

Mountain of Doom

Journey 2,000 years into the past, to the day Mount Vesuvius erupted

About the Story

Lexile: 980L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to build knowledge about life in ancient Rome and a historic disaster, and to analyze how an author brings a story to life

Key Skills:

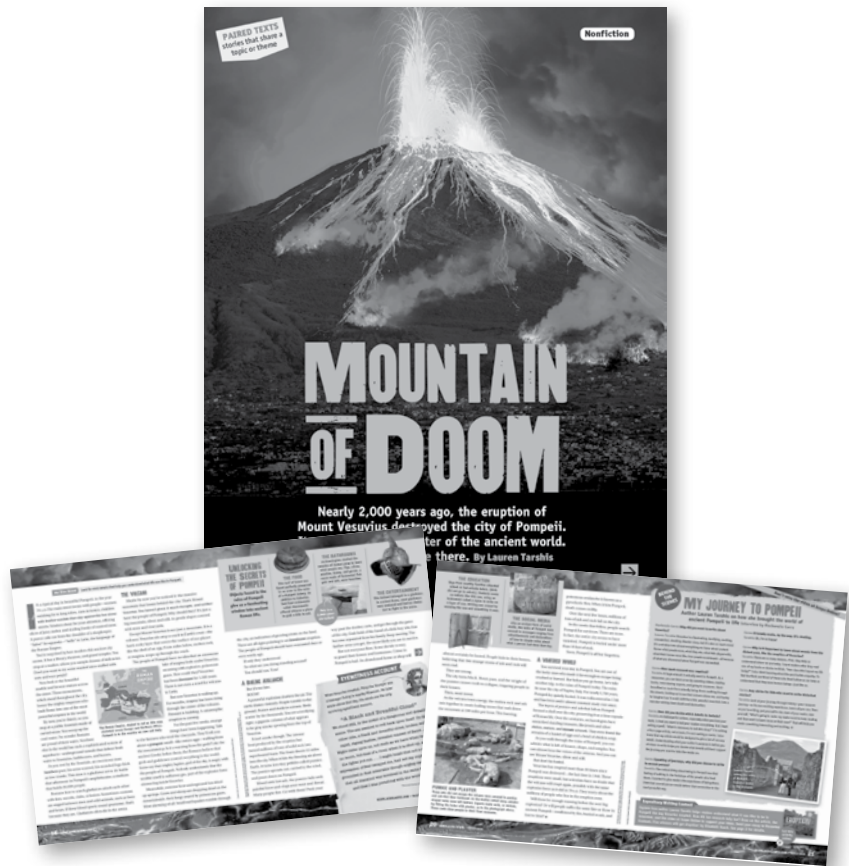
author's craft, point of view, setting, compare and contrast, word choice, mood

Essential Questions:

- How do we learn about historical events?
- How do authors bring stories to life?
- Why is it important to learn about the distant past?

Standards:

The articles and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6.** For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Video:

- “Behind the Scenes: The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius”

Audio:

- The article and interview
- Vocabulary Slideshow

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Skill Builders to print or project:

- Video Discussion Questions
- Preparing to Write: Bringing the Story to Life
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- **Core Skills Workout:** Mood, Text Evidence*
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Watch the video.

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Video Discussion Questions** and preview as a class. Then watch the Behind the Scenes video and discuss the questions together.

Preview vocabulary.

(10 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow**. Highlighted words: *calamity, consolation, dormant, excavated, imminent, lumbers, mosaic, pungent*

2 Reading and Discussing “Mountain of Doom”

(30 minutes, activity sheets online)

- Read aloud the As You Read box on page 18.
- Read the article as a class. Optionally, play the audio from Scope Online.
- Discuss the following questions as a class.

Close-Reading Questions

Why do you think author Lauren Tarshis decided to address the reader directly?

(author’s craft, point of view) *Addressing readers directly in present tense and in second person brings them closer to the story. In this case, Tarshis places readers in Pompeii, making them feel as if they are actually in another time and place. This helps readers understand what it must have been like to live in Pompeii and experience the eruption of Vesuvius.*

Identify sensory details that Tarshis uses in the first paragraph. (author’s craft)

Tarshis includes sensory details about the main street in Pompeii such as “women swishing by in long robes,” “leather sandals that slap

against the hot stone streets,” “sizzling hunks of roasted meat,” and a parrot that “squawks.”

What information does Tarshis include to help readers better understand the time and place in which her story takes place?

(setting) *Tarshis includes information about the clothing people wore, the food they ate, the language they spoke, the religious beliefs they held, the entertainment they enjoyed, how they communicated, the types of goods they bought and sold, and the architecture and artwork that surrounded them.*

Compare and contrast life in ancient Pompeii with life today. (compare and contrast)

Answers will vary. Two similarities are that people ate in fast-food restaurants—though the food back then may not have always been suited to our modern appetites—and that Pompeii had a sophisticated system for bringing water into people’s homes, similar to the one we have today. And while we don’t watch blood sports, ancient Romans’ love of watching gladiators in amphitheaters feels similar to our culture’s love of sports. A key difference is that today we have more advanced technology and a scientific understanding of natural disasters.

Consider the sections “The Volcano” and “A Boiling Avalanche.” List vivid verbs and adjectives that heighten the emotional effect of the writing. (word choice)

Answers will vary but will likely include looms, waking up, boils, steaming, explosive, rumble, seared, shatters, spewing, etc.

Describe the mood of the sections “The Volcano” and “A Boiling Avalanche.” Besides word choice, what techniques does Tarshis use to create this mood? (mood, author’s craft)

The mood of these sections is urgent, terrifying, and suspenseful. Tarshis creates this mood by including details about what is happening beneath Earth's surface, unbeknownst to the people of Pompeii. Additionally, Tarshis gives commands to the reader such as "run," "Now!," "Go with them!," "Push your way past the donkey carts, and get through the gates of the city," "Grab hold of the hand of a little boy . . .," and "Keep moving." These orders add to the sense of urgency, terror, and suspense.

"My Journey to Pompeii"

(10 minutes, activity sheets online)

Read the interview as a class. Then discuss the following questions, some of which refer to both the article and the interview.

Critical-Thinking Questions

▶ **What interested or surprised you about Tarshis's writing process?** *Answers will vary.*

▶ **In the final section of "Mountain of Doom," Tarshis writes that Pompeii was "lost to time." How does her article present a different idea?** *Students might say that though Vesuvius destroyed Pompeii and the city was*

buried for nearly 2,000 years, the eruption of Vesuvius also preserved Pompeii in a way that the city can now live on forever, a time capsule for present-day humans to study and admire.

▶ **Consider what Tarshis says in the interview about why it's important to learn about the distant past. What are some other reasons?**

Answers will vary. Students may say that learning about the distant past helps us prevent future tragedies by revealing our past mistakes. Students may also say that learning about the past can inspire us by revealing all that humans have accomplished throughout history.

▶ **Think about how Tarshis brings the story of Pompeii to life. What are some techniques she uses that you want to try in your own writing?** *Answers will vary.*

3 Skill Building and Writing

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Bringing the Story to Life**. This author's craft activity will prepare students for the prompt on page 21. *For alternate culminating tasks, see below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, explain three ways author Lauren Tarshis brings the ancient city of Pompeii to life. Use text evidence to support your ideas.

For Advanced Readers

Research a historical event that fascinates you. Using "Mountain of Doom" as a model, write your own article about the event. Use second-person point of view and plenty of sensory details.

For Historians

Research another volcanic eruption, such as Mount Tambora (1815), Krakatoa (1883), or Mount Kilauea (starting in 1983). What do scientists know about the eruption? How did the eruption change our planet? Present your findings in a slideshow or podcast.

For Scientists

Research the capability of today's scientists to predict volcanic eruptions. Present your findings in an essay or slideshow.