



To the Rescue

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Activities

Before reading

1 Match the words with the definitions.

earthquake

eruption

explosion

flood

oil spill

tsunami

- 1 When burning rocks, hot liquid and smoke come out of a volcano: eruption
- 2 A very large wave that goes over the land and destroys things: _____
- 3 When oil accidentally goes out of a ship: _____
- 4 A sudden violent shaking of part of the earth: _____
- 5 When something bursts suddenly with a very loud noise: _____
- 6 When a lot of water covers somewhere that is usually dry: _____

2 Use the words in Exercise 1. Answer the questions.

- 1 Which of these things have happened in your country since you were born?

- 2 Which of these things happened in your country a long time ago?

3 Do you think these sentences are true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 The eruption of Vesuvius destroyed the city of London.
- 2 The Asian tsunami went as far as the east coast of Africa.
- 3 In 1995 there was an oil spill in the Japanese city of Kobe.
- 4 The explosion at the Chernobyl power station was in 2009.
- 5 After Hurricane Katrina there were floods in New Orleans.

INTRODUCTION **Can we survive?**

Stephen Hawking, a famous British scientist, recently asked, 'How can people survive the next 100 years?' In two days 16,000 people sent him their answers.

Behind Stephen Hawking's question is the idea that our way of life is leading us towards disaster – a disaster so big that people will no longer be able to live on the Earth 100 years from now.

So what kind of disaster does Stephen Hawking think will happen? What is wrong with the way we live? Is he worried about how we use energy, and how we look after the Earth's environment? Is it going to be a natural disaster or a man-made disaster?

Some natural disasters (like volcanoes and earthquakes) are beyond our control because the causes lie deep inside the Earth. Natural disasters usually happen very suddenly, and they often cause a lot of suffering to the people living nearby. But there are other disasters – man-made disasters – which are caused by people. A good example is the *Titanic* disaster, when that great ship sank to the bottom of the dark waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

In this book you will read about many kinds of disasters. No one can answer all the questions about why disasters happen – not even very clever people like Stephen Hawking. However, we can think about ways of rescuing people and ways of helping people with the big changes that disasters bring to their lives. We can also think about what we can learn from disasters and how to prevent them from happening in the future.

disaster something terrible that happens

beyond far away from

suffering pain, sadness or illness caused by a problem

prevent to stop something from happening

CHAPTER 1 Vesuvius

Today one million people live and work in the crowded, noisy city of Naples in Italy. People are busy, and many of them probably do not look up at Vesuvius, the great volcano, which is nearly 1,300 metres high and lies to the east of the city.

In the year 79 AD, nearly 2,000 years ago, the people of the busy town of Pompeii were hurrying about their lives. Pompeii is twenty kilometres south-east of Naples, and it is only ten kilometres from the great volcano. At that time Pompeii was a rich town of 20,000 people with a busy port and market. All around the town were the beautiful homes of rich men and their families.

Then on 24th August everything changed for ever. In the middle of the morning the ground began to shake. Cups and plates fell off tables, and suddenly there were holes in the ground. People remembered the disastrous earthquake that hit Pompeii seventeen years before. Was this the beginning of another earthquake?

Dogs started to bark loudly, birds flew away, and then a strange silence fell over the town. At midday a great cloud of grey ash rose up from Vesuvius and into the air. That afternoon, with a terrible noise a thousand times louder than thunder, the top of the volcano was blown twenty kilometres into the air, and flames lit up the darkened sky. Vesuvius was erupting!

A south-east wind quickly blew the cloud of ash towards the town of Pompeii. People were frightened and tried to escape. But for many it was too late. In two days the town was covered in four metres of ash and stones. About 2,000 people were killed by the cloud of hot gases and ash.

AD the time after the year 0. 1986 and 2010 are AD years.

shake to move a lot

ash the grey powder that remains after a fire

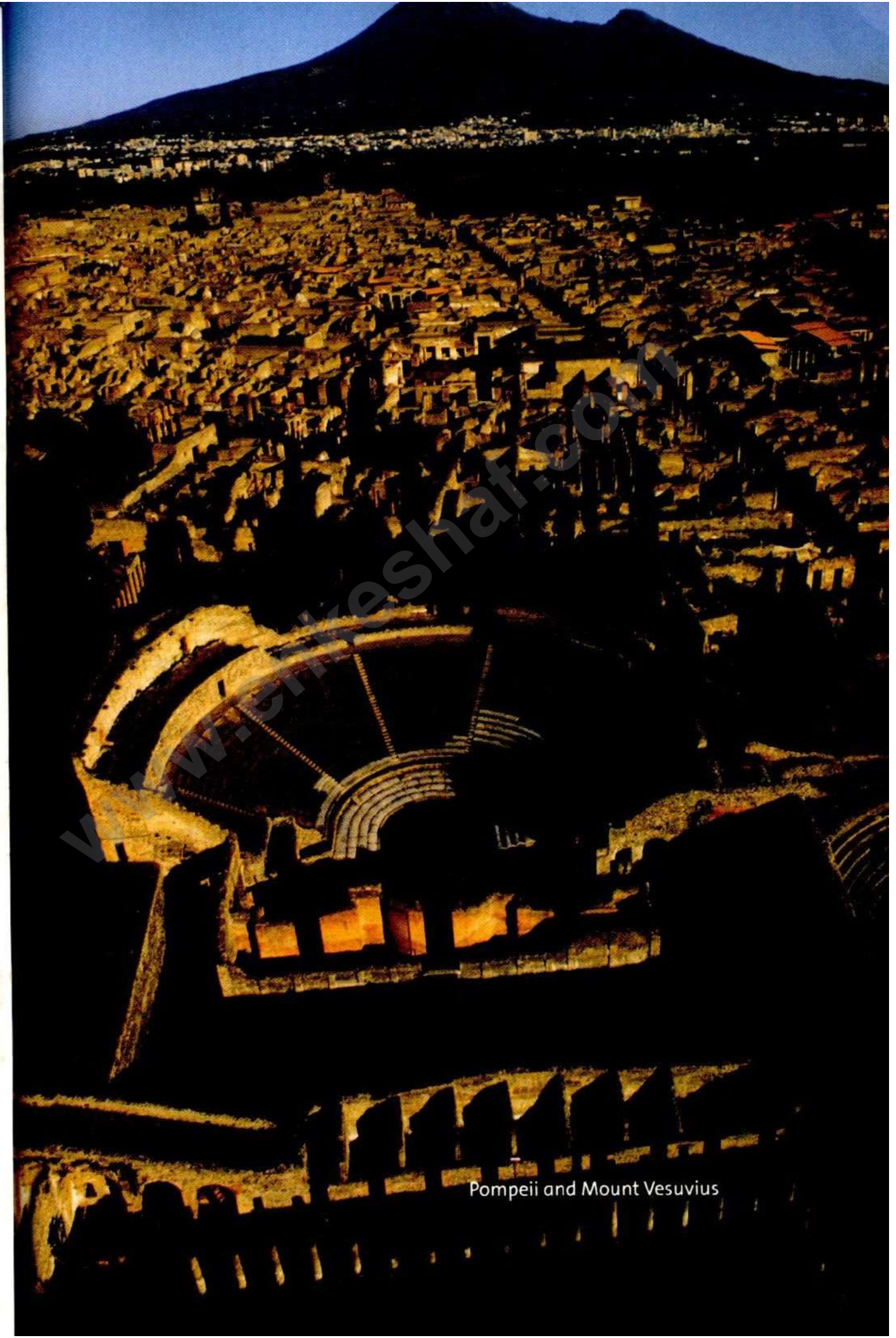
rise (*past rose, risen*) to go up or get up

erupt when a volcano erupts, it throws out burning rocks, smoke and ash

escape to get away from danger

cover to go over something

gas air that comes out of a volcano



Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius

Others were buried in a mountain of hot, wet mud and died immediately.

The small town of Herculaneum, which lies between Vesuvius and the sea, was also hit by the volcano. After the first eruption of Vesuvius many people left Herculaneum. Some people stayed, thinking that it was safe because the wind was not blowing the ash and smoke towards them.

But they were wrong. One day after the first eruption Herculaneum was suddenly covered by a river of hot ash and mud. In a few hours the town was buried under twenty metres of hardened rock from the volcano.

In some ways this eruption of Vesuvius was just like any other disaster caused by volcanoes. Lots of people died, and the families and survivors had to learn to make new lives for themselves. So why do we remember this eruption of Vesuvius? Let us think about how we have come to know about life in Italy at that time.

In 79 AD Pompeii and Herculaneum were controlled by the great city of Rome. We know a lot about Rome and its people through books written in the Latin language. Virgil and Pliny were famous writers of that time. In fact there were two writers named Pliny, and both of them were caught in the eruption. Pliny the Younger survived and wrote a detailed diary about the disaster, but his uncle, Pliny the Elder, was killed. We have more than just books, however, to tell us about the Romans at that time.

The eruption of Vesuvius killed people suddenly in the middle of a very normal day. Then the mud covered their bodies and buried them for many centuries. This had a surprising result: today Pompeii and Herculaneum show us how life was in these two Roman towns nearly 2,000 years ago.

bury to put a person or thing under the ground

control to decide how people should live

diary a book where you write what happens every day

century a hundred years