

Investigating Pompeii and Vesuvius

In the year AD 79, the volcano Mount Vesuvius erupted. It caused lots of damage to the nearby Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Buildings were destroyed and many lives were lost. The entire area was covered in layers of ash.

Many years later, the remains of the buildings were uncovered. The bodies of the buried victims had decomposed over time, leaving just skeletons behind. However, they also left hollow spaces where they once were, surrounded by compacted earth and volcanic ash.

The spaces were filled with plaster which was left to harden. Three-dimensional replicas were made from this. Experts are now able to see the final poses of the people of Pompeii and the plaster casts have helped them to piece together clues about life in the ancient cities.

Evidence has been found of animal remains as well as human. One dog was wearing a collar and was chained up to a post – this suggests that it was probably kept as a pet or guard dog. A famous plaster cast shows the dog in the position in which it perished: lying on its back with its legs in the air.

The remains at Pompeii are now a huge modern tourist attraction. The well-preserved ancient buildings make it one of the most visited archaeological sites in the world.

Delta – Truth or Myth?

Some sources suggest that evidence of another dog was discovered, lying above the body of a child. Some believe that the faithful dog died while trying to protect the young boy from the volcanic debris. A collar is also said to have been found, with the name 'Delta' engraved upon it.

It is thought that Delta belonged to Severinus, and stories say that the dog had already saved his life on previous occasions. The tales of Delta have inspired modern fiction such as 'The Pack of Pompeii'.



Mount Vesuvius in Italy.

Questions

1. What is the name of the volcano mentioned in the text? Circle **one**.

Pompeii

Herculaneum

Delta

Vesuvius

2. What was surrounding the hollow spaces left behind by the bodies? Tick **two**.

skeletons

compacted earth

plaster

volcanic ash

3. Look at the sentence: *One dog was wearing a collar and was chained up to a post.*

According to the text, what two things does this suggest the dog may have been kept as?

4. Which of these meanings best matches the word **perished**? Circle **one**.

became

died in a

rolled

tried to

too cold

sudden manner

over

escape

5. According to the story of Delta, what was found lying below the dog?

6. Number these steps in the process from 1-4 in the order in which they happened.

The first one has been done for you.

People were killed by the eruption and trapped under layers of volcanic ash.	1
The plaster was left to harden which created replicas of the bodies.	
The spaces were filled with plaster.	
Bodies decomposed, leaving a space under the compacted earth and ash.	

7. What is meant by the word **myth**?

Answers

1. What is the name of the volcano mentioned in the text? Circle **one**.

Pompeii

Herculaneum

Delta

Vesuvius

2. What was surrounding the hollow spaces left behind by the bodies? Tick **two**.

skeletons

compacted earth

plaster

volcanic ash

3. Look at the sentence: *One dog was wearing a collar and was chained up to a post.*

According to the text, what two things does this suggest the dog may have been kept as?

a pet or a guard dog

4. Which of these meanings best matches the word **perished**? Circle **one**.

became

too cold

**died in a
sudden manner**

rolled

over

tried to

escape

5. According to the story of Delta, what was found lying below the dog?

a child/a young boy

6. Number these steps in the process from 1-4 in the order in which they happened.

The first one has been done for you.

People were killed by the eruption and trapped under layers of volcanic ash.	1
The plaster was left to harden which created replicas of the bodies.	4
The spaces were filled with plaster.	3
Bodies decomposed, leaving a space under the compacted earth and ash.	2

7. What is meant by the word **myth**?

Accept: something that might not be true; a story that is told or believed; something that has been made up.

Investigating Pompeii and Vesuvius

In the year AD 79, Mount Vesuvius famously erupted, causing devastation to the nearby Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Buildings were destroyed and many lives were lost. The entire area was covered in layers of ash and other volcanic debris. Many years later, the remains of the buildings were uncovered and some interesting discoveries made.

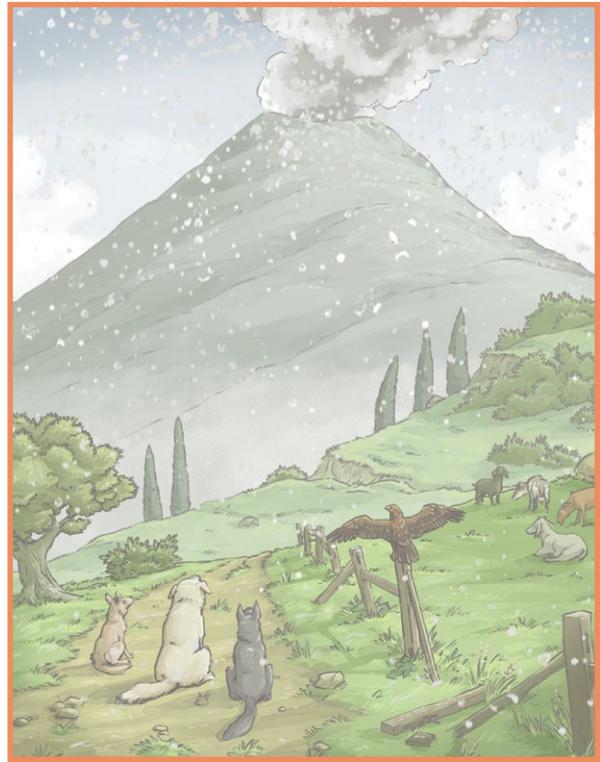
The bodies of the buried victims decomposed over time, leaving just skeletons behind. However, they also left hollow cavities in the space that they occupied, with compacted earth and volcanic ash all around. Archaeologists filled the spaces with plaster to create three-dimensional replicas of those who

perished. Experts are now able to examine the final poses of the people of Pompeii and the resulting plaster casts have helped them to piece together clues about life in the ancient cities.

Evidence has been found of animal remains as well as human. One particular dog appeared to have been wearing a collar and was chained up to a post – this suggests that it was probably kept as a pet or guard dog. A famous plaster cast shows the dog in the position in which it died: lying on its back with its legs in the air.

Incredibly, scientists have even been able to make plaster casts of the spaces occupied by plant and tree roots in the soil. The moulded root casts have been used to identify what types of plant Romans were growing in the soil at the time.

The remains at Pompeii are now a huge modern tourist attraction. The well-preserved ancient buildings make it one of the most visited archaeological sites in the world.



Delta – Truth or Myth?

Some sources suggest that evidence of another dog was discovered, lying above the body of a child. There is some speculation that the faithful dog died while trying to protect the young boy from the volcanic debris. A collar is also said to have been found with the name 'Delta' engraved upon it.



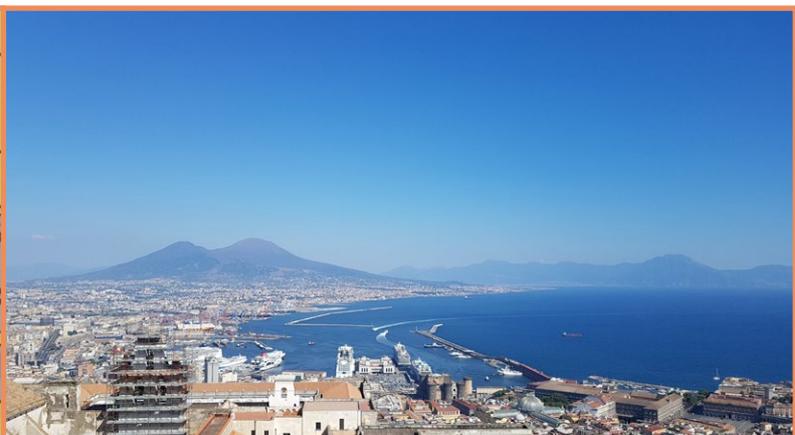
Delta, the hero dog, has been linked with an owner named Severinus and stories say that the dog had already saved the life of its owner on several previous occasions. The tales of Delta have inspired modern fiction such as the story of 'The Pack of Pompeii', in which a dog of the same name features.

Mount Vesuvius Facts and Figures

Height (since last eruption): 1281m (since 1944)

Eruption history: The volcano had not erupted for centuries before the AD 79 disaster. However, many recorded eruptions have occurred in the centuries between the years 1600 and 2000. The last of these was in 1944. One of the biggest was in 1631 when around 3,000 people were killed.

Local population: More than 2 million people are said to live in the area surrounding Mount Vesuvius, either on its lower slopes or nearby.



Mount Vesuvius is located in the Campania region of Italy, near the Bay of Naples.

Questions

1. Which two cities were affected by the AD 79 volcanic eruption? Tick **one**.

Vesuvius and Pompeii

Herculaneum and Delta

Delta and Vesuvius

Pompeii and Herculaneum

2. What did archaeologists use to fill the spaces left behind by decomposed bodies?

3. According to the text, one dog *was probably kept as a pet or guard dog*.

What evidence is there to support this suggestion?

Look at the section: **Delta – Truth or Myth?**

4. According to the story of Delta, why might the dog have been found lying above the body of a child?

5. Find and copy a word which means 'more than two but not many'.

6. Why do you think this section includes the words 'Truth or Myth' in the title?

Look at the section: **Mount Vesuvius Facts and Figures**

7. Complete the table below by writing the correct figures in each row.

People killed in 1631 eruption	
Last recorded height of the volcano	
Population living in the area	

8. Why do you think local people may have been surprised by the eruption in AD 79?

Answers

1. Which two cities were affected by the AD 79 volcanic eruption? Tick **one**.

Vesuvius and Pompeii

Herculaneum and Delta

Delta and Vesuvius

Pompeii and Herculaneum

2. What did archaeologists use to fill the spaces left behind by decomposed bodies?

plaster

3. According to the text, one dog *was probably kept as a pet or guard dog*.

What evidence is there to support this suggestion?

The dog was wearing a collar and was chained to a post.

Look at the section: **Delta – Truth or Myth?**

4. According to the story of Delta, why might the dog have been found lying above the body of a child?

The dog was trying to protect the child.

5. Find and copy a word which means 'more than two but not many'.

several

6. Why do you think this section includes the words 'Truth or Myth' in the title?

Accept: It is not clear whether the story is real; The evidence does not prove that the story was true; The author is not sure whether the events really happened.

Look at the section: **Mount Vesuvius Facts and Figures**

7. Complete the table below by writing the correct figures in each row.

People killed in 1631 eruption	3,000
Last recorded height of the volcano	1281m
Population living in the area	2 million

8. Why do you think local people may have been surprised by the eruption in AD 79?

Children's own responses which refer to the fact the volcano hadn't erupted for a long time.

Investigating Pompeii and Vesuvius

In the year AD 79, Mount Vesuvius famously erupted, causing devastation to the nearby Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Buildings were destroyed and many lives were lost. The entire area was covered in layers of ash and other volcanic debris. Many years later, the remains of the buildings were uncovered. Among them, some fascinating discoveries have emerged from that fateful day.

The bodies of the buried victims have decomposed over time, leaving just skeletons behind. However, they also left hollow cavities in the space that they occupied, with compacted earth and volcanic ash all around. Archaeologists filled the spaces with plaster, using them like moulds, and allowed the plaster to harden. By doing so, they have been able to create three-dimensional replicas of those who perished. Experts are now able to examine the final poses of the people of Pompeii and the resulting plaster casts have helped experts to piece together clues about life in the ancient cities.

As well as the people who succumbed to the disaster that day, similar evidence has been found of animals. One particular dog appeared to have been wearing a collar and was chained up to a post – this suggests that it was probably kept as a pet or guard dog. A famous plaster cast shows the dog in the position in which it perished: lying on its back with its legs in the air.

Furthermore, plaster casts of the spaces occupied by plant and tree roots in the soil have been formed. By analysing the size and shape of the moulded root casts, scientists have been able to identify what types of plant Romans were growing in the soil at the time.

The remains at Pompeii, now a huge modern tourist destination, receive over 3 million visitors a year and attract bigger crowds every year. The well-preserved ancient buildings make this one of the most visited archaeological sites in the world.

Delta – Truth or Myth?

Some sources mention evidence of another dog being discovered, lying above the body of a child. Speculation has evolved that suggests that the faithful dog died while trying to shield the young boy from the volcanic ash and pumice. A collar is also said to have been found with the name 'Delta' engraved upon it.

Delta, informally dubbed 'the hero dog of Pompeii', has been linked with an owner named Severinus, with stories suggesting that the dog had already saved the life of its owner on several previous occasions. The tales of Delta have inspired modern fiction such as the story of 'The Pack of Pompeii', in which a dog of the same name features.



An Eye-Witness Account

Pliny the Younger was a Roman author whose letters have given experts valuable insights into various aspects of Roman life. One of these is the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the events that followed. Pliny and his family witnessed the events of almost two thousand years ago. He later wrote them down in a letter to a historian, called Tacitus. The accounts include his uncle's fateful efforts to save people on the day of the eruption.

The writing has been translated into English, so different versions have slightly different wording. Pliny described a trembling of the earth and tottering buildings, which led to his family attempting to escape from the area to avoid imminent danger. Women and children were heard screaming and shrieking as showers of ash rained down on them. Meanwhile, Pliny's uncle (Pliny the Elder) took a boat to study the erupting volcano more closely. Upon receiving a message from a stranded local woman named Rectina, he changed his course in a valiant effort to save her. Sadly, he died in his attempt.

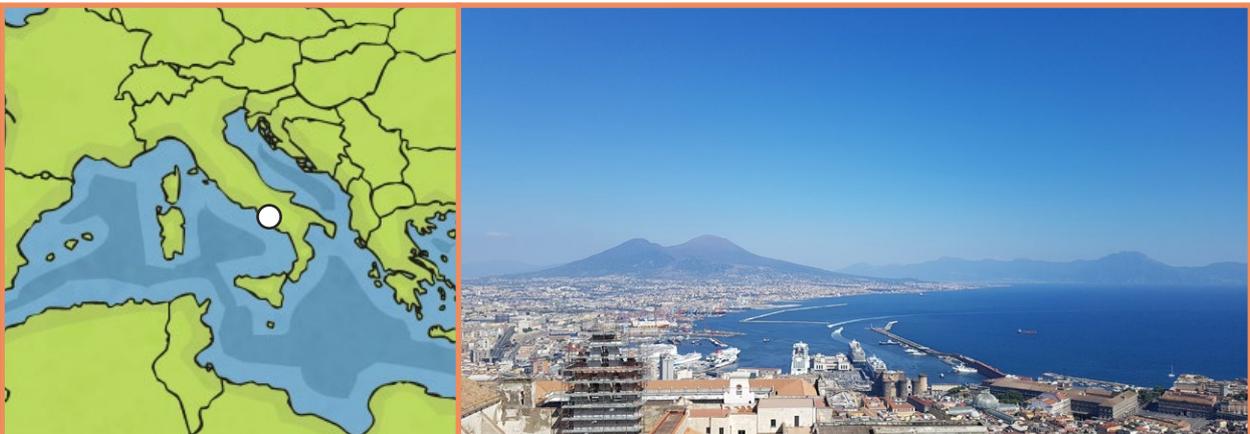
Mount Vesuvius Facts and Figures

Also known as **Vesuvius** or the Italian **Vesuvio**.

Last recorded height: 1281m (since 1944)

Eruption history: The volcano had not erupted for centuries before the AD 79 disaster. However, many recorded eruptions have occurred in the centuries between the years 1600 and 2000. The last of these was in 1944. One of the biggest was in 1631 when around 3,000 people were killed.

Local population: More than 2 million people are said to live in the vicinity of Mount Vesuvius, either on its lower slopes or in the surrounding area.



Mount Vesuvius is located in the Campania region of Italy, near the Bay of Naples.

Questions

1. Which two cities were affected by the AD 79 volcanic eruption?

2. How were archaeologists able to recreate the poses of people who were killed in Pompeii?

3. What evidence is there that people in Pompeii in AD 79 might have kept pets?

Look at the section: **Delta – Truth or Myth?**

4. What does the story of Delta suggest about the dog? Circle **one**.

The dog was
unlucky.

The dog was
clumsy.

The dog was
lazy.

The dog was
loyal.

5. Can you think of a word that means the same as 'dubbed'?

6. Why do you think this section includes the words 'Truth or Myth' in the title?

Look at the section: **Mount Vesuvius Facts and Figures**

7. Why does the recorded height of Mount Vesuvius change over time?

8. Why do you think local people may have been surprised by the eruption in AD 79?

Look at the section: **An Eye-Witness Account**

9. Draw lines to match the people with the correct descriptions.

Pliny the Younger

A local woman who was stranded due to the volcanic eruption

Tacitus

A Roman author who wrote letters about his eye-witness accounts

Pliny the Elder

A historian who received some of the letters detailing the events

Rectina

Uncle of Pliny the Younger who tried to study the eruption and save lives

10. What are your feelings about the actions of Pliny the Elder?
Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

Answers

1. Which two cities were affected by the AD 79 volcanic eruption?

Pompeii and Herculaneum

2. How were archaeologists able to recreate the poses of people who were killed in Pompeii?

Accept answers which refer to each of the following: the decomposed bodies leaving a space or cavity; plaster being poured into the space or cavity; plaster being allowed to set or harden, therefore creating a three-dimensional replica.

3. What evidence is there that people in Pompeii in AD 79 might have kept pets?

Accept answers which refer to the famous plaster cast of a dog wearing a collar and being chained to a post.

Look at the section: **Delta – Truth or Myth?**

4. What does the story of Delta suggest about the dog? Circle **one**.

The dog was
unlucky.

The dog was
clumsy.

The dog was
lazy.

**The dog was
loyal.**

5. Can you think of a word that means the same as 'dubbed'?

called/named/nicknamed

6. Why do you think this section includes the words 'Truth or Myth' in the title?

Accept: It is not clear whether the story is real; The evidence does not prove that the story was true; The author is not sure whether the events really happened.

Look at the section: **Mount Vesuvius Facts and Figures**

7. Why does the recorded height of Mount Vesuvius change over time?

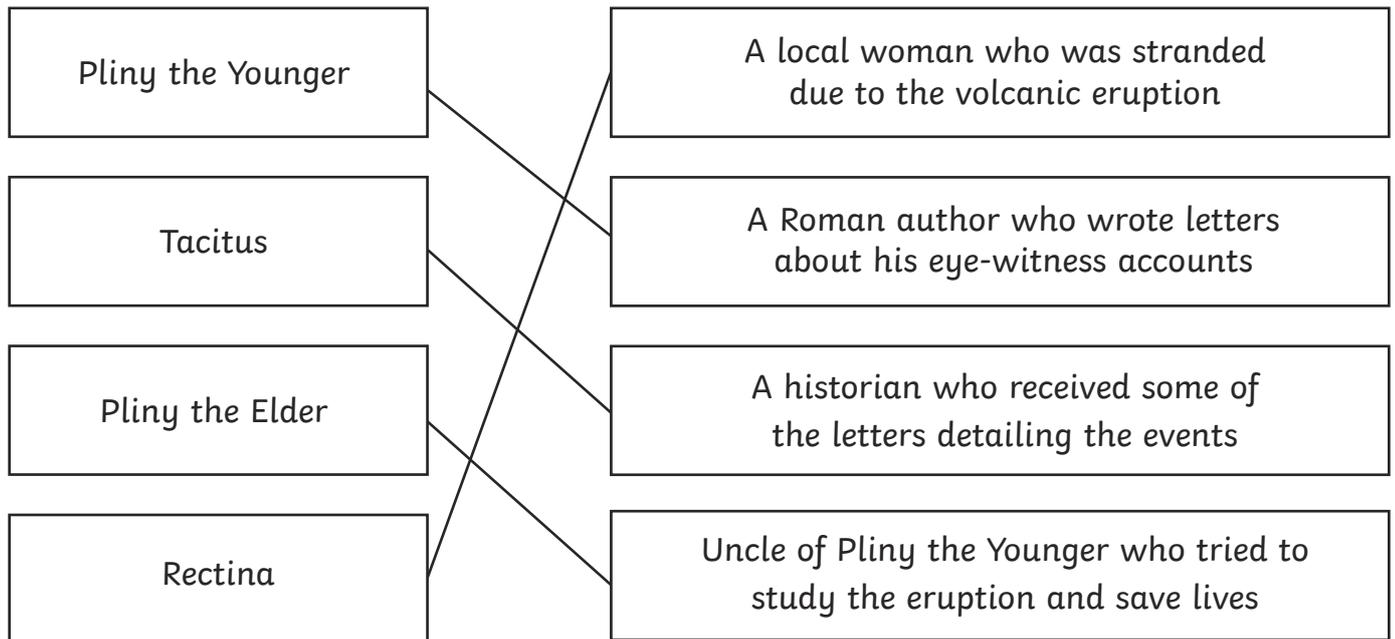
Accept answers which refer to an explanation that the top of the volcano/mountain is damaged/crumbled/affected by the exploding eruption.

8. Why do you think local people may have been surprised by the eruption in AD 79?

Children's own responses which refer to the fact the volcano hadn't erupted for a long time.

Look at the section: **An Eye-Witness Account**

9. Draw lines to match the people with the correct descriptions.



10. What are your feelings about the actions of Pliny the Elder?

Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

Accept children's own responses using evidence from the text, e.g. 'I think that Pliny the Elder was very brave for taking his boat to save Rectina'.