

One Boy's Experience

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One Boy's Experience by Lloyd Head

It was between five and half-past five Wednesday morning the **tremblor** came: backwards, forwards, sideways it shook, making things dance on the **bureau** as if they were alive, while the dishes in the **pantry** and the china closet rattled about at a great rate. I guess no one had time to think what had happened, at least I didn't. I just held on to the side of the bed to keep from falling out and ducked my head in the pillow, for I was so scared I couldn't even yell. When the shaking had somewhat subsided I jumped up and ran into my mother's room where my father and mother and my small sister slept. My father didn't seem scared very much but I guess he was, all the same, and so were all of us except the baby; she just sat up in bed and didn't even cry, but I'll bet she thought it was kind of funny whenever we heard a rumble we all piled down into the back yard as fast as we could.

When we went upstairs again we looked in the pantry—what a scene! broken cups, saucers, plates; on the floor, in the sink and everywhere. It was the same way in the parlor where some of our vases had broken. At first we thought that a number of things had been broken but we soon found out that we had come off very lucky for the things that had broken had gone into so many pieces that it looked more than it really was. When we had cleaned up the broken **crockery** and **bric-a-brac** and eaten

some sandwiches that my oldest sister had been going to take to a picnic with her that day, we all felt better and went to the window to look out.

People lined the sidewalks and everything was confusion. Looking up the street we could see where a large plate glass window had been broken in a store at the corner and when we looked away down town to see where the City Hall was you could see right through it. A fire was blazing further downtown and rumors were spread around that the **Cliff House** had fallen into the water and that certain cities along the coast were under water.

Nobody knew what to do and everybody seemed rattled. The fire was rapidly increasing and at intervals slight earthquakes would cause small sized panics. People would rush to the middle of the street between the car tracks and stay there quite a while after the shock had passed away. We had stayed in the house and ran down stairs at every slight shock and we soon got tired of that so my mother and sister sewed some sacks together and my father and I made a tent in the back yard and began a camp there; we made a brick fireplace in the yard by digging a hole in the dirt and placing bricks around it, leaving a place for a draft and then put a piece of tin over the bricks for a stove top. My mother then went after some stuff to eat so that we wouldn't be without something if we had to go up to the hills to get away from the fire. By this time it was gaining **headway** and cinders from the fire came floating down on us until there was a thin layer of them all over the yard.

The sun shone blood-red through a thick haze of smoke and people began coming in a steady stream from the district near the fire. Some carried all they had saved in little carts or wagons which had before been only playthings. Hatless, coatless, mothers and fathers, with children all packing something **trudged** on in the direction of the hills. Night came and my father and two sisters and I slept until morning in our tent. My mother stayed up all night watching the fire with my aunt, mother and grandmother who had come over to stay with us and had brought ample **provisions**

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NAME: _____

PP.2

ACTIVITY PAGE

DATE: _____

Reading Questions

Head writes that “when we looked away down town to see where the City Hall was you could see right through it.” What do you think he means? Why was he able to see through City Hall?

1. Look for an example of personification in the first paragraph and answer the following questions.

A. Copy a quote from the text that demonstrates personification:

B. What non-human thing is personified?

C. What human quality or action does the author use to describe the thing?

2. Head writes that “when we looked away down town to see where the City Hall was you could see right through it.” What do you think he means? Why was he able to see through City Hall?

3. Why did people rush out of their homes and into the middle of the street at every “slight earthquake” and “slight shock”?
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4. Head writes that refugees from the fire transported “all they had saved in little carts or wagons which had before been only playthings.” Why do you think he includes this detail? What does it show about the situation in San Francisco?
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5. Write a personal narrative describing a time you and your friends or family worked together in the face of a difficult situation.
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NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY PAGE

Spot the Fake

1. Write a narrative in response to the prompt your teacher gives you.

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NAME: _____

DATE: _____

2. For each group that presents, guess whose narrative is not truthful.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

F. _____

NAME: _____

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Revision
