

# The Dark Side of Nature

1 Nature usually plays a positive role in our lives. Sometimes, however, nature can turn wild and dangerous. Some natural events can cause serious injuries, death, and significant damage. These events are called *natural disasters*. There are two main types of natural disasters. First, there are extreme weather events, such as violent storms. Second, some natural disasters are the result of movements under the earth. These movements can cause *earthquakes*.

2 Violent storms bring heavy rain and strong wind. All of the rain can cause floods. The most serious violent storms begin over oceans. These are called *hurricanes*, *cyclones*, or *typhoons*. Their names depend on their locations. A hurricane is a massive storm in the Atlantic Ocean or the eastern Pacific Ocean. A cyclone is a severe storm that starts in the Indian Ocean or in the southwestern Pacific Ocean near Australia or Africa. A typhoon is a storm in the northwestern Pacific Ocean near Asia. In 2009, a typhoon hit Taiwan. Eighty inches (two meters) of rain fell in two days. Heavy floods destroyed bridges and roads and caused widespread damage.

3 When floods occur in the mountains, sometimes the water mixes with earth to make *mud*. This heavy mud moves down the side of a mountain in a *mudslide*. Mudslides can destroy homes and injure people. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch resulted in about 10,000 deaths across the Caribbean. Many of the people died in the floods and mudslides when the water and mud washed their homes down the mountains.

## WHILE YOU READ 1

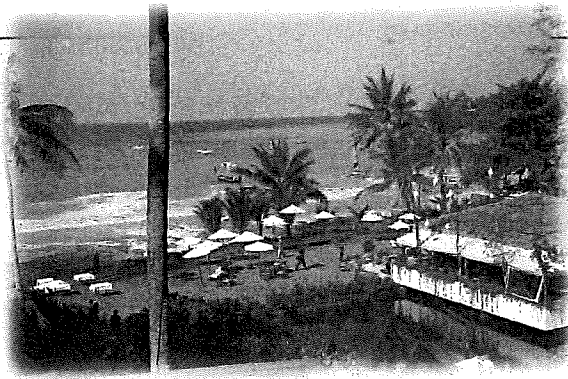
Look back in the paragraph to find words that signal cause and effect. Highlight the effects.

## WHILE YOU READ 2

Look back to find the definition of *mud*. Highlight it.



A mudslide washes through the streets after Hurricane Mitch.



Tsunami coming ashore in 2004



- 4 Movement under the earth can also cause natural disasters. Massive earthquakes are not frequent, but they can be deadly. In 2010, there was a major earthquake in Haiti. No one knows how many people died as a result. Estimates are between 50,000 and 300,000. It nearly destroyed or completely destroyed almost 300,000 buildings. A million people lost their homes.
- 5 The most severe damage is usually at the center of an earthquake, but an earthquake can also cause disaster far away. For example, in 2004, there was a major earthquake in the Indian Ocean near Indonesia. No people live in the ocean, so the earthquake did not hurt anyone. However, it caused a huge tsunami that hit 12 countries. A *tsunami* is a massive wall of water that hits the shore **suddenly**. This tsunami was 100 feet (30 meters) high. It destroyed many communities along the shore and killed about 230,000 people. More than one and a half million people had to leave their homes.
- 6 Although most earthquakes are caused by the natural movement of the earth, sometimes human activity contributes to natural disasters. Mines can increase the pressure under the earth. Dams, which store large amounts of water, can also cause an increase in pressure. This increase in pressure can lead to an **earthquake**.

WHILE YOU READ 3

Look back to find the definition of *tsunami*. Highlight it.

WHILE YOU READ 4

What is the main idea of paragraph 6? Highlight it.



People examine the damage after an earthquake.

- 7 Natural disasters occur when a community is vulnerable to natural events such as violent weather and movements under the earth. Perhaps homes are on land that is very low, or they are near a river. Perhaps the buildings are not very strong. These situations can make places vulnerable to storms, floods, or earthquakes. After disasters, communities often rebuild in ways that will help them to be less vulnerable to these events.

**Table 7.1** The Ten Most Deadly Natural Disasters

EVENT	LOCATION	YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS
Flood	China	1931	1,000,000–4,000,000
Flood	China	1887	900,000–2,000,000
Earthquake	China	1556	830,000
Cyclone	Bangladesh	1970	500,000
Cyclone	India	1839	300,000
Earthquake	Syria and Turkey	526	250,000
Earthquake	China	1976	242,000
Earthquake	China	1920	240,000
Tsunami	Indian Ocean	2004	230,000
Earthquake	Haiti	2010	50,000–300,000

Source: About.com