

Springboard^{into} Comprehension 4

Main Idea Fossil Fuels
 A Place in Space

Sequencing Black Rock
 The Best Holiday Ever

Compare and Contrast From Me to You
 Your Choice!

Fact and Opinion Community Views
 The Daily News

Cause and Effect Natural Disasters

The Invaders

Bias and Prejudice Have Your Say!
 Save Our Skate Park

RA 8.5–9.5



NATURAL DISASTERS



Written by Phill Simpson

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INTRODUCTION

Every year, about 500 natural disasters hit our world. Many of these disasters cause people pain and suffering. They also damage roads and buildings.

There are different types of natural disasters. They include earthquakes, hurricanes, storms, floods, and fires. Not every disaster claims a lot of lives. The amount of damage varies. However, some natural disasters have tragic effects.

Around 250 million people suffer every year as a result of natural disasters. The number is increasing. Some experts say population increases might be a cause. Global warming might be to blame, too.



Cars being swept away by a mudslide in the Swiss village of Rueun

An army officer surveys the damage to houses and roads after an earthquake in California, in the United States, in 1989.



Fires in Corsica damaged many buildings in 2001.



Campers waded through the flooded campsite at the Glastonbury music festival in the United Kingdom, 2005.

After a natural disaster, huge efforts go into disaster relief. Medical teams, firefighters, and other relief workers try to help. In many countries, the military also assists. Aid agencies often help, too. They collect food, medicine, clothes, and money that people freely give them, or **donations**. The donations go to people in need.

Some natural disasters happen no matter what people do. People cannot prevent earthquakes and hurricanes. However, people can prevent some fires and floods. They can also control them better. Being well prepared makes a huge difference.

FLOODS IN EUROPE

Floods occur in all parts of the world. They often have less effect in places where people can afford strong houses and dams, in Europe, for example. However, even in Europe, floods killed over 700 people between 1998 and 2007.

One of the worst floods in recent years happened in Europe in 2002. Flooding affected many countries. The floods killed about 100 people and hundreds of thousands lost their homes.

Flood-Affected Countries



This aerial photo shows where floods broke through a barrier in St Gilles, France.



This village in Schlans, Switzerland, was damaged by a mudslide after heavy rains.



Long periods of heavy rain can lead to flooding. Storms with heavy rain can also bring about floods. Experts say there are also other reasons for floods. Some say too many people now live on floodplains. Some say people have cut down too many forests. Forests soak up a lot of the water.

In 2002, there were many storms in Europe. There were also long periods of very heavy rain. Therefore, two of Europe's largest rivers flooded. The floods broke bridges and ruined buildings. They broke the special barriers built to keep out floods, called levees, too.

Flooded roads made it difficult to escape the water. Rescue workers found it hard to get to victims. Many people offered their help and services, without expecting to be paid. Such people are called **volunteers**. Thousand of these volunteers helped with the relief work. They built and reinforced levees. They piled up thousands of sandbags and rocks to keep back the floods.

A huge number of people had to leave their homes, or evacuate. In Germany alone, more than 100,000 people had to evacuate. In some places, people got stranded on rooftops. Helicopters had to lift them to safety.

The floods caused further damage. They interrupted power supplies. In many places, the water-soaked soil gave way. This caused landslips. Sources of drinking water became polluted. There was mud everywhere. There were a lot of remains of destroyed buildings, cars, and trees.



This levee was built in Germany to stop the Elbe River from flooding.



Volunteers remove mud from a flood-stricken house in Weesenstein, Germany.



A car is buried under a pile of rubble after a mudslide in Rueun, Switzerland.

After the floods, people had to clean up and rebuild. This cost more than US \$20 billion. After the 2002 floods, an alert system was put in place. This helps monitor river flooding across Europe. People cannot prevent all floods, but they can find better ways to manage them.