not suffer much from the first stage of the eruption. Only an inch or so of ash **dusted** the city. But its luck would not continue. The next stage of the eruption would destroy Herculaneum along with Pompeii.

On August 25, streams of hot **lava** poured down the mountain at 70 miles per hour. Poisonous gas filled the air. Any people left in Herculaneum and Pompeii were buried along with the cities. Perhaps as many as 20,000 people died.

Over time, people in the surrounding areas forgot about Pompeii and Herculaneum. But in the mid-1700s, **excavations** began to uncover the city of Pompeii. The items found there have taught scientists a lot about life in Pompeii and about the **disastrous** eruption in 79 A.D. Now tourists come from all over to see the remains of the **ancient** city.



words read _____

- errors _____ = _____
cold score

words read _____

- errors _____ = _____
hot score expression date passed

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Comprehension Questions

Identifying the main idea

1. What is the main idea of the story?
 - a. Mount Vesuvius erupted and destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum.
 - b. Scientists have uncovered the remains of the city of Pompeii.
 - c. People forgot about the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Recalling a fact

2. Why did some people leave Pompeii on the morning of August 24?
 - a. ash and pumice rained down
 - b. hot lava poured down
 - c. poisonous gas filled the air

Getting meaning from the context

3. What does **eruptions** mean in this story?
 - a. earthquakes
 - b. explosions
 - c. excavations

Making connections within the text

4. Why did many people stay in Herculaneum in the early stages of the eruption?
 - a. They wanted to see what would happen.
 - b. They did not understand the danger.
 - c. They had no way to get out of the city.

Finding supporting details

9. Many things happen in a volcanic eruption that are dangerous to human life. Write three events in an eruption that can kill people.

Connecting the author's and the reader's ideas

5. Why did more people die in the second stage of the eruption than in the first?

Developing vocabulary

6. Write the bold-faced words from the story that mean the same as the definitions below.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------|
| a. diggings | <hr/> |
| b. very old | <hr/> |
| c. explode | <hr/> |
| d. stayed alive | <hr/> |
| e. very harmful | <hr/> |

Attending to details

7. Fill in the blanks below with bold-faced words from the story.

The _____ of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. was disastrous. The volcano totally destroyed the _____ cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. First, Pompeii was heavily covered with _____ and _____. The next day both Herculaneum and Pompeii were destroyed by streams of hot _____.

Processing information

8. Why were the people in Pompeii and Herculaneum unable to escape the eruption?

Enrichment Activity

Mount St. Helens erupted in the state of Washington in 1980. Read about the eruption, and explain why there was very little loss of life.