

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

pompeii and other natural disasters: a guide

Grades 1–7

Pompeii: Lost & Found

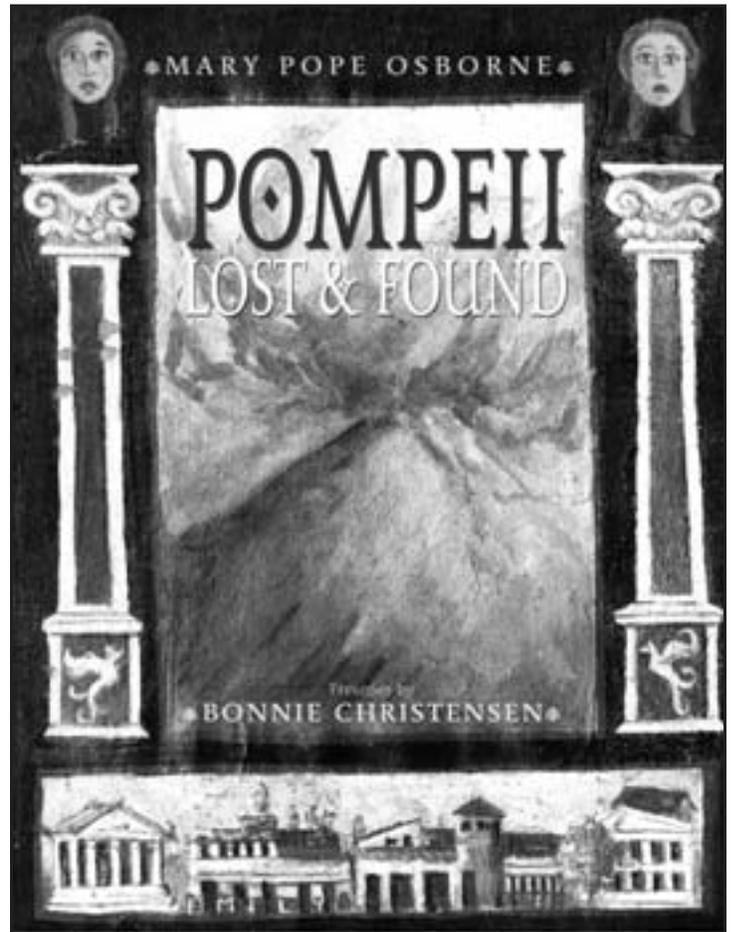
Mary Pope Osborne
Illustrated by Bonnie Christensen

Dangerous Planet

Bryn Barnard

Twisters and Other Terrible Storms

Will Osborne and Mary Pope Osborne
Illustrated by Sal Murdocca



Pompeii: Lost & Found

Grades 1–5 • Alfred A. Knopf hardcover • 0-375-82889-3
GLB/reinforced hardcover binding • 0-375-92889-8

introduction

Teaching a Unit on Natural Disasters

Natural disasters are the Earth's way of reminding its inhabitants of its awe-inspiring power. While the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius that buried Pompeii is perhaps the most famous natural disaster in history, students who have been following current events over just the last few years have seen natural forces wreak havoc around the globe. Tsunamis in the Indian Ocean, tornadoes in the Midwestern United States, and

hurricanes off the Central American and North American coastlines have killed hundreds of thousands of people and destroyed or damaged billions of dollars in property. Learning about natural disasters provides students with an understanding of the workings of weather conditions, gives information on how to stay safe should a natural disaster occur in their part of the world, and helps foster a respect for the Earth's dynamic forces.

pre-reading activity

As part of the ancient Roman Empire, Pompeii was a flourishing town located along the Mediterranean Sea, in what is now south central Italy. Spend time researching this period in history with students by exploring Roman structures of government, social class, art, culture, architecture, and everyday life.

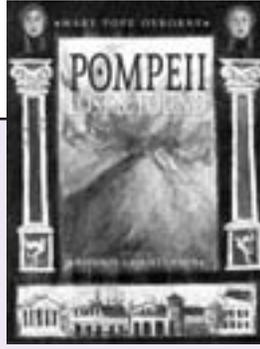


vocabulary/ use of language

Ask students to write down unfamiliar words and try to define them by taking clues from the context of the novel. Such words may include:

amphitheater (p. 21)
archaeologist (p. 13)
architect (p. 11)
fresco (p. 13)
forum (p. 29)
gladiator (p. 21)
inscription (p. 11)
perished (p. 35)
petrified (p. 19)
ruins (p. 11)
scrolls (p. 22)
villa (p. 11)

Pompeii: Lost & Found



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about the book

From Magic Tree House series author Mary Pope Osborne, with stunning frescoes by Bonnie Christensen, *Pompeii: Lost & Found* describes the destruction, rediscovery, and archaeological findings of the ancient Roman town of Pompeii, buried during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79.

connecting to the curriculum

Language Arts—Archaeologists who have excavated the Pompeian site have discovered inscriptions on buildings and graffiti on walls written in Latin. Explore how Latin word roots are an instrumental aspect of the English language. Challenge students to make a glossary of common English words and their Latin derivations.

Social Studies—In ancient Roman life, the forum was an area of a city or town where much activity took place, such as commerce, religious worship, and politics. Along with students, explore the Roman system of government and how it has influenced the American governmental system. How are they alike and how are they different?

History—While excavating the site of ancient Pompeii, archaeologists have uncovered thousands of artifacts that inform scientists about daily life in this ancient society. Challenge students to build a time capsule containing objects that describe life in the early 21st century. Each student should write a paragraph about his or her chosen object describing how it reflects contemporary society, then attach a picture of him- or herself and the paragraph to the object. Enclose all student objects in an airtight, waterproof container on which the date the capsule is sealed is written. With permission from the school administrator, choose a time and place to bury the container on school property.

Visual Arts—In *Pompeii: Lost & Found*, illustrator Bonnie Christensen describes the ancient art of fresco painting. (p. 36) Have students go online to research images of frescoes found in the Pompeii excavation site. Work with the school art teacher to help students create small-scale fresco paintings of a scene from their everyday life.

Performing Arts—Theater was a popular form of entertainment in ancient Rome. Masks were common props: those with frowns signified sad or tragic characters; those with smiles indicated happy or comic characters. Again working with the school art teacher, have students make masks in the Roman style. Choose an ancient story, such as one of Aesop's fables, to perform before the class.

Science—Discuss and research the work of volcanologists. To us, Mount Vesuvius is the volcano that destroyed Pompeii. To the Pompeians, it was a lovely hillside where sheep grazed and farmers grew grapes and olives for wine and oil. Discuss with students the science of volcanoes, including how they are formed and what causes a volcano to erupt.

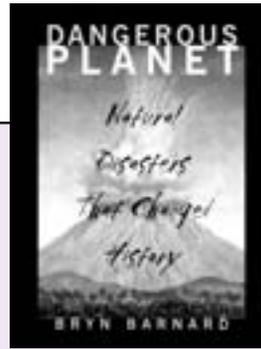


Illustration © 2006 by Bonnie Christensen

Dangerous Planet: Natural Disasters That Changed History

about the book

In *Dangerous Planet: Natural Disasters That Changed History*, author Bryn Barnard examines nine separate natural disasters—beginning with the meteor that killed the dinosaurs—that in their aftermath changed the course of history.



**Dangerous Planet:
Natural Disasters That Changed History**
Grades 3–7 • Crown Books hardcover • 0-375-82249-6
GLB/reinforced hardcover binding • 0-375-92249-0

connecting to the curriculum

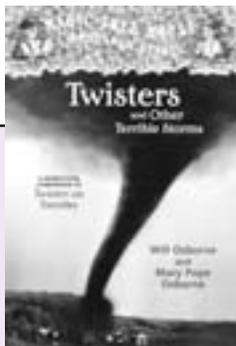
Science—Spend time researching the impact theory. Have students focus on how the theory explains the extinction of the dinosaurs and the rise of mammals. Relate the global-warming effect of the meteor’s impact with contemporary causes of global-warming. Have students research scientific predictions for the effects of global warming on the environment.

Language Arts—The blizzard of 1888 crippled the eastern United States seaboard and caused massive amounts of damage and loss of life. Assign students to go back in time as journalists to learn about this extreme snowstorm. Each student should write a first-person account of the storm, including factual information and details.

Contemporary Events—*Dangerous Planet* examines the tsunami that overwhelmed the island of Crete, ushering in the decline of the Minoan civilization. Have students research the 2004 tsunami that rearranged the Indian Ocean and the 2005 hurricane, Katrina, that devastated New Orleans. Focus on the efforts made to get the needed aid to these areas, and the precautions taken to protect their populations from similar natural disasters in the future.

pre-reading activity

What is extreme weather? What is a natural disaster? Before beginning this book, ask students to brainstorm examples of weather. As a class, define each example, and identify those that can become natural disasters (an example would be a tropical storm developing into a hurricane).



Twisters and Other Terrible Storms • Grades 1–4
Random House Children’s Books paperback • 0-375-81358-6
GLB/reinforced hardcover binding • 0-375-91358-0

Twisters and Other Terrible Storms A Magic Tree House Research Guide

about the book

Twisters and Other Terrible Storms explains how weather works in its most extreme forms by examining the science behind twisters, hurricanes, and blizzards, and suggests ways to be safe should students experience wild weather firsthand!

connecting to the curriculum

Social Studies/Geography—Hurricanes occur all over the world and are known by different names, depending on where they happen. Have students research where hurricanes (or typhoons) occur on the planet. Students should find and mark these locations on a map.

History—Some of the world’s most fascinating facts and trivia are weather related, such as the biggest hailstone that weighed two pounds. (p. 50) Challenge students to research more amazing historical weather facts. Once research is completed, help students organize and categorize the information, then publish the findings in a weather trivia book.

Health/Visual Arts—Learning how to be safe during a storm is important information that every person should know. Have students review pages 52 and 53 of *Twisters and Other Terrible Storms*, then design a series of Public Service Announcement posters that tell people how to be safe in various types of storms. After students complete preliminary designs, give each a sheet of poster board and art supplies to create the final art.

pre-reading activity

What is meteorology? From where does the word derive? What do meteorologists do? Screen a videotaped segment of a local weather report and discuss the information provided in it. Also, have students collect a week’s worth of weather reports in a national newspaper, such as *USA Today*, and examine the information.

in their own words . . .

Mary Pope Osborne

Q: When and how did you become interested in learning about Pompeii?

A: Ever since I was a child, I've been fascinated by Pompeii. I first "visited" Pompeii a number of years ago, writing *Vacation Under the Volcano*, a Magic Tree House book, and more recently, *Ancient Rome and Pompeii*, a Magic Tree House Research Guide co-authored with my sister Natalie Pope Boyce.

Q: What was the most interesting fact that you discovered about Pompeii?

A: I think the most interesting thing about the discovery of Pompeii was that archaeologists were able to "bring back" many of the people who died there. After the volcano erupted, thousands of people were buried under tons of ash. When their bodies decayed, they left empty spaces inside the hardened ash. By pouring plaster into these spaces, archeologists were able to replicate the forms of some of the people and animals of Pompeii.

Q: What are the rewards of writing nonfiction?

A: I love writing nonfiction because I learn so much while doing my research. I also enjoy the process of bringing order to all the information I've gathered, so that I can tell a complicated story to kids in a simple and direct way.

Bonnie Christensen

Q: When did you first begin drawing?

A: My father always encouraged me to draw. He began compiling a notebook of my drawings when I was five . . . I still have many [of them]. There is an example of one of those early drawings on my Web site: www.bonniechristensen.com.

Q: When doing the illustrations for *Pompeii: Lost & Found*, what was the hardest part of the fresco painting process?

A: The hardest part of painting frescoes is completing the painting before the plaster dries. Once the drawing was transferred to the plaster I had about 24 hours to complete the painting. This usually meant working full-time (no lunch break) on the painting for 12 hours one day then 4–5 hours the next day. I spritzed the painting with water and kept it wrapped in plastic overnight, then would get up very early in the morning to finish it.

Q: Who is your favorite artist and why?

A: The world is too big and history of art too long and I'm too indecisive to have a favorite artist. I admire Giovanni Bellini, Jacques-Louis David, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Käthe Kollwitz, and Robert Rauschenberg among others. I admire the way each reflects in his or her art the time in which they lived, and their personal perspective.

More information on Christensen's fresco work can be found at www.randomhouse.com/teachers/pompeii

related titles

by theme

Pompeii . . . Buried Alive!

Edith Kunhardt Davis

Nature & the Natural World • Weather

Grades 2–4 / PB: 0-394-88866-9

Random House Children's Books

Twister on Tuesday

Mary Pope Osborne

Nature & the Natural World • Weather

Grades K–3 / PB: 0-679-89069-6 / GLB: 0-679-99069-0

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internet resources

BBC: Ancient History

www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/pompeii_portents_01.shtml

This site, posted by the BBC, is a comprehensive look at the events leading up to, during, and after the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79.

How Volcanoes Work

www.geology.sdsu.edu/how_volcanoes_work/

This site explains in great detail how volcanoes work and offers excellent imagery of many of the world's active volcanoes.

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia

2004 Tsunami

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake

A comprehensive Web page containing information on the 2004 tsunami that destroyed the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand, and other countries.

2005 Hurricane Katrina

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Katrina

A detailed and regularly updated Web page concerning the hurricane that destroyed New Orleans.

CNN.com

www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2004/tsunami.disaster/

CNN's coverage of the 2004 tsunami, and its aftereffects in the Indian Ocean.

PB = Paperback

GLB = Reinforced Hardcover Binding

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