Name_____

Mount St. Helens: A Deadly Volcano

Modern history has had its share of deadly volcanic eruptions. Mount St. Helens, located in the state of Washington, was once called "the Smoking Mountain" by Native Americans. The once smoking mountain was becoming extremely active, and by March of 1980, the activity within the volcano had begun to increase significantly.

Because of the increased activity, those living near the mountain were encouraged to evacuate. Unfortunately, not everyone listened to the warnings and left the area. One can only assume that those who chose to stay did not realize just how dangerous the situation was about to become.

Then, on May 18, 1980, the area around the volcano was hit with an earthquake. Parts of the mountain began to shift and one of the largest landslides ever recorded followed as a result of the earthquake. But the mountain wasn't finished. The volcano erupted with a blast that took out trees and leveled the area as far as twelve miles from the point of the blast. The explosion caused the debris from the landslide to become liquefied, and everything was propelled by the force of the explosion down the mountain at speeds surpassing one hundred miles an hour. The rush of debris, in turn, flooded the surrounding riverbanks, causing them to overflow and destroy everything in their path.

Despite the warnings, everyone did not reach safety. Fifty-seven people died as a result of this natural disaster. Scientists continue to monitor the still active volcano and hope such a catastrophe as what occurred in 1980 will not repeat itself in the near future.

Text Questions

1. Using information from the text, explain why people may not have evacuated the area around Mount St. Helens.

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2. What was the author's purpose in writing this text?
   a. to explain
   b. to entertain
   c. to persuade
   d. to inform

3. Which statement is an opinion?
   a. Mount St. Helens led to the deaths of fifty-seven people.
   b. The eruption in 1980 of Mount St. Helens is, without a doubt, the worst natural disaster to ever occur in North America.
   c. The state of Washington experienced an earthquake and a volcanic explosion on the same day.
   d. Mount St. Helens was called "the Smoking Mountain" by Native Americans.

4. Why were the residents of the mountain encouraged to evacuate?
   a. The volcano was showing signs of increased activity.
   b. The property around the volcano was being used by the government for an interstate highway.
   c. Animals trying to escape volcanic activity were causing a stampede.
   d. Secret government experiments were taking place near the mountain.

5. Which would be a good primary source about the 1980 volcanic eruption?
   a. a website about volcanic eruptions in South America
   b. an atlas with maps showing the Pacific Northwest
   c. a letter written about the volcanic explosion by a survivor from the area
   d. an encyclopedia entry about volcanoes

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