



Name _____

Mysterious Explosion in Russia

The Tunguska River is in central Siberia, Russia. It was the site of the most mysterious explosion in world history. On June 30, 1908, a violent blast slammed into the area with the force of a hydrogen bomb. Yet this was almost forty years before such a bomb was invented. The explosion leveled thousands of square miles of forest in seconds. It was a mostly unpopulated area. However, eyewitnesses described a fiery, explosive sky, waves of intense heat, and a thunderous noise. The blast knocked cows and people right off their feet more than thirty miles away. The sound was heard more than six hundred miles away.

What caused this blast? Even now, scientists aren't sure. Several suggestions have been

made. Some have suggested that a large meteorite or asteroid burst through Earth's atmosphere and exploded. But there is no **crater** in the area. Meteorites and asteroids are composed of rock and metal. It seems there would have been an impact crater.

Other scientists believe that a small asteroid exploded in the air before hitting the ground. That's why there is no crater. The event did occur at the same time that Earth was passing through the orbit of Comet Encke. The explosion could have resulted from an atmospheric collision with a large piece of the comet's tail. That would explain no crater. Still, the mystery remains. Since it happened more than one hundred years ago, will it ever be solved?

Check Your Understanding

- How many years ago did the mysterious explosion occur?
 - more than 1,000 years ago
 - more than 100 years ago
 - during a world war
 - in 1970
- From the context of the passage, what is a **crater**?
 - a gigantic hole in the earth
 - a long ditch in the ground
 - a new lake
 - a kind of planet
- Which of these did *not* happen during the Tunguska event?
 - Scientists recorded the crash during the event.
 - A hydrogen bomb exploded.
 - The explosion leveled thousands of square miles of trees.
 - both a and b
- What can you infer from the passage?
 - Scientists are deeply divided over the cause of the explosion.
 - Scientists don't want to know the cause of the explosion.
 - A hydrogen bomb exploded in the region.
 - Alien spacecraft caused the explosion.

