

0. THE PEOPLE OF POMPEII - Story Preface

1. POMPEII IN 79 A.D.

2. A SOPHISTICATED TOWN

3. WARNING SIGNS

4. VESUVIUS ERUPTS

5. RAIN OF TERROR

6. ANNIHILATION

7. THE PEOPLE OF POMPEII



People trying to flee Pompeii, during the massive eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, would have used Fortuna Street (among others) as they tried to run from the town. This image depicts Pompeii's excavated Fortuna Street as it appeared sometime between circa 1890 and 1900. The illustration is from the Detroit Publishing Co., Catalogue J Foreign Section. [Online via the Library of Congress](#). Click on the image for a better view.

The Roman fleet at [Misenum](#) (the small peninsula mid-left on the space shuttle photo) helped to evacuate most of the residents of Pompeii and the surrounding towns. Pliny the Elder, commander of the fleet, [dispatched](#) ships while he personally directed efforts at Stabiae. While [ashore](#), he died on August 25, most likely of a heart attack.

Around two thousand people were left in Pompeii. Perhaps there had not been enough time to evacuate everyone. Some likely returned to their homes after the ashfall stopped. The death toll, including all impacted towns (such as Herculaneum), was about 16,000. It was one of the [deadliest](#) volcanic eruptions of all time.

People and [animals](#) were buried in hot ash. As the ash hardened (volcanic ash does not dissolve in water), it molded itself to those who had died. The bodies deteriorated, leaving a cavity inside the hardened ash.

Professor Giuseppe Fiorelli, the father of 19th century [Pompeii excavation](#) and modern archeology, [developed](#) a method to learn more about the people who had been inside the cavities. Fiorelli poured plaster of paris into the open spaces in the hardened ash. The plaster replicas tell a [chilling](#) tale of final moments.

Today, nearly 2,000 years later, we can learn much about the inhabitants of Pompeii. As excavations continue, we see:

- [Horror](#) on the face of a man who knew he was about to die
- The love of a mother who died [with her child](#)
- A fleeing person whose [open palm](#) was frozen in time.
- A man whose [outstretched arm](#) could not keep death away.

Whether huddled together or [alone](#), the story is the same. The [people](#) of Pompeii, like the people on Herculaneum's beach (and in its boat houses), could not have realized the full extent of the mountain's fury. Sophisticated and wealthy though they were, they did not possess the knowledge they needed to survive.

One could argue that at least modern people have that knowledge. We know much more than the ancients knew about volcanic eruptions. We know how to survive an ash fall. We know a [pyroclastic flow](#) will destroy everything in its path.

Yet, many scientists predict Vesuvius is likely to erupt sometime within the next 25 years. About 3.5 million people currently live in the vicinity of her potential fury.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-PEOPLE-OF-POMPEII-Pompeii>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-PEOPLE-OF-POMPEII-Pompeii>



Misenum - Seen From the Space Shuttle

Image online, courtesy NASA.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Misenum-Seen-From-the-Space-Shuttle>



Death of Pliny the Elder

Image online, via Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Death-of-Pliny-the-Elder>



Dog at Pompeii, Buried in Ash

Image online, courtesy the Catholic University of America [website](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dog-at-Pompeii-Buried-in-Ash>



Nineteenth-Century Excavation at Pompeii

From "Pompeii," by Salvatore Ciro Nappo.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nineteenth-Century-Excavation-at-Pompeii>



Pompeii Victim Covered with Volcanic Ash

Image online, courtesy the Hotel Onda Verde website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pompeii-Victim-Covered-with-Volcanic-Ash>



Mother and Child, Victims of Vesuvius

Image, described above, online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mother-and-Child-Victims-of-Vesuvius>



Pompeii Victim - Open Palm, Frozen in Time

Image from Pompeii, online via Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali-Soprintendenza archeologica di Pompei.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pompeii-Victim-Open-Palm-Frozen-in-Time>



Outstretched Arm of Victim

Image online, courtesy the visitsitaly.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Outstretched-Arm-of-Victim>



Man Who Died in Vesuvian Ash

Image online, courtesy Catholic University of America.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Man-Who-Died-in-Vesuvian-Ash>



Victim of Pompeii's Disaster

Image online via Catholic University of America.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Victim-of-Pompeii-s-Disaster>



THE PEOPLE OF POMPEII

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/THE-PEOPLE-OF-POMPEII>