

The girl who saved 100 lives

In 2004, on December 26, Tilly Smith, a 10-year-old girl from the UK, was on holiday in Thailand with her family. They were walking along Mai Khao beach in Phuket. The weather was sunny, but the sea looked strange. The water moved back, going far away from the beach, and it looked white with bubbles. Tilly felt something was wrong.

Two weeks before, Tilly learnt about tsunamis in school. Her teacher showed a video of a big wave that hit Hawaii in 1946. When she saw the strange sea in Thailand, she remembered the lesson. She told her parents, "Tsunami! There'll be a tsunami soon!"

At first, her mother didn't believe her. But Tilly was scared. She asked her family to run away from the beach. She cried, "Please Mum, please come back with me... It's dangerous here! If you don't, something bad will happen to you!"

Her father listened and told the hotel staff. They quickly moved people away from the beach. Around 100 people, including Tilly's family, went to the second floor of the hotel. Just then, a huge wave hit the beach. The tsunami that day began after a big earthquake close to Indonesia. Big waves hit 14 countries and killed more than 227,000 people. Many were tourists. Thailand was hit two hours later.

Thanks to Tilly's warning, everyone was safe at Mai Khao beach that day. People called her "The Angel on the Beach." She won many prizes and a French newspaper named her Child of the Year. She even met the president of the USA who said that Tilly's story shows that education can save lives.

Today, countries have warning systems to tell people when a tsunami is going to happen. In 2004, they didn't. Because of stories like Tilly's, we now understand how important it is to learn about natural disasters. Education can truly save lives.

1. Are these sentences true or false?

- a) Tilly and her family moved from the UK to Thailand in 2004.
- b) When Tilly told her parents about the tsunami, her mother thought it wasn't true.
- c) Tilly told her family to leave the beach because she was afraid.
- d) The water arrived at the beach before Tilly and her family went inside the hotel.
- e) That day, nobody died on the beach where Tilly was.

2. Answer the following questions.

- a) Why did Tilly know about tsunamis?
- b) What did employees at the hotel do when Tilly's father told them about the danger?
- c) How many countries did the tsunamis hit? How many people died?

- d) Which was the nickname Tilly was given after her heroic intervention?
- e) Which is the final reflection of this text?