

UNIT 3 >>> Eyewitness

Aim: To explore the topic of natural disasters and people's first-hand accounts of experiencing them. To encourage students to imagine what it might be like to be involved in such disasters.

Background note

Research into natural disasters and relief efforts could be very upsetting for your students, so supervise closely.

1

- Use these questions as the basis for a class discussion before looking at the texts.
- Elicit the name of some different types of natural disaster and write them on the board. Possible answers are: *earthquake, hurricane, volcanic eruption, tsunami, flood, drought, typhoon, tornado, wildfire* (the last three are in the texts).
- Note a *typhoon* (Text A) is a severe tropical storm that originates in the northwest Pacific Ocean. A *hurricane* is the name given to the same type of storm, but in the Atlantic Ocean or northeast Pacific Ocean.
- Ask the class if they have read about instances of any of the disasters on the board. If so, did they watch news on TV/online or just read about it? Do they know anyone who was an eyewitness to a natural disaster? Write any details on the board.
- Read out the final question and check students understand *authorities* (emergency services, local/national government, community leaders, charities, etc). Remind students that they first met this word in Unit 1, page 11. Elicit responses from different members of the class and write some answers on the board.
Expand the question by asking: *Did the community and/or local/national government respond well/quickly enough? Had anything like that happened before? Did the community learn from past mistakes?*

2

- Read out the question and check students understand *man-made* (caused by human activity). Ask students to skim-read the texts as fast as possible in order to find the answer to this question. Before they give their answer, check comprehension of *typhoon* in Text A (if you haven't already covered it in Exercise 1).
- Ask students to guess the meaning of *typhoon* before giving them the definition above.
- When you check the answer, ask students how they know it is man-made (answer in brackets below). You may need to check they understand *arson*.

Answer

wildfires in Melbourne (*Police are investigating nine cases of arson, which may have contributed to the number of fires that have broken out in recent days.*)

3

- Ask students to read the texts again in more detail to answer questions 1–7.
- When they've finished, put them into pairs to check their answers. Elicit the answers from different pairs of students, dealing with any comprehension problems that come up.

Answers

- 1 February 2009
- 2 under their desks in their classrooms
- 3 emergency food, shelter and medical attention
- 4 a loud roar and really heavy rain
- 5 30,000 residents spent the night without power
- 6 'the disaster-prone country'
- 7 Students could quote the mayor in Text C, plus that fact that no one died this time.

4

- Students can answer this question in pairs or small groups and then develop it for homework. Brainstorm some different sight, sound and smell verbs (from Unit 3, page 32) for the three different disasters and write these on the board. Encourage students to use personal experience as well as their imagination.

Homework

As a follow-up to Exercise 4, get students to research a natural disaster and imagine they were an eyewitness to the event. Ask them to write a first-hand account of what it was like to be there. What did they see/smell/hear? What happened after the disaster? Ask them to bring their reports to the next class to share.