



POMPEII

The only active volcano on mainland Europe is Mount Vesuvius, situated on the west coast of Italy, just east of Naples, and most well-known for its eruption in the year 79 A.D. destroying the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Mount Vesuvius has **erupted** about 50 times, but its most famous eruption **took place** in 79 A.D. when it destroyed the city of Pompeii. It quickly **buried** the city in volcanic ash and preserved the life of this Ancient Roman city.

The people of Pompeii didn't know that Mount Vesuvius was a volcano and in fact there wasn't even a word for volcano in Latin as they **were not aware** of their existence until Vesuvius erupted.

In the year 62 A.D. the city experienced a huge **earthquake** and several minor quakes occurred for several years, but when the volcano finally erupted on 24th August 79 A.D. the people of Pompeii didn't know what was happening and didn't immediately evacuate the city.

Pliny described it as looking like "a pine tree, for it shot up to a great height in the form of a trunk, which extended itself at the top into several **branches**." At 1:00 in the afternoon, the sun was blocked as people tried to clear the heavy **ash** from the rooftops.

Less than 12 hours later, at midnight, volcanic mud **took over** the town of Herculaneum and its citizens escaped to Pompeii. However, just 6 hours later, Pompeii was covered in the **debris** and ashes. The victims died almost instantly as the heated air burned their lungs and **tightened** their muscles. The dead bodies remained in a **semi-curved** position quickly buried in ash and preserved for hundreds of years.

Following the eruption, Pliny also had **witnessed** '...the sea retreating as if pushed by the earthquakes.' The movement of the water was most likely caused by a tsunami. About 2,000 people had died. The two cities were abandoned for centuries.

The ruins at Pompeii have provided archaeologists with valuable information about everyday life in the ancient world. In 1748, Pompeii was discovered by a group of explorers **seeking** ancient artifacts. They learned that the ashes from the volcano preserved the city. Pompeii appeared the same as it did nearly 2,000 years earlier. Skeletons remained where the people had fallen, objects and household goods were **scattered** throughout the streets, and later jars of preserved fruit and loaves of bread were uncovered below the ashes.

The **remains** at Pompeii are now a huge modern tourist attraction and it is one of the most visited archaeological **sites** in the world.

1. Which city was destroyed by Vesuvius along with the city of Pompeii?
2. What occurred 17 years earlier prior to the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D.?
3. At approximately what time did Mount Vesuvius erupt?
4. Approximately how many people were killed by the destruction of Pompeii?
5. What tree most resembles the eruption of Vesuvius?
6. What was preserved by the ashes and mud following the eruption of Vesuvius?

VOCABULARY

1. **erupted** a person who sees something happen and describe it to other people
2. **took place** knew or realized something
3. **buried** take control
4. **were aware** looking for
5. **earthquake** covered by debris
6. **branches** having a semi spiral shape
7. **ash** parts of ancient objects and buildings that have survived
8. **took over** location
9. **debris** seismic tremor
10. **tightened** spread far apart over a wide area or over a long period of time
11. **semi-curved** what is left after something has been destroyed by burning
12. **witnessed** burning rocks, etc. were thrown out from the volcano
13. **seeking** part of a tree
14. **remains** to make something more difficult to move, open or separate
15. **scattered** pieces of materials left after something has been destroyed
16. **site** happened



LISTENING

A Survivor's Letter from Pliny the Younger

"Ashes now fall upon us, though as yet not in great .
I looked behind me; gross darkness pressed upon our rear, and came
rolling over the after us like a torrent, overspread
us, not like that of a moonless or night, but of a room
when it is shut up, and the lamp is put out. You could hear the shrieks
of , the of children, and the
of men; some were seeking their children, others their
parents, others their wives or . . . one lamenting his own
, another that of his family . . . many lifting their hands
to the ;but the greater part imagining that there were no gods
left and that the last and was come upon the world."

Watch this video to find out more about what happened when Mount Vesuvius erupted: