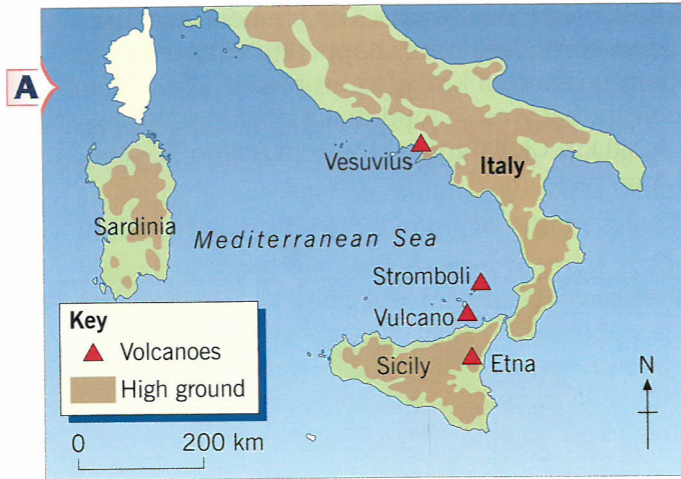


What happens when a volcano erupts?

When a volcano erupts it can cause serious problems. People are put in danger and their surroundings can be severely damaged. Problems like this are called **natural hazards**. Earthquakes, floods, drought and strong winds are also examples of natural hazards. In spite of the danger and possibility of great destruction, a lot of people often live in volcanic areas. This is because ash and lava turn into rich fertile soil which is good for farming. Good farming areas are attractive places to live.

The largest and most active volcano in Europe is the 3,340 metre high Mount Etna. This volcano is located on the Italian island of Sicily and it continuously rumbles and steams. Several times in the last one hundred years Etna has had major eruptions, when masses of ash, volcanic bombs and lava have been blasted out of the cone, destroying the surrounding area. Over a million people live in the Mount Etna area and these eruptions have caused considerable problems for them.

Mount Etna erupted most recently in 1971, 1983, 1992, 2000, 2002 and 2005. In 1971 the eruption began with a



huge explosion that sounded like a jet aircraft taking off. This was followed by a spectacular fireworks display when red-hot ash was thrown hundreds of metres into the air and molten lava poured down the mountainside. In this eruption most of the ski slopes and cable car stations were destroyed and a research observatory near the summit was completely wiped out.

B The 'fireworks display' eruption of Mount Etna

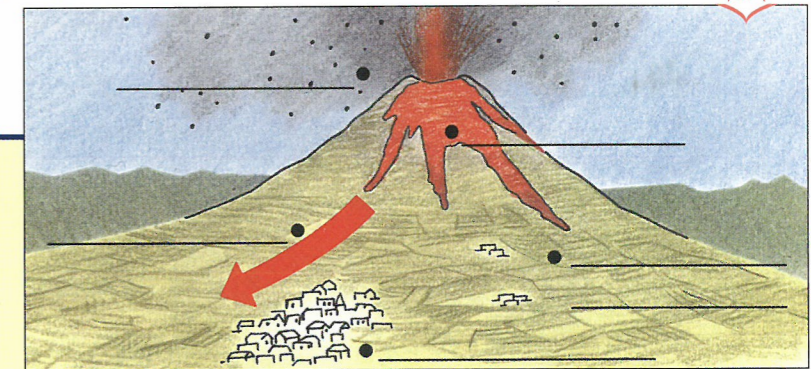


The 1983 eruption began in March and continued for several months. Millions of tonnes of lava gushed out of the crater and engulfed a hotel, three restaurants, 25 houses and numerous orange groves and vineyards. The lava flowed at an average speed of 15 km per hour

(about the speed you ride a bicycle) and at one time threatened to bury several small villages in its path. Eventually a diversion was made and after a series of controlled explosions, the lava was diverted and the villages saved.



C Damage caused by the lava flows of the 1983 eruption of Mount Etna



Activities

- 1 Why do volcanic areas often have a lot of people living in them?
- 2 a What is meant by the term 'natural hazard'?
b Give four examples of natural hazards.
- 3 Describe what happens when Mount Etna erupts by sorting the boxes below into the correct order. Link your boxes with arrows and add a title. You might like to make a simple drawing for each box to make your description clearer and more interesting.

Lava pours down the mountainside	Buildings and property damaged
Rescue service goes into action	Volcano gently rumbles and steams
Loud explosion as volcano erupts	Ash, bombs and lava blasted out of volcano

- 4 a Make a simple copy of sketch D and put the following labels in the correct places.
 lava flows threatened settlement
 diversion channel ash and bombs
 vineyards and orange groves

b Underneath your sketch list eight problems caused by Mount Etna erupting.

Summary

When volcanoes like Mount Etna erupt they may bring danger to people and cause severe damage to property and the surroundings. Disasters caused by great forces such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods and strong winds are called natural hazards.