



Natural disasters or nature's attacks?

- A.** Do you know the names of the natural disasters illustrated below? Write them in the spaces provided. Read the text for help.



1.



2.



3.



4.

What is a natural disaster?

A natural disaster is an event which occurs for natural reasons and has a deep or violent impact on the environment. In other words, it's a **hazard** that affects a place inhabited by people and it often brings consequences in terms of human, financial and environmental losses. Therefore, an earthquake that hits an uninhabited area can't be considered a disaster.

Disasters sometimes seem a way that nature uses to show its living energy in a violent form. Nature seems to be attacking us with its most unknown and inner forces. Even though disasters have always occurred, when we experience them, we may think that the natural forces are rebelling against us for our disrespectful behaviour. The capacity of populations to resist and to support a hazard, that is their resilience, is a key factor in evaluating how severe the disaster is.

Two main natural disasters: earthquakes and flooding

Among the most common and frightening natural disasters are earthquakes: sudden **shakes** of the Earth's crust that provoke vibrations which can vary in magnitude. Earthquakes can cause fires, tsunamis (seismic sea waves), volcanic eruptions and the collapse of buildings, which in turn can kill people and wildlife. They are unpredictable even though some people think that there are certain signs (pets showing agitation, particular climatic conditions, higher concentration of radon in the air) that warn us that an earthquake is going to hit. Many of the dramatic consequences of earthquakes could be avoided by stronger buildings, safer systems and earlier **warnings**.

Flooding is a type of hazard connected to water. It can occur when the volume of water within a lake or a river exceeds the total capacity of its bounds and submerges the surrounding area. The severity of this disaster depends on the quantity of the exceeding water and the area involved. Some European countries are planning a form of flood prevention which, they think, will limit the damages provoked by this disaster. Civil Defence is a very important organism which has become more and more necessary. In all European countries, in fact, it plays a crucial role providing **relief** to those areas and populations hit by different natural disasters and informing people how to behave during the emergency.

Glossary

hazard: rischio; **shakes:** scosse; **warnings:** avvertimento; **relief:** soccorso

practice

A. Read the text and write T (True) or F (False). Correct the false statements.

	T	F
1. A hazard which involves people and wildlife is a disaster.		
2. When an earthquake hits an uninhabited area it's considered a disaster.		
3. Resilience is the capacity of people to predict a disaster.		
4. Flooding occurs when the water of a lake or river exceeds its bounds.		
5. Civil Defence in Europe has only the task of preventing disasters.		

B. Read the text again and answer the questions.

1. What is a natural disaster?
2. What are the main consequences of earthquakes?
3. Why is Civil Defence important?

C. Here are some natural disasters. Match them to their right definition.

- | A | B |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. earthquake | ☐ a. gigantic sea wave. |
| 2. hurricane | ☐ b. movement of the surface of the earth. |
| 3. tornado | ☐ c. uncontrollable fire near wild land areas. |
| 4. flooding | ☐ d. a storm when winds turn around a certain point. |
| 5. tsunami | ☐ e. a storm with severe winds, especially in coastal areas. |
| 6. wild fire | ☐ f. an explosion of a volcano and the fall of rocks and lava. |
| 7. volcanic eruption | ☐ g. water exceeding the capacity of a river or lake. |

D. Complete the passage with the correct future forms from the box below.

is going to hit • they will find • is going to take • will occur • it will probably happen •
are meeting • it will fall • are going to work • it will take • will be • will come

Asteroids: a menace from space

Asteroids are rocky bodies that are part of the solar system. They are smaller than planets and move in orbit through space. Professor Parosh, a famous astronomer (1) us into the fascinating but worrying world of the danger of asteroids. His team of researchers believe that in the near future a big asteroid (2) close to the earth. By studying their orbit they have predicted that one of the biggest (3) our planet. It's not easy to say when it (4). The Professor says that it's possible to determine approximately the area where (5). It's moving fast but (6) more than ten years before the impact. So in a short time a team of scientists and astronomers (7) together to find out with more precision the countries involved and the period (8). Next May researchers from every part of the world (9) in Washington D.C. to discuss the results of their investigations and strategies to protect the population. They are sure (10) a way to evacuate the regions where damage (11) more severe.