

Section 3

ADAM: So, Michelle, shall we make a start on our presentation? We haven't got (1) left.

MICHELLE: No, Adam. But at least we've done all the background reading. I found it really interesting – I'd never even heard of the Laki eruption before this.

ADAM: Me neither. I suppose 1783 is a long time ago.

MICHELLE: But it was a huge eruption and it had (2)

ADAM: I know. It was great there were (3) to look at. It really gives you a sense of how catastrophic the volcano was. People were really trying to (4) the science for the first time.

MICHELLE: That's right. But what I found more significant was how it impacted (5) on political events, as well as having massive social and economic consequences.

ADAM: I know. That should be the main focus of our presentation.

MICHELLE: The observations made by (6) were interesting, weren't they? I mean, they all gave (7) what happened, even if they didn't always use (8)

ADAM: Yeah. I was surprised there were (9) established by that time – so, you know, you can see how the weather changed, often by the hour.

MICHELLE: Right. Writers at the time talked about (10) to describe (11) that spread across Europe. They all realised that this wasn't the sort of fog they were used to – and of course this was in pre-industrial times – so they hadn't experienced sulphur-smelling fog before.

ADAM: No, that's true.

MICHELLE: Reports from the period blamed the haze for (12), respiratory issues and asthma attacks. And they all describe how it covered the sun and made it look (13)

ADAM: Must have been very weird.

MICHELLE: It's interesting that Benjamin Franklin wrote about the haze. Did you read that? He was (14) in Paris at the time.

ADAM: Yeah. At first no one realised that the haze was caused by the volcanic eruption in Iceland.

MICHELLE: It was Benjamin Franklin who realised that before anyone else.

ADAM: He's often credited with that, apparently. But a French naturalist (15) – I can't remember his name. I'd have to look it up. Then other naturalists had the same idea – all independently of each other.

MICHELLE: Oh right. We should talk about the immediate impact of the eruption, which was obviously enormous- especially in Iceland, where (16)

ADAM: Mmm. You'd expect that- and the fact that the volcanic ash drifted so swiftly – but not that the effects would go on for so long. Or that two years after the eruption, (17) were being reported as far away as North America and North Africa.

MICHELLE: No. I found all that hard to believe too. It must have been terrible - and (18) anyone could do about it, even if they knew the ash cloud was coming in their direction.

MICHELLE: We should run through some of the terrible consequences of the eruption experienced in different countries. There's (19)

ADAM: Starting with Iceland, where the impact on farming was devastating.

MICHELLE: Mmm. One of the most dramatic things there was the effect on livestock as they grazed in the fields. They were poisoned because they ate vegetation that had been contaminated with fluorine as a result of (20)

ADAM: That was horrible. In Egypt, the bizarre weather patterns led to a severe drought and as a result the Nile didn't flood, which meant (21)

MICHELLE: It's so far from where the eruption happened and yet the famine there led to more people dying than any other country. It was worse than the plague.

ADAM: OK. Then in the UK the mortality rate went up a lot - presumably from respiratory illnesses. According to one report it was about (22) and included an unusually (23) people under the age of 25.

MICHELLE: Mmm. I think people will be surprised to hear that the weather in the USA (24) too. George Washington even makes a note in his diary that they were snowbound until March in Virginia. That was before he became president.

ADAM: Yes, and there was ice floating down the Mississippi, which was unprecedented.

MICHELLE: Astonishing, really. Anyway, what do you think ...