

REVISION: Past tenses. Natural disasters (Achievers B1+)

Mega Earthquake and Tsunami

by Gillian Frost (weather correspondent)

At 14.46pm on the 11th March 2011, Japan experienced a powerful earthquake. It reached a magnitude of 9.0 and even though it lasted 6 minutes, it left parts of the country completely destroyed.

The earthquake struck close to the north coast, about 250 miles from Tokyo. It triggered a super tsunami which swept inland near the city of Sendai. Waves reached heights of up to 405 metres and travelled 6 miles inland. The Japanese National Police Agency reported that 15,883 people were killed and another 6,145 were injured during the disaster. Around 129,225 buildings were destroyed.

Jeremy Michael, an English teacher working in Japan at the time, described the whole event. 'It was like a horrific dream,' he recalls. He was teaching a class of primary school children when the earthquake hit. He said it had felt like it was never going to end. Crouching under their desks while it was happening, when they finally went outside they were met with more danger. Children were panicked and many were crying. Tsunami alarm bells were also ringing, he remembers, warning the town to evacuate immediately to higher ground.

Within 10 minutes, they had all managed to reach the safety of a train station high up on a hill. He recalls looking back and seeing the wave approaching rapidly. Water had already flooded the school. The tsunami waves had destroyed most of the town and everyone was made homeless. Jeremy and his class waited for an hour on the hill until the water returned back to normal levels. It was snowing and the temperatures were freezing.

In Utsunomiya alone, where Jeremy was living, only 9,000 survivors from 18,000 residents had been confirmed. Millions of people suffered across Japan. It was the single worst natural disaster they had ever experienced.

1. READ THE TEXT AND DECIDE IF THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

- 1 The emergency services warned people to evacuate to safety. ____
- 2 Jeremy and his class escaped to safety by train. ____
- 3 Tsunami waves covered the whole town. ____
- 4 People rescued their belongings from their homes. ____
- 5 Jeremy and the children waited in the freezing cold for the water levels to reduce. ____

2. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE PAIRS OF WORDS BELOW IN THE CORRECT ORDER.

air crash / injured	destroyed / earthquake	disruption / flooding
drought / starvation	hurricane / storm	

1 Heavy rain has caused _____ in several parts of the South West, with deep water causing major _____ to the road networks.

2 Ten people have been _____ in a(n) _____ at the Soldotna airport in Alaska. The air taxi crashed as it was taking off.

3 The rainy season put an end to the _____ in Somalia which threatened to cause widespread _____

4 Thousands of buildings were _____ in the Gansu province of China when a(n) _____ reached a magnitude of 5.9.

5 Many homes were left without power after last night's _____.
_____ force winds of more than 80km an hour were recorded.

3. WRITE SENTENCES USING THE PAST SIMPLE OR CONTINUOUS.

At 8.30am, an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.5 happened off the coast of Sendai.

When it happened, ...

1 The Smiths / (buy) / at the supermarket.
.....

2 a large building / (collapse) / in the middle of a street.
.....

3. Car and house alarms / (go off)).
.....

4 A cloud of dust / (cover) / the whole city.
.....

5 My mum / (watch) / the news on her computer.
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4. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE PAST PERFECT FORM OF THE VERBS BELOW.

steal	eat	agree	already burn	not visit
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1 I forgot We to see my aunt at the weekend?

2 John fell asleep after he an enormous dinner!

3 When I looked into my bag I realized someone my purse.

4 When mum went into the kitchen, the pizza

5 He me before his flight.

5. FILL IN WITH THE VERBS IN PAST SIMPLE, PAST CONTINUOUS OR PAST PERFECT.

1. They were good friends . They each other for quite a long time (**KNOW**).

2. When we arrived at the party everybody (**DANCE**)
3. After the referee the whistle the players began playing (**BLOW**)
4. After the orchestra had finished the concert they standing ovations (**RECEIVE**)
5. at you when I phoned ? (**SHE LOOK**)
6. He in the garden all day yesterday (**WORK**)
7. The letter only a few minutes after she had left (**COME**)
8. Before we played in the playground we our homework (**DO**)