

The Pack of Pompeii

Adult Guidance

'The Pack of Pompeii' is a short, illustrated story written for key stage 2 and published by Twinkl Originals as part of the 'Extreme Earth' collection. Exploring the topic of volcanoes, the story is set at the time of the AD 79 eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which famously destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The central characters of this fictional tale are a pack of three dogs who live on the mountainside just outside the city. Their emotional journey helps to illustrate what it may have been like to experience the eruption at the time. It reinforces and enhances children's knowledge of volcanoes and the events in Pompeii in particular. The engaging story could be used for guided reading, a whole-class read or a starting point for topic work.

Story Overview

Livia, Claudia and Alba are a pack of three mountain dogs living on the 'Gentle Mountain' outside Pompeii and Herculaneum in AD 79. They are usually guided by their shepherd to round up the goats, but their senses tell them that something is different today. With the goats acting strangely and the ground feeling unusually warm underfoot, the dogs wander into the town to investigate what the 'two-legs' of the settlement are doing, and to search for food. They experience the rumbling of the ground as the eruption of Vesuvius begins. First, they seek to escape from the town, but eventually, Livia decides to go back to rescue one of the human children. Once Livia takes the girl to safety, she is reunited with Alba and Claudia and the trio help to rescue the 'hero dog', Delta, and the surviving members of Delta's human pack.

As the dogs finally reach the horse-drawn carts that are trying to flee the city, Delta returns to the devastated, crumbling Pompeii in a vain effort to rescue one of the family's children. Livia, Claudia and Alba are able to escape the ruins of Pompeii as the deadly eruption runs its terrible course. They hear about the final fate of Pompeii from the eagle, Cato.

Themes

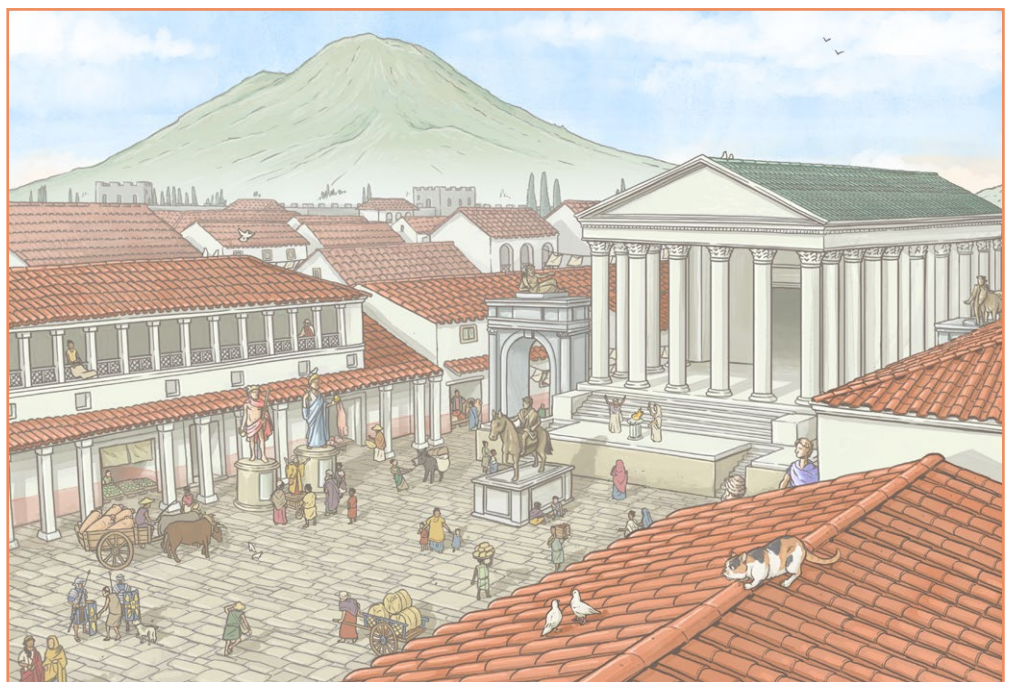
The story focuses on the effects of a volcanic eruption and describes, in some detail, the impact that a volcanic eruption can have on a landscape and the people and animals living there. It includes the themes of survival, friendship, loss, bravery and loyalty.

The story features the character of Delta, a dog who it is believed may have been part of a true, tragic story at the time of the Pompeii disaster. The skeletal remains of a dog were found in a way that suggests that the dog may have been trying to protect a child. A collar with Delta's name inscribed was discovered separately.

Additional Resources

The story is available in eBook and printable PDF form for both Windows and Mac technology. **Click here** to download the story and select 'More downloads' for alternative versions.

A range of additional resources is available to download in order to support the teaching of the text, including guided reading presentations, display resources, fiction and non-fiction reading



comprehension activities, writing activities and topical 'volcanoes' activities. **Click here** for the full collection.

Sensitive Issues

This story, written for key stage 2, details the events of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Pompeii in AD 79. While handled in a sensitive manner, there are some potentially distressing elements of the subject matter which teachers may wish to be aware of or discuss with children before reading:

- The story takes place over the course of one day and includes the volcanic eruption up to the point where Pompeii is destroyed by pyroclastic flows.
- The story is told from the perspective of dogs rather than humans. The dogs are hungry and go into town partly to hunt for scraps to eat.
- The story aligns itself with historical facts: that the town of Pompeii was completely destroyed and that many people were killed and buried. No specific human deaths are described although some are implied. Some background knowledge about the historical event is recommended, in order to avoid the ending coming as a surprise.
- Scenes during the eruption and attempted evacuation of Pompeii feature many dangers, which some children might find scary or upsetting. These include collapsing buildings, fires, and ash and rocks falling from the sky.
- A young girl is separated from the rest of her family before escaping.
- A young boy is left behind during the attempted escape but Delta returns for him. Their fate is never revealed but it is implied that they do not escape.
- The humans and the dogs suffer injuries during the course of the story, including bleeding and wounded limbs.
- At the end of the story, although the main character escapes with her life, there are casualties involving named characters. 'Delta' was a real dog who perished in AD 79 as a result of the Vesuvius eruption but the events told here are a work of fiction.

Consider discussing modern-day advances in predicting eruptions, as well as the location of volcanoes in the world, to ensure that students feel safe.

It is recommended that you read the story before sharing it with children so that you are familiar with the content. Please be aware of any children in your class who may find the above elements distressing.

Chapter Summary

One

The story is narrated by Livia, one of three dogs who work the Gentle Mountain. The dogs work with their shepherd on the mountainside near Pompeii. Livia is joined by Claudia and Alba as they try to tend to the goats, who are said to be acting strangely. In the absence of their 'two-leg', the hungry dogs trot downwards towards the town in search of food, noting that the rabbits have fled and the horses also appear to be sensing something unusual in the air.

Two

The three dogs head toward the town, but as they arrive, there is a rumbling under the ground. The trembling is felt by the people of the town, too, and urns and stone carvings tumble and shatter on the floor. The pack smell something is wrong in the air and Livia, as leader, barks that they must leave.

Three

The pack initially begin to head out of town but Livia has a change of heart, leading them back towards the city in search of the 'two-leg' who feeds them, a young girl from their shepherd's family. Statues and roof tiles continue to fall to the ground. People are dashing around the streets in panic. They find the girl who gives them some

meat, then ushers them away, urging them to safety. Livia saves Alba from a collapsing stone wall that would have crushed her. Then, the dogs pass the home of Delta, a house pet whom they have heard stories about.

Four

The pack leave the town and return to the hillside, feeling tremors and an unusual heat under their paws. They encounter Cato, an eagle who points out the huge ash cloud emerging from the erupting volcano. Ash falls on them from the sky as they watch buildings in the town begin to collapse and people fleeing. Just as they are all set to follow Cato towards safer ground, Livia announces her decision to return to the town. She gives Alba and Claudia the job of herding the goats to safety while she returns for the shepherd and his family.

Five

Ash continues to fall from the sky and the erupting volcano roars. Livia arrives in Pompeii as the ash cloud brings darkness to the town. She finds many humans desperate for help and hears shrieks and cries. Roofs have collapsed and buildings are in ruins. Livia finds the young 'two-leg' who fed her sobbing in the back room of the shepherd's home, in need of rescue. She helps her out into the street as they attempt to find safety away from the crumbling buildings.

Six

Joining a rush of fleeing people, the dog and the girl are heading out of town when they pass Delta once more, still in the grounds of her family's home. Livia leads the girl to the safety of a boat which is leaving the town. Livia is shocked to discover that Alba and Claudia have returned to help her. The three dogs attempt to make their own escape on foot but, once again, pass Delta's home. They try to convince Delta to follow them to safety but she is loyal to her human family, who have not left their vulnerable building, and she chooses to stay with them.

Seven

The building is struck and reduced to rubble. Delta is persuaded to round up her human family as the trio of mountain dogs attempt to lead them all to safety. Only some of the family are guided away towards the edge of town, as Delta is forced to leave a young boy behind. The dogs lead them through burning streets and a hail of rocks. Crowds of fleeing people use horse-drawn carts to leave their gathered possessions. The dogs and humans board one of the carts.

After an exhausted Livia wakes, she finds that Delta has left the cart to return to the town, in search of the missing boy.

Eight

After several hours, the line of carts has continued beyond the volcano to safety. Not all of the carts made it. Cato, the eagle, arrives to bring news. Everything in the city is said to have been buried and nothing could have survived it. The saddened dogs think of Delta and her unshakable devotion to her family. The story ends as Livia reflects on lessons of 'kindness, loyalty and the strength of the pack'.