



**A2Z Learning: 11+**  
**English**  
**Reading Comprehension**  
**Pompeii (NF)**

These comprehensions will help you to experience the type of texts that are usually used in 11+ exams or independent school entrance exams.

The number of marks next to each question will give you an idea about how detailed your answer will need to be. Therefore, if a question is worth 3 marks then the answer will need at least 3 separate points/pieces of evidence from the text.

School selection tests are usually timed, so working within a time limit is something you will need to practise.

A reading comprehension of this length (just over a page) will be expected to be completed in 25-30 minutes.

Make sure you **read the questions carefully**. If it asks you to write a sentence make sure you do!

Good luck! You can do this!



## POMPEII by Ian Andrews

Read the following passage then answer all the questions that follow.

The extract is from a history book "POMPEII" by Ian Andrews. Pompeii was a town close to Mount Vesuvius. The Romans knew it had been a volcano but they thought it was extinct.

- 1) The first sign of serious trouble came in the year AD 62. The 4<sup>th</sup> February had been a calm day. The next day began as any other day might have done. But around midday everyone stopped still because they all heard a terrible roaring. While they pondered this, the ground beneath them began to tremble; then they guessed the truth. Those nearest the gates rushed into the open countryside. They realised that an earthquake was upon them.
- 2) Seneca says that much of Pompeii was demolished. We know that the great cistern by the Vesuvian Gate was broken, sending cascades of water into the town. The Temple of Jupiter was badly damaged, as were others, and statues were cracked. No doubt there was much damage to smaller pieces of equipment and to household goods. The horror was so overwhelming that it sent some people mad.
- 3) When trouble came again, in August AD 79, there was some warning. Minor tremors cracked walls and it was noticed that wells and springs had dried up. The Pompeiians thought some god must have been displeased. They did not know that the water in the bowels of the earth was being changed to super-heated steam which, under vast pressure, was struggling to escape to the surface.
- 4) On 20 August the ground again shook and the sea boiled; these were final warnings. But only the animals seem to have taken fright; people preferred to grit their teeth and 'see it out'.
- 5) Four days later an ear-splitting crack announced destruction. The earth shook and the sky darkened as the top of Vesuvius was blown clean away. Infernal fires, smoke, burning stones and glowing lava were flung up into the air and spread in a dismal umbrella above Pompeii.
- 6) Down upon town and country fell the blazing stones setting fire to whatever they touched. Lava, pouring over the edge of the volcano, spread towards the doomed cities. Upon Pompeii itself a hail of ashes fell and choking fumes followed. The sea on the other side of town roared and bubbled.



7) Luckily, the eruption had begun in the morning, when many Pompeiians were out of doors. The wisest of them ran for it straight away or unshackled animals pulling carts and rode off on them. Soon, every available horse or ox had been ridden out of Pompeii. The gladiators also made a dash to escape, no doubt, punching and stabbing their way through the terrified crowds.

8) It was not possible for all to escape. Some were old, or too greedy. Others considered it safer to wait in sealed rooms until it was all over.

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Answer the following questions in full sentences. Refer to the extract "POMPEII" for your answers. The mark allocated is placed after each question. The mark will guide you by indicating how many points you should make.

1. On what date did the people of Pompeii first realise that there was a problem?

(1)

2. What two incidents on 5 February made the people realise it was an earthquake?

(2)

3. An historian wrote about the impact of the earthquake. Name him and identify three details he reveals about the damage caused.

(4)

4. Seventeen years later, there was another earthquake. Give the date and say what two signs warned the people.

(3)



5. What did the towns people believe caused the earthquake?

(1)

6. In your own words give the scientific explanation for the earthquake.

(4)

7. An idiom (an expression not to be taken literally) states that the response of the locals was to 'grit their teeth'. In your own words, state what it could mean.

(1)

8. What signs of the volcanic activity suggest extreme heat?

(1)

9. What was significant about the time of day when the volcano erupted?

(2)

10. Identify three groups of people who could not get away and why.

(3)

11. What do the following words from the passage mean?

a) "pondered" (paragraph 1) .....(1/2)

b) "minor" (paragraph 3) .....(1/2)

c) "infernal" (paragraph 5) .....(1/2)

d) "doomed" (paragraph 6) .....(1/2)

