

# The Rediscovery of Pompeii

Mount Vesuvius erupted in the first century.

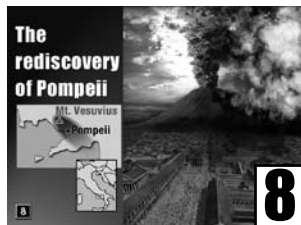
## BASIC

Almost 2,000 years ago, a volcano called Mount Vesuvius erupted, blowing many tons of ash, dust, and rock 20 miles high. The city of Pompeii, in Italy, was completely buried. **Can you find Italy on a map? What do you think it would have been like to be in Pompeii when Mount Vesuvius erupted?** Obviously, we can't go back 2,000 years into the past to know what it was really like. But we can study the writings of the survivors who saw the eruption. And we can study the remains of buildings and other items that are still in the ruins

of Pompeii.

**What do you think can be learned from these things?**

The author of a new book about Pompeii used these clues and more to research what kind of a city it was, what kind of people lived there, and what life was like there before the volcano destroyed the city. **Would you be interested in reading a book about Pompeii? Why or why not?** NEXT



## GENERAL

The big picture here shows what one of the world's most famous disasters might have looked like. Nearly 2,000 years ago, the eruption of a volcano called Mount Vesuvius buried the city of Pompeii, killing thousands of people. **Who knows where Pompeii is? (Italy.)**

Historians believe the eruption happened in the year 79. At that time, Pompeii was a busy city of about 20,000 people. There had been earthquakes in Pompeii before, and there were probably rumblings and smoke coming from Vesuvius from time to time before the eruption. **Why do you think the people of Pompeii didn't move away?** Historians say that Mount Vesuvius may have blown up on August 24th of the year 79. **Who knows what happens when**

**a volcano erupts?** (*Pressure builds up inside the volcano, until it breaks through the top, releasing steam, ash, and lava.*) The Vesuvius eruption blew the top of the mountain completely off, spewing tons of ash, rocks, and lava 20 miles into the air. It buried not only Pompeii, but some of the smaller towns in the area as well. No one is quite sure how many people died in the attack, but the total is estimated to be more than 4,000.

People have always been fascinated by Pompeii. A new book by author Mary Beard looks at what kind of city it was, what kind of people lived there, and what life was like before the volcano destroyed the city. **What clues do you think she and other historians might have to answer these questions?** NEXT

## ADVANCED

Pompeii was a city of 20,000 residents in the year 79 C.E. It was thought of as a very international city, considering its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea, and its architecture showed Egyptian and Greek influence. **What empire ruled this area, and most of Europe, at that time?** (*The Roman Empire.*) Pompeii and the other smaller towns in the area were prone to earthquakes — in fact, a large quake had wreaked havoc only 13 years before, and the city of Pompeii was still recovering. Residents were used to the ground shaking every once in a while.

The date isn't certain, but historians think that on August 24th, Pompeii met its sudden and violent end. **What happened?** (*The nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted.*) The eruption was swift and ferocious,

blowing the entire top of the mountain off, and sending tons of scalding steam, ash, and rock 20 miles in the air. This explosion was so huge that material from Vesuvius fell in the city of Constantinople, more than 1,000 miles away. As residents began to flee, clouds of material from this volcano swept through the city, burying approximately 4,000 of its people underneath tons of ash and rock. Pompeii and neighboring smaller cities were gone.

Some survivors did escape, and their eyewitness accounts gave history the story of Pompeii. The city itself remained buried until uncovered by excavation in 1748. What was discovered there has provided us with an intimate and detailed glimpse of life in Pompeii in the first century. **Have you seen the ruins of Pompeii before?** NEXT