Name_____

The New Madrid Fault

In 1812, an earthquake caused by the New Madrid fault caused such seismic activity that the Mississippi River actually flowed backwards. The first tremors began in 1811, giving warning that the New Madrid Fault was about to get interesting. This fault line, which is named after the city New Madrid and is located along the Mississippi River in the state of Arkansas, would soon produce an earthquake that would have likely measured well above an eight on the Richter scale.

Unlike the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, this area near the New Madrid fault was sparsely populated. However, some towns were totally wiped out when the tremors caused landslides that covered the areas below them. Then, in February of 1812, the largest of the earthquakes would strike the area.

The quake that hit the region in February of 1812 is estimated to have measured at a strength of 8.8 and is undoubtedly one of the strongest earthquakes to ever hit this region. The tremors were so strong that church bells rang in Boston, Massachusetts, from the shaking of the earth. Waterfalls were created in the mighty Mississippi as the riverbed shifted and people unlucky enough to be on the water were killed instantly in the tumultuous waters. Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee was created as the earth shifted and water from the Mississippi poured into the new depressions of the ground.

The activity finally began to wane in March of the same year, but the landscape of the area had been permanently changed. Towns had been destroyed, fields were flooded, and new lakes were created. Historians estimate that the series of events eventually caused the deaths of over one thousand people.

Text Questions

1. Based on the text, which statement is <u>not</u> true?
   a. The New Madrid fault is located near the Mississippi River.
   b. Tremors from the New Madrid fault were so strong that the effects were felt as far away as Boston, Massachusetts.
   c. There were no serious injuries as a result of the earthquakes because there were no large towns.
   d. At one point, the Mississippi River flowed backwards as a result of the earthquakes.
2. Which would be the best source to learn more about the New Madrid Fault?
   a. a book about major fault lines in the United States
   b. a book about major earthquakes that have happened throughout the world
   c. an online encyclopedia entry about major earthquakes in the United States
   d. an online site about the history of the Mississippi River
3. Which is an antonym for the word *sparsely* as it is used in the second paragraph?
   a. barely
   b. lightly
   c. thinly
   d. densely
4. What is the main idea of this text?
   a. In the past, the New Madrid fault caused major damage near the Mississippi River.
   b. The earthquakes caused by the New Madrid fault were worse than the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.
   c. People all over the world should know about the life-changing effects of earthquakes.
   d. The New Madrid fault is still a serious threat in today's world.
5. Using the information in the text, list two things that happened as a result of the earthquakes.
   a. _____
   b. _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS