

CITY DESTROYED

Illustrated by ALAN FRASER



NO ESCAPE: People flee from the volcano's deadly hail of stones and ash.

MOUNT VESUVIUS is peaceful Menough today, with its olive groves and grazing animals. Yet it was the cause of one of the worst disasters ever to hit our nation — the death of an entire town.

IN THE AFTERNOON of August 24, A.D. 79, Mount Vesuvius turned into a killer.

The volcano erupted, spewing out vast clouds

of ash and stones, and thick black smoke. The burning ash rained down on the bustling town of Pompeii, about 6 miles away.

Choking and blinded by the smoke, people fled in terror, barely able to run as an earthquake shook the ground.

Within hours, the ash had buried all but the tallest buildings.

More than 20,000 people died that day, smothered by the ash. A once thriving town had vanished!

LUCKY ESCAPE!

ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, writer Pliny the Younger was less than 20 miles away, in the town of Misenum. Here is his firsthand account of fleeing from the disaster.

“WE SAW THE SEA sucked away and forced back by the earthquake. It had shrunk away from the shore, and many sea creatures were stranded on dry land.

Ashes were already falling, although not yet very thickly. I looked around—a dense black cloud was coming up behind us, spreading over the earth like a flood.

‘Let us leave the road while we can still see,’ I said, ‘or we shall be knocked down and trampled underfoot in the dark.’

We had scarcely sat down when absolute darkness fell—not the dark of a moonless or cloudy night, but as if a lamp had been put out in a closed room.

You could hear the loud shrieks of women, the wailing of children, and the shouting of men.

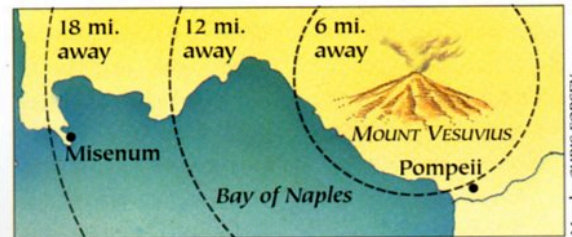
A curious kind of light appeared, not daylight but more like the light of a distant fire.



Then darkness set in once more and ashes began to fall again, this time in heavy showers.

We rose from time to time and shook them off, otherwise we would have been buried and crushed beneath their weight.

At last, there was genuine daylight. We were terrified to see that everything was changed, buried deep in ashes like snowdrifts.”



FALLOUT: The spread of ash from the volcano.

Name _____ Date _____

City Destroyed

1) Do you think there was anyway for the people of Pompeii to avoid being killed? If so, how?



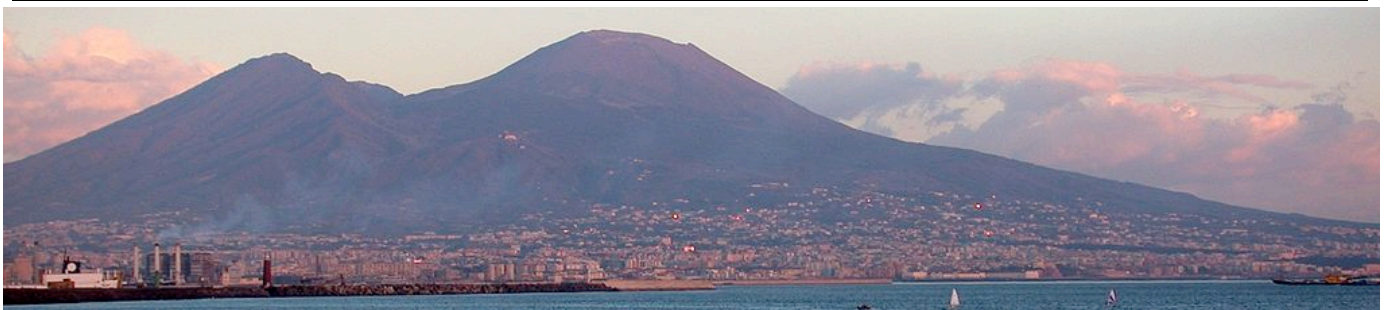
2) The city of Pompeii was preserved by the ash, for almost 2000 years. What has this made possible?

3) If you were present during the time in which the volcano erupted, what would you have done? Why?

Lucky Escape!

Directions: Choose an adjective (character trait) to describe how Pliny must have felt when he and the others saw what was happening in the distance.

| Adjective | Explain why you chose that specific word. Use evidence from the text to support your answer. |
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| | |



Pliny's Letter about his Uncle

Dear Tacitus,

One day, from his post at the city of Misenum, my uncle spotted a large cloud rising from Mount Vesuvius. The sight can best be described as being like an umbrella pine, for it rose very high on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches. In places it looked white, elsewhere cloudy and dirty, according to the amount of soil and ashes it carried with it. My uncle saw at once that it was important enough for a closer inspection, and he ordered a boat to be made ready so that he could go to Pompeii and inspect it further, telling me I could come with him if I wished. I replied that I preferred to go on with my studies.

He hurried to Pompeii, which everyone else was leaving. He was entirely fearless as he went to explore

and examine this **phenomenon**. Ashes were already falling, hotter and thicker as the ships drew near, followed by bits of blackened stones, that had been cracked by the flames. Suddenly they were in not so deep water and they could not reach the shore with their ship because of all the debris from the mountain. Even so, my uncle figured out how to get to shore and went to visit his friend, Pomponianus. He hugged his terrified friend, cheered and encouraged him, thinking he could calm his fears. They rested and they ate a feast of wonderful food. Meanwhile on Mount Vesuvius broad sheets of fire and leaping flames blazed at several points, their bright glare emphasized by the darkness of night. My uncle tried to get rid of his friends fears by repeatedly saying that these were nothing but bonfires left by the peasants in their terror, or else empty houses on fire in streets that were abandoned.

1) Draw a picture of the volcano based on Pliny's description.

2) How is Pliny's uncle acting so differently than everyone else? Why do you think he is acting this way?

Then he went to rest and slept. By this time the courtyard outside his room was full of ashes mixed with pumice stones. If the level of the rocks had risen anymore and he had stayed in the room any longer, he would never have got out. He was wakened,

came out, and joined Pomponianus and the rest of the household, who had stayed up all night. They discussed whether to stay indoors or take their chance in the open, for the buildings were now shaking with violent shocks, and seemed to be swaying to and fro as if they were torn from their foundations. Outside, on the other hand, there was the danger of falling pieces of stone, even though these were lighter than regular rocks. After comparing the risks they chose to go outside. As a protection against the falling objects they put pillows on their heads tied down with cloths.



Pliny the Younger

3) Did Pliny and his friend make the right choice to go outside? Why or why not? Explain.

While the sun should have been bright in the sky by this time, they were still in darkness, blacker and denser than any ordinary night, which they relieved by lighting torches and various kinds of lamps. My uncle decided to go down to the shore, to see at first hand whether it was possible to escape by sea; but they found the waves still wild and dangerous. While at the sea, my uncle lied down and asked repeatedly for cold water, which he drank. Then the flames and smell of **sulfur**, which signaled the approach of the fire, drove the other people with him away, while he could not move from the ground. I assume that his breathing was blocked by the heavy smoke. When daylight returned—two days after the last time he had seen it—his body was found intact and uninjured, still fully clothed as in life. He looked more like a man sleeping than a dead man. Farewell.

4) Based on this letter, how does Pliny feel about his uncle? Why do you say that?

Aim: What happened at Pompeii, and what can its remains tell us about life in the past?

Context Clues:

The girl poured the water in to the cup in such a hurry that she didn't stop pouring in time and the water came **spewing** out of the cup.

- ✓ Part of speech
- ✓ Definition
- ✓ Sentence

Journal: Begin your writing with.... 'I wish I had one _____, because then.....'