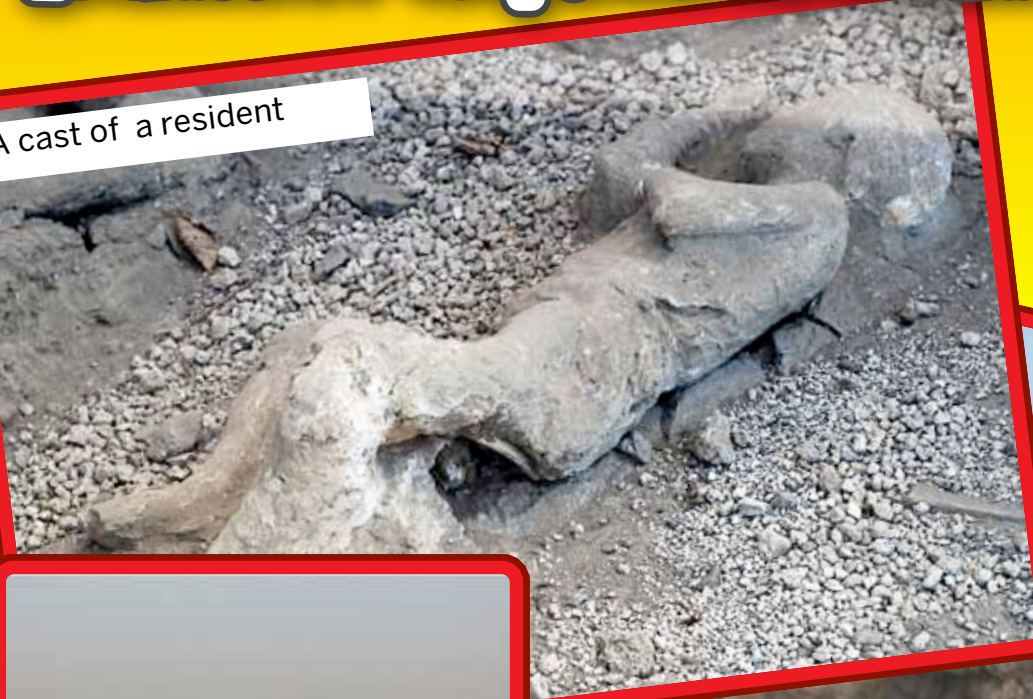


Comprehension Workbook 4

Pompeii

A massive eruption in Roman times

A cast of a resident



Vesuvius today



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

The Pompeii eruption

On the 24th of August 79AD, Mount Vesuvius erupted with such violence that the top of the volcano was blown away, two cities buried by ash and perhaps 16,000 people killed. A few dozen bodies were perfectly preserved in the ash.



Some of the fiery ash, gas and steam produced buried Pompeii 3m deep, while nearby Herculaneum was buried 25m. The ash came out of the volcano at 1.5 million tonnes a second! About 16000 people were killed in the eruption, The ash buried and preserved the city for over 1500 years until it was dug up by archaeologists.

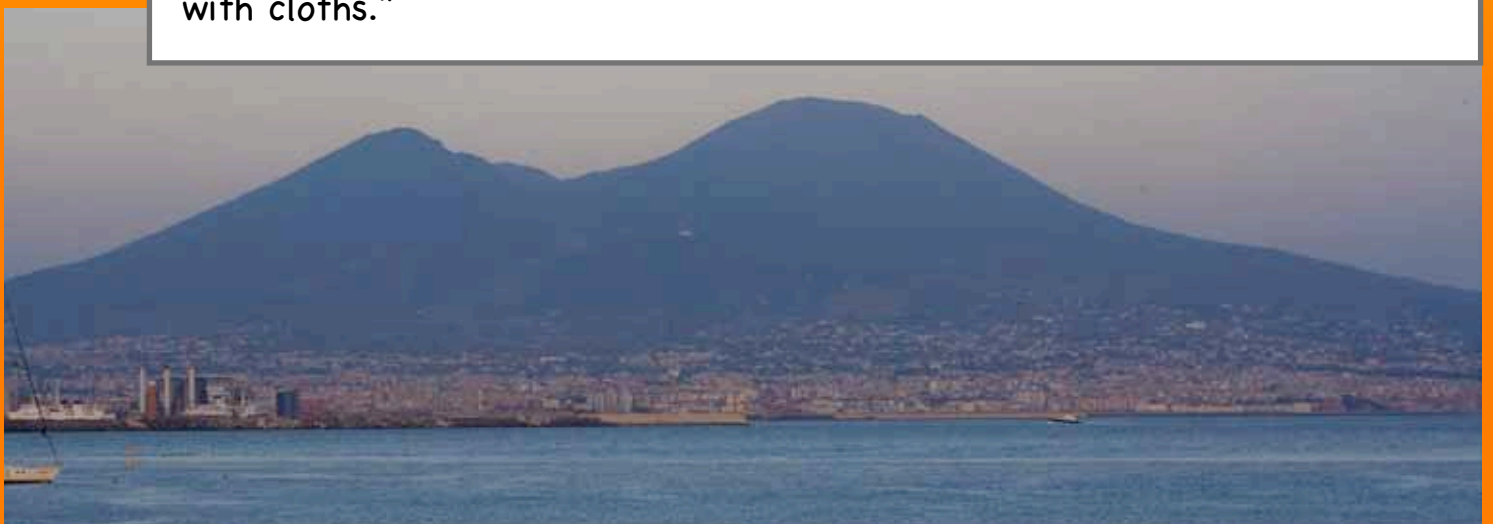
During the eruption a column of gas, ash and steam was thrown into the air, creating what looked like a mushroom cloud. The ash may have reached over 30 km into the sky before falling back to the ground. This cloud continued to 'rain' ash for about 18 hours. Buildings started to collapse and some people began to escape. But then came a quite different event: a deathly blast of high temperature, high speed gases and dust. Anyone left simply died from the heat or they were suffocated in the fumes, and were then buried by the falling ash.

A Roman called Pliny the Younger saw this from about 18km away and experienced some of the effects of earthquakes and falling ash. Those who remained in Pompeii were so close to the volcano they stood little chance.

"On 24 August, in the early afternoon, my mother drew my uncle's attention to a cloud of unusual size and appearance. It rose to a great height on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches. In places it looked white, elsewhere blotched and dirty, according to the amount of soil and ashes it carried with it.

My uncle, who was in charge of the Roman fleet in the bay, hurriedly steered his course straight for the danger zone to rescue people. He was entirely fearless. Ashes were already falling, hotter and thicker as the ships drew near. I never saw my uncle again.

People near me argued whether to stay indoors or take their chance in the open, for the buildings were now shaking with violent shocks. Outside, on the other hand, there was the danger of falling pumice stones. As a protection against falling objects they put pillows on their heads tied down with cloths."





Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word '**rain**'.

b From that sentence, suggest what '**rain**' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word '**rain**'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to '**rain**'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think '**rain**' means in **this** example.



Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: blotched	spotted

3

Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

1 Write a heading for your summary.

2 Now write the main idea in one sentence.
e.g. "This story tells us..."

3 Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,
can you rewrite your
summary to make it better?**

- 1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.**
- 2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.**
- 3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.**
- 4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?**

**There is
nothing wrong
with rewriting; even
the best authors
rewrite their
work.**

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4

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

People argued about staying indoors or going outside.

Finally, a cloud of hot gas, ash and steam rolled down the mountainside, killing all who were left.

It 'rained' ash for about 18 hours.

The ash reached 30km into the air before falling back

A Roman called Pliny saw the disaster from about 18km away.

Pliny's uncle sent the Roman fleet to help, but all were killed.

On 24 August a cloud of unusual size grew above Vesuvius.



Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.

A cast of one of the victims who was crouching when the hot gases struck.



1 Which year did the disaster happen?

2 How long did ash fall?

3 How high was the ash cloud?

4 How much ash fell a second?

5 How many bodies were preserved by the ash?



Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.



1 Who eventually got killed?

2 Why did everyone not flee when they saw the ash cloud?

3 Do you think there was plenty of time for everyone to escape?

4 Why did some of the evidence of the disaster remain for 1500 years?



Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

- 1 If you had lived in Pompeii, would you have known that a disaster was coming?
- 2 Would you have stayed inside or run out with pillows on your head?
- 3 What is the purpose of using the word 'mushroom' about the ash cloud?
- 4 The ash cloud is also described in another way. Which of the two ways do you prefer, and why?
- 5 Do you think it would be interesting to visit Pompeii, or do you think looking at the remains would be too gruesome?





Talking it through

Pompeii today

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.



Discussion topic: A tourist guide

Suppose you had a job as a summer tourist guide at Pompeii. What do you think you would want to tell people – science facts, gruesome stories, history? Decide what you would say. You have just five minutes to say something before their coach leaves.



Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.



Just another cloud?

When you live by a volcano you can get used to it sending out gas and ash clouds. You begin to take no notice. Then, one day, you see that the cloud is not going upwards, but rolling down the mountain...
Now continue the story.

Pompeii's last day

On the 24th of August 79AD, Mount Vesuvius erupted with such violence that the top of the volcano was blown away.

Some of the fiery ash, gas and steam produced burying Pompeii 3m deep, while nearby Herculaneum was buried under 25m. The ash came out of the volcano at 1.5 million tonnes a second! About 16000 people were killed in the eruption, of which a few dozen bodies were perfectly preserved in the ash. The ash buried and preserved the city against for over 1500 years until it was dug up by archaeologists.

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