

## **BODIES FROM THE ASH: LIFE AND DEATH IN ANCIENT POMPEII**

### **Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2008 Grades 6-8**

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**Bodies from the Ash: Life and Death in Ancient Pompeii** by James M. Deem. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 50 pages.

#### **Summary**

On August 24, AD 79, the people of ancient Pompeii awoke to what seemed to be a normal summer day. They had no reason to suspect that most of their lives would soon be over. Small tremors had been shaking the area for several days, though they didn't worry because the region had been subjected to many earthquakes over the years. It wasn't until mid-afternoon that the people of Pompeii realized that the earthquakes were caused by Mount Vesuvius. By the next afternoon, the city of Pompeii had been covered by nine feet of pumice and debris. Days later, those that had escaped returned home to an unfamiliar landscape.

Pompeii was virtually a forgotten city until 1763 when it was discovered by treasure-hunting excavators. In 1860, a new excavator named Giuseppe Fiorelli implemented many procedures that helped preserve Pompeii. Today, Pompeii is both an archaeological site and a modern town. People come from all over the world to see the ruins of Pompeii, plus the body casts, and artifacts housed in the museum. This book contains over 50 photographs that show dig sites, ruins, artifacts, jewelry, and casts of the dead. The subject matter and the fascinating photographs make this nonfiction book very compelling reading that will attract many middle school students including those who may not be avid readers.

Read an excerpt:

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0618473084/ref=sib\\_dp\\_pop\\_ex/102-5579273-5584113?ie=UTF8&p=S00C#reader-link](http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0618473084/ref=sib_dp_pop_ex/102-5579273-5584113?ie=UTF8&p=S00C#reader-link)

#### **Awards and "Best Book" Lists**

2006 ALA Best Books for Young Adults

2006 NCSS/CBC Notable Children's Trade Book in the field of Social Studies

2006 NSTA/CBC Outstanding Science Trade Book for Students K – 12

2006 Orbis Pictus Recommended Book

2005 SLJ Best Children's Books

#### **Author's Biography**

James M. Deem was born in Wheeling, West Virginia and currently lives in Arizona. He received a Bachelor's degree in language arts from the University of Kansas and has taught high school English and French. He earned both a master's degree and a doctorate in reading education from the University of Michigan. After teaching college student for twenty-seven years, he retired and began writing full-time in 2003. He has written many nonfiction and fiction books and has received many awards for those books. His lifelong fascination with Pompeii led him to visit the ruins and later write this book. He continues his research by taking trips to Pompeii and other surrounding areas devastated by the eruption.

For addition information see: James M. Deem Biography <http://jamesmdeem.com/bio.htm>

#### **Other Titles by James M. Deem**

*3 NBs of Julian Drew*

*Bodies from the Bog*  
*How to Make a Mummy Talk*  
*How to Hunt Buried Treasure*  
*How to Catch a Flying Saucer*  
*El Salvador*  
*The Vikings*

### **Related Titles**

*Archaeology for Kids: Uncovering the Mysteries of Our Past, 25 Activities* by Richard Panchyk.  
*I Was There: The Buried City of Pompeii* by Shelley Tanaka.  
*Mount Vesuvius and the Destruction of Pompeii, AD 79 (Natural Disasters)* by Russell Roberts.  
*Pompeii: The Last Day* by Paul Wilkinson.  
*Pompeii: The Roman World* by Peter Connolly.

### **Classroom Connections**

#### **How to Make a Volcano Model**

<http://www.volcanolive.com/model.html>

This website gives the materials and ingredients needed to make a model volcano. Complete the model and make a village around it to re-enact the many eruptions of Mount Vesuvius.

#### **Science Activity: Volcano Terms Crossword Puzzle**

<http://volcano.und.edu/vwdocs/kids/fun/crossword/crossword.html>

#### **Science Activity: Label the Volcano Activity**

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/volcano/labelvolcano.shtml>

#### **Archaeological Detectives**

<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/archdetectives/>

This website provides a lesson plan for forensic archaeology: the students play the part of the forensic archaeologist and try to figure out the identity of a skeleton.

#### **Lesson Plans for Ancient History with Coins**

[http://www.forumancientcoins.com/Articles/Lesson\\_Plans.htm](http://www.forumancientcoins.com/Articles/Lesson_Plans.htm)

This site includes lesson plans about Pompeii and the ancient coins found in the hands of people in the ruins.

#### **Pompeii Forum Project**

<http://pompeii.virginia.edu/>

This site provides wonderful pictures from Pompeii. Display them to the class.

**Art:** Plaster casting different objects, such as shells, would be a good art project linked to this book. It would help the students understand what plaster casting is and understand how archaeologists used plaster casters to illustrate who the people of Pompeii were.

### **Web Sites**

#### **Dig: The Archaeology Magazine for Kids**

<http://digonsite.com>

*Dig* is an archaeology magazine for kids published by the Archaeological Institute of America. The website designed for kids provides information about archaeology, history, and ancient civilizations.

### **Discovery Channel Feature/Pompeii: The Last Day**

<http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/pompeii/pompeii.html>

This site includes information about Pompeii, including ongoing excavations and a quiz on survival.

### **Explore the World of James Deem**

<http://www.jamesmdeem.com/>

This attractive site provides information about James M. Deem, including his biography, books he has written, awards received, book reviews, activities and lessons for teachers and librarians, and information about school visits. It also has links to excellent web sites about Pompeii.

### **Exploring the Environment: Volcanoes**

<http://www.cotf.edu/ete/modules/volcanoes/vmtvesuvius.html>

This site gives a detailed history of Mount Vesuvius. It also contains an excerpt from a record written by Pliny the Younger describing the events surrounding the death of his uncle who was killed by the eruption.

### **Houghton Mifflin Company**

[http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press\\_release/deem/](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press_release/deem/)

This site provides a summary of *Bodies from the Ash* by James M. Deem and a brief paragraph about the author.

### **How Volcanoes Work**

[http://www.geology.sdsu.edu/how\\_volcanoes\\_work/](http://www.geology.sdsu.edu/how_volcanoes_work/)

This site provides information about how volcanoes work. It gives information about volcano eruption dynamics, volcanic landforms (types of volcanoes), eruption products (lava, gases, etc.), types of eruptions, and volcanoes on other worlds (Moon, Mars, Venus, etc.).

### **Pompeii: Stories from an Eruption**

<http://www.fieldmuseum.org/pompeii>

This is a website for an exhibit at the Field Museum in Chicago. The information on the website is thorough and includes an interactive timeline.

### **Pompeii: Unraveling Ancient Mysteries**

<http://harcourtschool.com/activity/pompeii/>

This site is designed for exploring Mount Vesuvius and the towns surrounding the volcano. It includes a clickable map allowing the user to click on different towns.

### **Vesuvius, Italy**

[http://volcano.und.edu/vwdocs/volc\\_images/img\\_vesuvius.html](http://volcano.und.edu/vwdocs/volc_images/img_vesuvius.html)

This site provides information about Mt. Vesuvius and contains several photographs relating to its eruption in AD 79 and many thereafter.

### **Volcanoes!**

<http://volcano.und.edu/volcanoes.html>

This site provides information about volcanoes, including the Earth's volcanoes, volcanoes of other worlds and current eruptions. You can find a volcano by world region, country and name.