Natural disasters

Ask the children what they can tell you about Natural Disasters, they will mention floods, volcanoes, earthquakes etc. This is just a warmer really to get them recalling information about natural disasters.

Scenarios

These are invented stories that you can tell the children to get them to examine ‘what makes something a natural disaster?’ After each story ask the task question (though you don’t have to do all of them, two were enough for one yr3 group).

- I leave my tap on and it fills up the sink. The sink then overflows and floods the bathroom.
- A river bursts it banks and floods a large area.
- A dam that was poorly built breaks and the water floods a large area.
- A volcano erupts on a deserted island.
- A volcano destroys a village but all the people escaped.
- An earthquake causes all the books to fall of the shelves, cup and glasses smash on the the floor. A few people are hit by falling objects. No one has to go to hospital.

Task question:

- Is that a natural disaster?

Nested questions – these are the questions that may come up during the discussion.

- How big does a flood have to be to be a natural disaster?
- Is it a natural disaster if nothing is destroyed?
- If no one is hurt?
- If no one is killed?
- If it was started by someone is it a natural disaster?

Abstract/general questions

- What makes something ‘natural’?
- What makes something a ‘disaster’?

Real events

These are true stories and the first is a little harrowing. You may want to make it imaginary (or not use them at all) for the purposes of discussion.

Aberfan

*In October 1966, after days of heavy rain, a mudslide from Merthyr Mountain hit a village called Aberfan, Wales. Most of the mud had been put there by miners over the last 50 years.*

Task question:

- If it was caused by people and rain was it a natural disaster?

Mascali

*Mascali lies on the side of Mount Etna, which is a live volcano and frequently erupts. In 1928 Mascali was completely destroyed by one of Etna’s eruptions. They rebuilt Mascali in exactly the same place. Etna.*

Task Question:

- If it gets destroyed again are the builders of the volcano responsible?
Nested questions:

- Can nature be blamed for anything?
- Is no one to blame?
- Are natural disasters evil?
- Are you responsible if you didn’t know what would happen?