



There aren't any photographs of Krakatoa's explosion, but newspapers around the world published illustrations of the disaster.

YESTERDAY

Mighty Krakatoa

126 years ago, this explosion was felt around the world.

BY ALEXIS BURLING

It was a clear August morning in 1883, but something wasn't right on Krakatoa (kra-kuh-TOW-uh). This normally tranquil volcanic island—part of a chain of islands that is now the country of Indonesia—had been making strange noises since March. Soon, these rumblings would build and **climax** in an explosion that would be felt around the world.

At 12:53 p.m. on August 26, a huge pop, followed by an ear-shattering BOOM, **ricocheted** through the air. Krakatoa emitted a mushroom cloud of black, swirling debris. The sky turned dark with thick, syrupy smoke. And the reverberations caused the ocean to rise higher and higher, before crashing furiously onto the shore. But the worst was yet to come.

By evening, panic had spread throughout Krakatoa's neighboring islands. It was clear that the "sleeping giant" had awoken. At the time, not even the world's most sophisticated scientists had much understanding of volcanoes. And besides, the islands were now cut off from the rest of the world. All telegraph cables—the islanders' only means of communication—had been destroyed in the blast.

Some villagers locked their windows and doors, hoping Krakatoa would return to its

Compare/Contrast

Directions:

1. Read both articles.
2. Write down five facts each about the eruptions of Krakatoa and Mount St. Helens.

sleeping state. Others climbed to the top of coconut trees, covering their noses and eyes with wet cloths. Still others took their families and fled to the highest point on their island in case of another explosion.

All of these efforts were useless.

At 10:02 a.m. the next morning, Krakatoa exploded, obliterating the island it sat upon. Billowing plumes of fire and crumbled earth shot up 20 miles into the air. The violent sea formed a 100-foot-tall wall of water, called a tsunami (tsoo-NAH-mee), that flattened 165 towns in its path. Twelve hours later, the wave was recorded at a spot 3,800 nautical miles away—a distance a ship takes 12 days to reach.

A total of 36,417 people died in Krakatoa's eruption. But the land repaired itself and people started anew. In the last century, a baby volcano—Anak Krakatoa—cropped up where the mighty volcano once stood. Will it be as dangerous as its parent was? Let's hope not. ■

Look for two of my words on this page!



TODAY

Mount St. Helens

Hundreds of lives were saved before this volcano erupted.



Thousands of old-growth trees were destroyed in Mount St. Helens's eruption. Roads were ruined for hundreds of miles.

Look online at www.scholastic.com/storyworks for more activities to do with these stories!

3. On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph that explains how the eruptions of the two volcanoes are alike and how they are different.

On May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted in Washington State. It was the largest volcanic explosion in American history. Fifty-seven people were killed. More than 200 homes were destroyed. And thousands of acres of forest, along with bridges and roads, were reduced to a sea of smoldering ash. Scientists did what they could to forecast the disaster. But they were no match for the volcano.

Months before St. Helens erupted, volcanologists (scientists who study volcanoes) were monitoring its activity. The 40,000-year-old volcano had been dormant, or inactive, for 123 years. But there were a number of startling clues that it wouldn't be much longer. The first sign came on March 20, when a 4.1 magnitude earthquake struck. A week later, a huge explosion blew off St. Helens's top, leaving a 250-foot-wide crater. Mini avalanches of ash and rock spewed from deep within the earth's core.

Scientists were certain something major

was about to happen. The question was when. Governor Dixie Lee Ray announced a state of emergency. The local police evacuated hundreds of people from their homes. Members of the U.S. Forest Service mapped out restricted zones to keep the swarms of curious tourists out of harm's way. And search-and-rescue teams were put in place for when—not if—a major disaster occurred.

Sure enough, at 8:32 a.m. on May 18, Mount St. Helens began to erupt. First, a 5.1 magnitude earthquake shook the base of the volcano. Then, an enormous explosion—as loud as 500 atomic bombs—was heard as far away as Canada. Within seconds, the largest landslide in recorded history sent mud and debris careening upward and outward at 670 miles per hour. The resulting river of mud and 800°F molten lava leveled everything in its path.

The fallout from the blast reached far and wide. Experts estimate 900,000 tons of volcanic ash blanketed highways in Washington State. Millions of fish and more than 7,000 animals perished. But many people survived. As one survivor put it, "I witnessed the eruption of the sleeping beauty and understood how fragile a human is while standing before nature." ■