**Vocabulary**

**massive**: large, heavy, and solid

**tsunami**: a series of very large ocean waves caused by an underwater earthquake

**desperate**: feeling great need to do something right away

**debris**: pieces of things that have been broken or destroyed

**destruction**: complete ruin, damage
March 11, 2011, started out as a normal day in Kamaishi, Japan. But disaster struck at 2:46 p.m. That’s when a massive earthquake began to rumble below the floor of the Pacific Ocean.

When the earthquake began, the school day was almost over. Students at Kamaishi East Junior High School were getting ready for after-school activities.


When it was over, the school building was still standing. But for the students and thousands of other people along the northeast coast of Japan, the nightmare had just begun. An even worse terror was on its way.

Killer Waves

The quake had caused a series of giant waves, called a tsunami. The tsunami began racing across the ocean at jet speeds. As it got closer to land, it grew stronger and bigger. In some places, it became 133 feet high.

The students at Kamaishi East knew that a tsunami was coming. That’s because they had learned about the waves in school. Their town had been destroyed by tsunamis twice before, in 1896 and 1933.

There was no time to stand around. “Before I realized I was running, my feet were moving,” says Kana Sasaki, 14. Her classmate Aki Kawasaki also moved quickly. “I thought the tsunami would come,” she says. “I was desperate to escape.”

Along with other students, the girls shouted for their teachers to follow
them to higher ground. There, they would be safe from the raging waters.

**Race for Survival**

As the teens ran, they passed an elementary school. The teachers there had planned to stay on the third floor of the building. But the sight of the running teens changed their minds.

The elementary school kids and their teachers joined the teens as they ran. The group decided to race to the top of a hill. The teens helped the younger children, grabbing their hands and pushing them along.

Everyone reached the top of the hill out of breath and terrified. Below them, they watched a horrifying scene begin to unfold in their town.

**A Town Destroyed**

Just 30 minutes after the earthquake, a churning black wave swept into the streets. The water rose so quickly that cars, trucks, homes, and people were swallowed up in seconds.

The water became a powerful, raging river. It was filled with debris, boats, and pieces of wrecked homes. The students watched in shock as their junior high school disappeared under the waves.

Then the waters lifted a car and crashed it into the third floor of the elementary school. It was exactly where the teachers had planned to wait with the younger kids. If they had stayed, they would have been killed.

**Hope and Strength**

The tsunami left an unbelievable path of destruction. The raging waters erased entire towns. About 20,000 people died, including 850 in Kamaishi.

Most of the Kamaishi East students lost their homes. But thanks to their quick action, they all survived. “If it weren’t for them,” says their teacher Shin Saito, “I don’t think I would be alive.”

The brave teens’ story inspires the people of the city as they work to rebuild. Says Saito, “It’s the students who are giving us hope and strength to move on.”

—By Lauren Tarshis with reporting by Setsuko Kamiya
Show What You Know

Answer these questions about “Surviving the Tsunami.” Fill in the bubble next to the best answer to each question.

1. This story is mainly about _____.
   ① a tsunami that hit Japan
   ② Japanese history
   ③ how tsunamis form
   ④ one brave teen

2. The tsunami happened in _____.
   ① 2009    ② 2011
   ③ 2010    ④ 2012

3. What happened first in the story?
   ① The tsunami hit the town of Kamaishi.
   ② An earthquake began underwater.
   ③ Students ran to higher ground.
   ④ A car hit the third floor of a school.

4. In the quote “I was desperate to escape,” the word desperate is _____.
   ① a noun
   ② a verb
   ③ an adjective
   ④ an adverb

5. Which is the best summary of the section “A Town Destroyed”?
   ① The teens destroyed their town.
   ② People in Kamaishi still have hope.
   ③ The tsunami wrecked property and killed people.
   ④ The teens helped younger children.

6. All of the teens _____.
   ① survived
   ② left the town
   ③ lost their homes
   ④ quit school

7. The teens could best be described as _____ for helping younger kids.
   ① shy
   ② athletic
   ③ selfish
   ④ heroic

8. The quote “If it weren’t for them, I don’t think I would be alive,” shows that Mr. Saito feels _____.
   ① grateful to his students
   ② hopeful about the future
   ③ worried about his neighbors
   ④ all of the above

9. Which statement is an opinion?
   ① The tsunami killed many people.
   ② Tsunamis have destroyed Kamaishi three times.
   ③ Aki and Kana should get an award.
   ④ The earthquake shattered windows.

10. The author’s purpose for writing this story was probably to _____.
    ① inform readers about a tragic event
    ② instruct readers about how to prepare for a tsunami
    ③ entertain readers with a fiction story
    ④ persuade readers to study tsunamis

A woman sits among the ruins left by the tsunami.
How a Tsunami Forms

Look at the diagram. Use the information in it to answer the questions.

1. An earthquake happens underwater. The seafloor snaps up. That lifts the water above it. When the water falls back down, waves are formed. They travel outward.

2. In the beginning, the waves in a tsunami are far apart. The distance between two waves can be hundreds of miles. Each wave’s height is usually not more than three feet at first.

3. As waves reach the shore, they are pushed together by the land. They become much higher and closer together.

1. Which of these events happens first as a tsunami is formed?
   A. waves travel outward
   B. an earthquake occurs
   C. waves get pushed together
   D. the seafloor lifts water

2. The brown area of this diagram represents the ________.
   A. tsunami
   B. earthquake
   C. seafloor and solid ground
   D. cities that are destroyed

3. What do the red arrows in this diagram show?
   A. the direction water travels
   B. where to go to avoid a tsunami
   C. the height of the waves
   D. how far apart the waves are

4. Which part of the picture shows where the earthquake happens?
   A. the upper left
   B. the lower left
   C. the upper right
   D. the lower right

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ACTION ONLINE SOLUTIONS
Answers to online-only activities for the March 26, 2012, issue

PICTURE PERFECT
Answers may vary. Accept answers similar to those below.
1. **Photo:** The photo shows ants with colored water in their see-through stomachs. **Caption:** The caption says that a scientist gave the ants something colorful to eat.
2. **Photo:** The photo shows a giant weta eating a carrot. **Caption:** The caption says that the weta is big enough to eat a carrot.
3. **Photo:** The photo shows mosquitoes buzzing around a foot. **Caption:** The caption says that mosquitoes love the smell of stinky feet.

MAKE THE CONTRACTION
1. I'm
2. We're
3. We've
4. it's
5. haven't
6. That's
7. didn't
8. don't
9. he'll
10. I've

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
1. b
2. a
3. d
4. b
5. a
6. a
7. d
8. b
9. a
10. c

VOCABULARY REVIEW
1. desperately
2. tsunami
3. destruction
4. massive
5. debris

YOU BE THE EDITOR
1. b
2. c
3. c
4. a

ACTION SOLUTIONS
Answers to skills activities in the print edition and Teaching Guide

MAIN IDEA, P. 3
1. ✔ Large insects are gross.
2. The world's heaviest insect is the giant weta.
3. The weta at left weighs more than three mice.

CONTRACTIONS, P. 4
1. who's = who + is
2. I'm = I + am
3. he's = he + is
4. can't = can + not
5. it's = it + is
6. I'd = I + would

USE THE CLUES, P. 11
Answers may vary. Acceptable answers include:
1. The tragedy probably occurred at night, after 10 p.m.
2. The reason people are staring at Ren is probably that Bomont has a law against listening to loud music, and the music coming from Ren's car is very loud.
3. Ren is probably thinking about his mother. Earlier in the play, his mother's death was mentioned.

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW, P. 15
1. a
2. c
3. b
4. c
5. c
6. a
7. d
8. a
9. c
10. a

HOW A TSUNAMI FORMS, P. 16
1. b
2. c
3. a
4. b

SAY IT WITH STYLE, P. T3
1. M
2. S
3. M
4. S
5. David's face didn't show his emotions. (Accept answers similar to this.)
6. A feeling of happiness came over Sophia suddenly, like an ocean wave. (Accept answers similar to this.)
7. Answers may vary.
8. Answers may vary.

PLOT PYRAMID, P. T5
1. The main problem is that dancing isn't allowed in Bomont, but teens want to dance.
2. The problem gets more complicated when Ren comes to town and questions the dance ban.
3. The problem reaches its worst point when Shaw catches Ariel dancing with Ren.
4. The problem begins to be solved when Ren explains his views at a City Council meeting.
5. The problem is finally solved when Ren organizes a school dance and persuades Shaw to let Ariel attend.

WRITE TO A HEROIC TEEN, P. T7
Answers may vary.

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