

Christchurch Earthquake



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Christchurch Earthquake Set 14 (561 words)

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Special words

earthquake, learned, there, where, everywhere, was, during, field, minutes, calmed, world worst, put, water, through, friends, were, they, route, thought, what, could, some, warned, one, minute

February 22, 2011: The Day Christchurch was Struck by a

Magnitude 6.3 Earthquake.

The day began normally. I got up, got dressed and went to school.

There was nothing to indicate that this day would haunt me for years to come.

We were in the middle of lunch when the earthquake hit like a bomb.

The ground shook, the building shook, windows shattered, items that were not fixed to the wall, tumbled to the ground. Kids shouted, cried and screamed.

I scrambled under my desk and held on to the legs so it would not move during the shaking, and waited. We all waited, now quiet, for our surroundings to still and the order to go outside and line up on the field. The noise was terrifying, as plaster and ceiling tiles rained down on us, among choking clouds of dust. Through the din, we could hear the sirens.

The quake, and the swiftly following aftershocks, lasted less than 10 minutes. Gradually, everything calmed and we emerged from the protection of our desks into a world that was unrecognisable. The worst was the liquefaction - muddy water bubbling up through the cracked floors. There was shattered glass from broken windows, walls with cracks so wide you could put your arm through them, and everywhere there was dust, choking dust.

And there were continual aftershocks; smaller quakes you feel first in the soles of your feet that send a shudder through your body.

The water mains broke at my school and just outside the doors, swirling over the playground, there was a river of muddy water that we had to wade through to reach the liquefaction-covered field.

We worried about our family, our friends, our pets. Were they all right? Had they survived, as we had? Had our homes been hit?

Mum collected me from school. I thought I knew what the aftermath of a quake was like. We had learned about it at school. But nothing could have prepared me for what I saw as we walked home. We slogged through liquefaction and burst water mains on the flat, and, as the aftershocks continued, dodged rocks as they fell from the retaining walls that flank the steep road up the hill to our house.

Mum told me there was some damage to our house. She told me that the fish had died when the CD box fell into their tank, smashing the glass cover. She warned me about the mess in the living room where

the cabinet, that held her best glass, had burst open, spilling its contents across the floor.

Dad's study was a terrible mess with books strewn everywhere. Fortunately, Dad had bolted the bookcases to the wall so they did not topple over.

My bedroom suffered the most structural damage. The windows shattered leaving nothing but empty frames and there was a gaping hole in one external wall.

Roads were badly damaged: holes opened in the bitumen, liquefaction bubbled up, bridges twisted. There were traffic jams as everyone tried to get home. Dad and my sister, Kathryn, took many hours to travel what is usually a 20 minute trip. They drove at snail's pace, stopping and starting every few metre as they waited in a long line of cars, each trying to navigate a safe route along the damaged road.

At one point they thought they were going to die as a huge building teetered alarmingly above them, and then held.

Christchurch, my city, had been destroyed. Everywhere there was wreckage. Not just buildings and houses, road, bridges, power lines, mobile phone towers and phone lines were broken or damaged. Thick, muddy slush covered the ground and seeped into houses. This was a world I did not know.

It would be a long time before life returned to normal.

Teaching points

- 'If the short vowel doesn't work, try the long vowel'
- Christchurch, items, so, go, sirens, gradually, emerged, continual, bolted, over, most, bitumen, metres, mobile, before, usually
- 'o' is used for the /u/ sound: cover, covered, worried, nothing, above
- Soft 'c' and soft 'g': ceiling, pace, emerged, dodged, damage, bridges
- Silent 'w', 'k', or 'b': wreckage, bomb, knew
- 'tion' pronounced 'shn': protection, liquefaction

Questions

After reading the text ask students one or more of the following questions. If students are working in pairs, alternate Partner 1, then Partner 2.

- Tell me two things about the person who is telling the story. Do you think it is true? Give a reason for your answer.
- Discuss earthquakes - what causes them and what happens when they strike.
- Tell me three things that happened when the earthquake struck.
- What are two things school children in New Zealand are trained to do if an earthquake strikes and they are in class?
- 'Through the din, we could hear the sirens' What do you think the word 'din' means? What kind of sirens do you think they heard?
- What do you think 'a huge building teetered alarmingly above them, and then held' mean? Which word do you think describes that it was moving or wobbling?