

Is “the Big One” Coming?

What would really happen if *The Big One* came?" is a question most of us have wondered. Scientific research has provided sufficient fuel for worry, fear and an abundance of media attention. But is it justified? Is there really much chance that a *Big One* really will happen on planet earth - in our life time?

Depending on how one defines a *Big One*, it could be argued that we've already had at least ten Big Ones – with each one of them taking more than a million lives and all in the last 800 years, six of them in less than the last 100 years. Still, few people seem to be aware of these. More than once, I've heard a major national television news report refer to the recent South Asian tsunami disaster as "the world's worst disaster". The truth is there have been quite a few natural disasters along the last century that were even more destructive.

I consider also a disaster that about a hundred thousand or so people die every day around the world, although that is part of the normal life-and-death cycle. Death does more to cause us to re-evaluate our lives than anything else. Normally the closer the people are to us, the deeper the impact their death has on our lives. But when something unusual happens above and beyond the normal, we should stop to evaluate the consequences.

Consider the following major natural disasters: volcanic eruptions, blizzards, contactable diseases, earthquakes, floods, famine... in all cases they were certainly violent and destructive. And the results were so devastating and so final to so many people that one could argue: That was the *Big One* for the people involved.

1. Comprehension exercises (2 points)

1.a. According to the text (0.5 points)

- a. **A big one is defined by taking away more than a million people.**
- b. People dying everyday is also a natural disaster.
- c. The pest is not considered a natural disaster.

1.b. According to the text (0.5 points)

- a. Mass media don't pay much attention to disasters.
- b. The South Asian tsunami has been the worst of all.
- c. **There have been more than ten big ones in our history.**

1.c. There have been ten natural disasters last century.

(Answer 'True' or 'False' AND write the sentence supporting this idea) (0.5 points)

- **FALSE - six of them in less than the last 100 years.**

1.d. Death impacts us depending on how close the person who die is to us.

(Answer 'True' or 'False' AND write the sentence supporting this idea) (0.5 points)

- **TRUE- Normally the closer the people are to us, the deeper the impact their death has on our lives.**

2. Do the following grammar exercises according to the instructions given (2 points)

2.a. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first one, using 'If only' (0.5 points)

- I really wish we could be friends.

- **If only we could be friends.**

2.b. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first one, using 'unless' (0.5 points)

- I'll play tennis this weekend if the weather is not bad.

- I'll play tennis this weekend **unless the weather is bad.**

2.c. Finish the following sentence using 'interested' (0.5 points)

- Psychologists are always **interested in (plus -ing form).**

2.d. Finish the following conditional (0.5 points)

- I wouldn't have felt sleepy if **I had (plus past participle).**

3. Identify ONLY FOUR words from their definitions (1 point)

- to be conscious, sensible of. **(to be aware of)**

- a measure of how likely it is that some event will occur. **(chance)**

- a storm with widespread snow accompanied by strong winds. **(blizzard)**

- to have a wish or desire to know something. **(to wonder)**

- systematic investigation to establish facts. **(research)**

- causing much damage or destruction. **(destructive)**

4. Write a summary of the text of about 30 – 45 words using your own words (2 points)

5. Write a composition of about 100 – 150 words on ONLY ONE of the following topics (3 points)

5.a. What would you do to help people if a natural disaster happened in your town?

5.b. Describe the job you would like to have in the future.