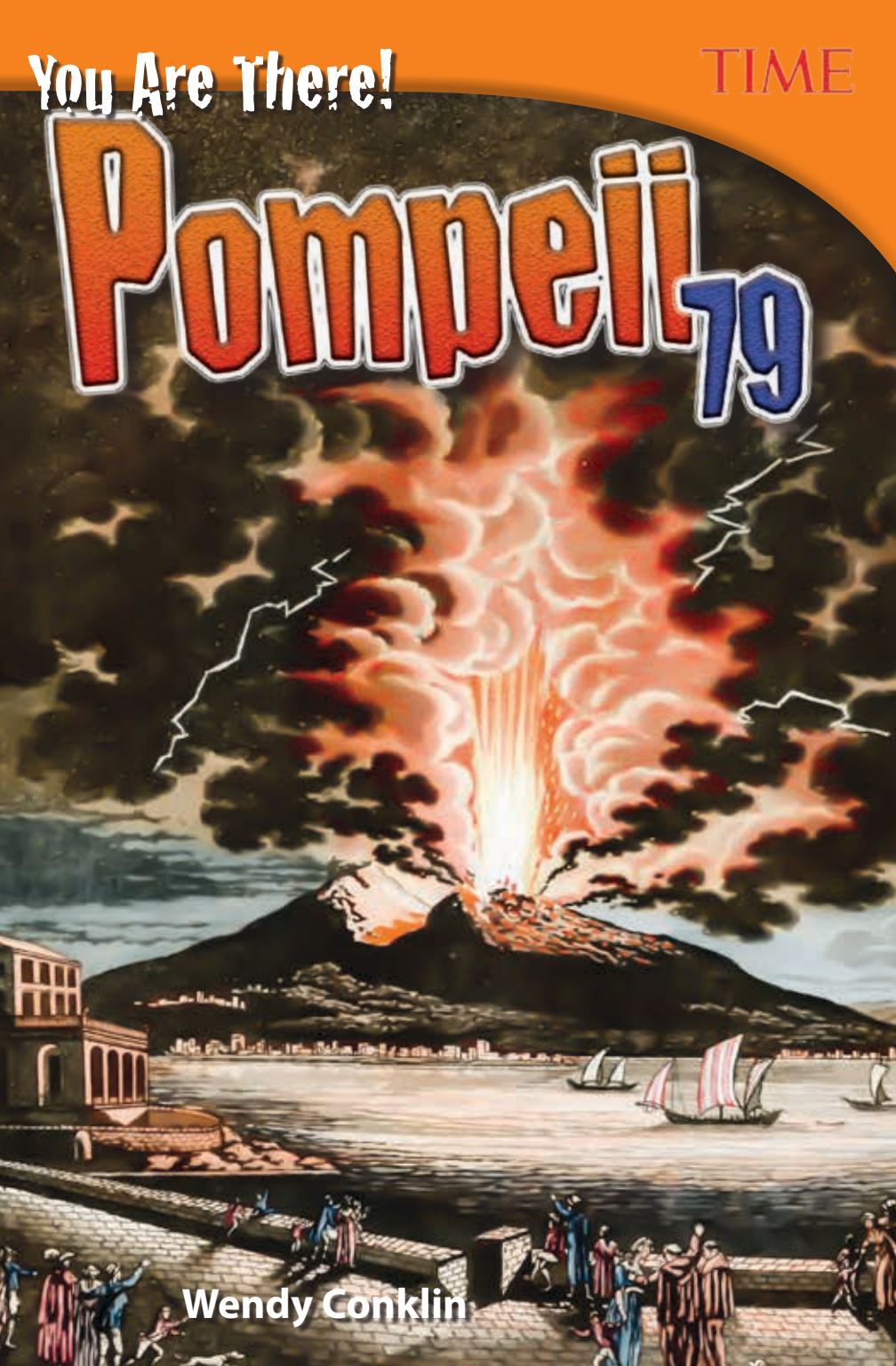
You Are There!

TIME

Pompeii 79



Wendy Conklin

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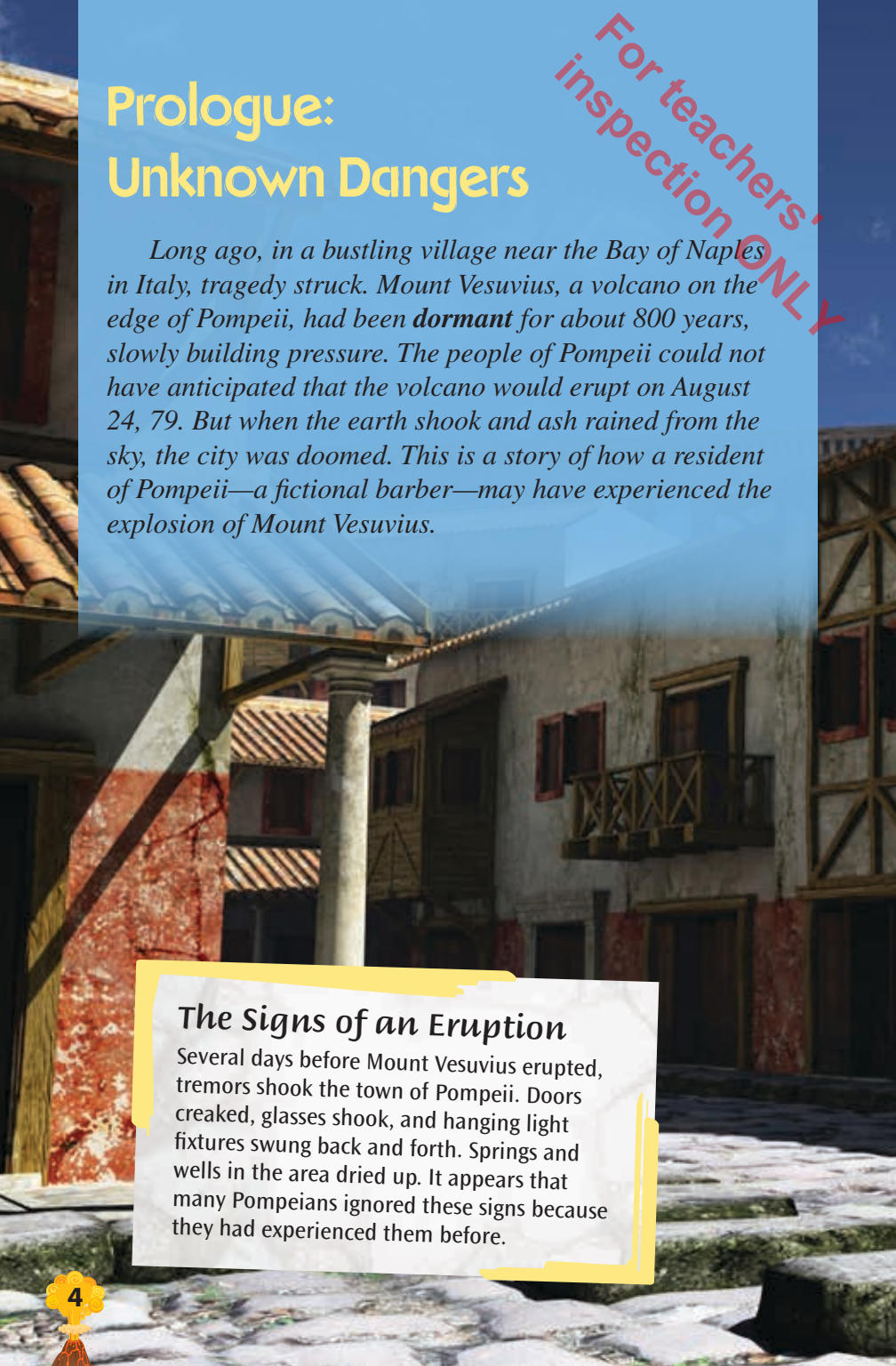
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Prologue: Unknown Dangers

Long ago, in a bustling village near the Bay of Naples in Italy, tragedy struck. Mount Vesuvius, a volcano on the edge of Pompeii, had been ***dormant*** *for about 800 years, slowly building pressure. The people of Pompeii could not have anticipated that the volcano would erupt on August 24, 79. But when the earth shook and ash rained from the sky, the city was doomed. This is a story of how a resident of Pompeii—a fictional barber—may have experienced the explosion of Mount Vesuvius.*



The Signs of an Eruption

Several days before Mount Vesuvius erupted, tremors shook the town of Pompeii. Doors creaked, glasses shook, and hanging light fixtures swung back and forth. Springs and wells in the area dried up. It appears that many Pompeians ignored these signs because they had experienced them before.

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Morning Calm

8:00 a.m.

The creaking door wakes you again this morning. Didn't you fix the door frame yesterday? Let's face it: being a barber doesn't necessarily make you a very good carpenter. You've got to get up anyway and make your way down to the **forum** early, so you can set up shop in a good location. Lately, Pompeians haven't been stopping by for shaves, much less haircuts. That old barber, Flavius, has been landing the ideal location under the **colonnade**, but you have to beat him to that spot today. Your rent is due soon, and you need to make money to keep living in your tiny apartment.

There are about 20,000 people living here in Pompeii, and it feels as if they all reside on your street. The noise of children crying and the stench of rotting food dumped out in the streets make this living arrangement miserable (especially now, in the heat of August). The only thing worse than this would be living above the **bathhouse**. Having to listen to men splashing water around and singing at the tops of their lungs would drive anyone mad.

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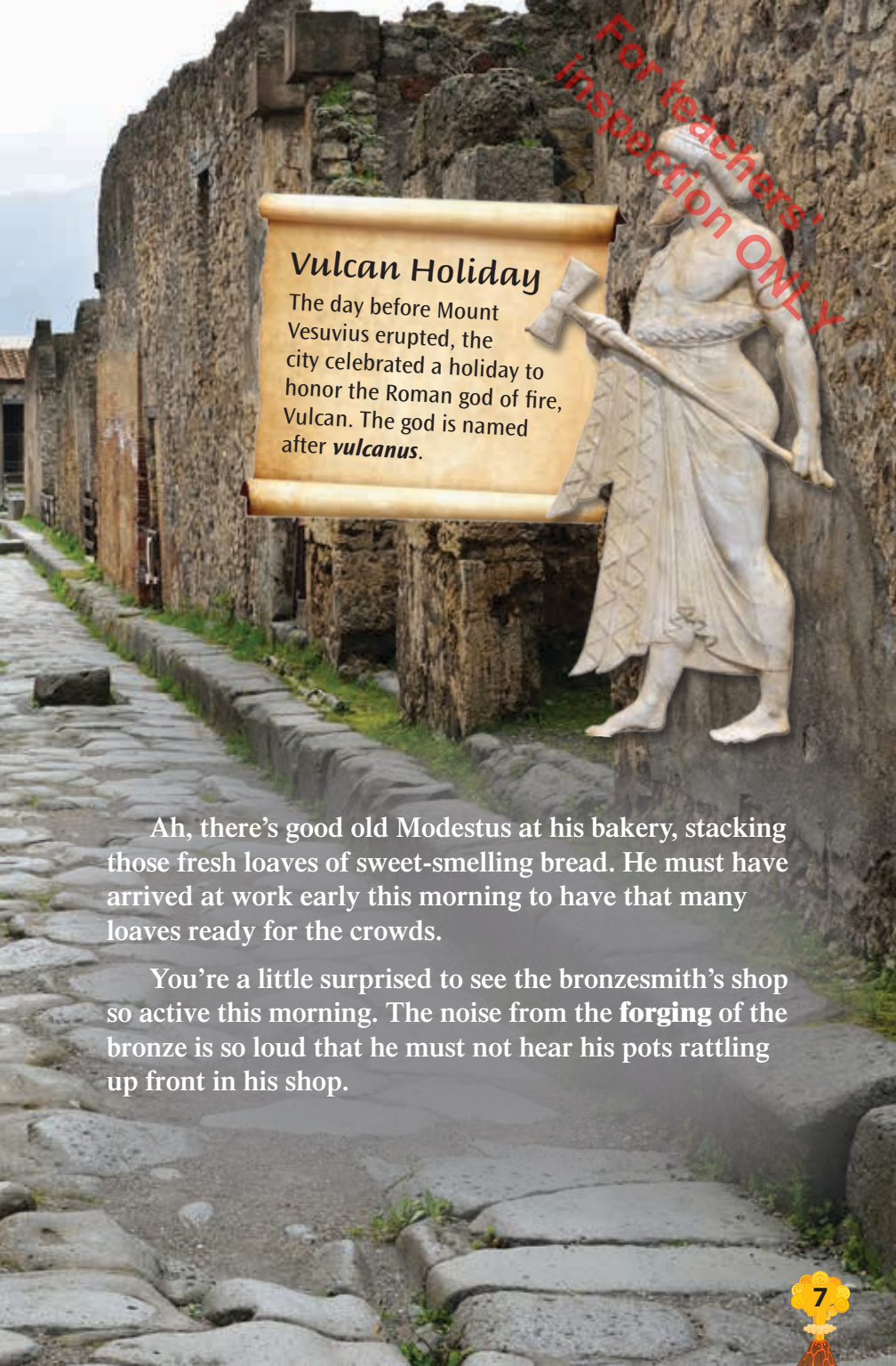
Do Animals Have a Sixth Sense?

On the day of the eruption in Pompeii, animals might have behaved strangely. There's no proof that animals can sense things before they happen. But scientists think that animals can hear **infrasonic** sounds, such as the rumbling of the earth before an earthquake. So, they would react by fleeing.

8:30 a.m.

You better be careful where you walk in the **cobblestone** streets. The garbage is everywhere, and there's no chance of rain to wash it all away. What you wouldn't give to have some sewers around this place! Your neighbor's bird is making odd chirping noises and trying to get out of its cage—very strange behavior for such a content bird.

You know you're out of wine, fish, eggs, and bread, so you better stop by the tavern on your way to the forum and get something to eat. The Vulcan holiday celebrated yesterday has ended, and things can get back to business as usual.



Vulcan Holiday

The day before Mount Vesuvius erupted, the city celebrated a holiday to honor the Roman god of fire, Vulcan. The god is named after ***vulcanus***.

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Ah, there's good old Modestus at his bakery, stacking those fresh loaves of sweet-smelling bread. He must have arrived at work early this morning to have that many loaves ready for the crowds.

You're a little surprised to see the bronzesmith's shop so active this morning. The noise from the **forging** of the bronze is so loud that he must not hear his pots rattling up front in his shop.

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9:00 a.m.

Finally, you arrive at the tavern, eager for a dish of steaming vegetable stew. You take a seat at the counter, which is already filled with jars of snacks such as olives, breads, and cheeses. You catch the eye of your usual server, Atia, and she's off to get your favorite red wine from the **amphora** in the back of the tavern. Not the most expensive wine, though . . . she knows your budget.



Belief in Spirits

In Pompeii, it was common for a home or a business to have a **lararium** to honor the spirits they believed provided protection. Some lararia were simple paintings. For the wealthy residents, they were more elaborate, with statues in small temples.

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You glance over at the painting of the **lares** on the wall next to the counter. Shrines like these can be found on almost every building, and Pompeians believe the shrines will protect them. You place a few **sesterces** in the jar on the counter to take care of your bill and head to the forum to get ready for the day.



A Busy City

Before the eruption in AD 79, Pompeii was bustling with residents and tourists. Streets were lined with shops, cafes, and bathhouses. There were two theaters; the larger one hosted gladiator fights, which were popular at the time.

Reader's Guide

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1. Why did Pompeians ignore the signs of the earthquake and subsequent volcanic eruption?
2. Why would some Pompeians decide to stay in their homes during the eruption?
3. If a volcano erupted in your area, what local and far-reaching effects would it have?
4. How did most of the citizens of Pompeii escape the danger?

