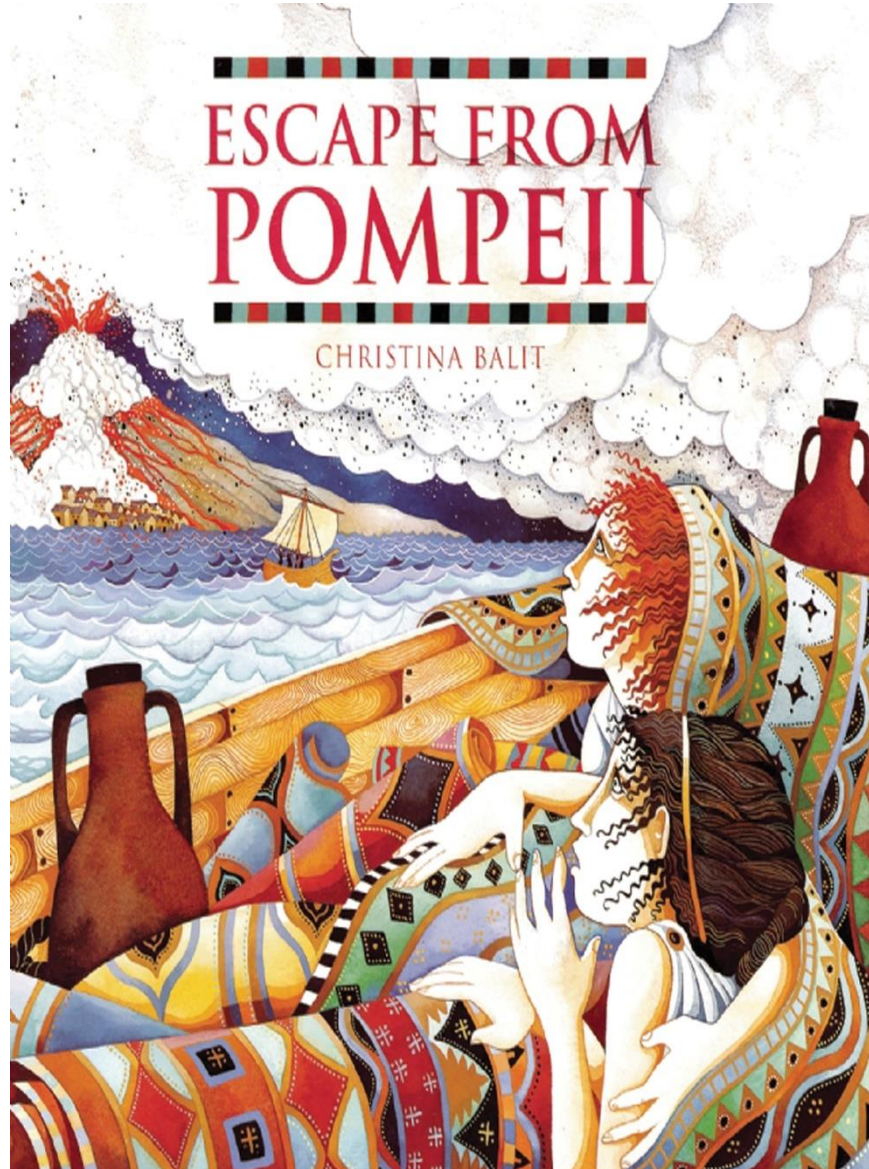


ESCAPE FROM POMPEII

CHRISTINA BALIT







On a hillside overlooking the sparkling bay of Naples, the Roman city of Pompeii glimmered in the sunlight. From his window young Tranio listened to the noise humming from bars, taverns and shops around him, and to the busy tradesmen haggling in the streets below. Beyond the massive city walls he could see Pompeii's greatest protector looming in the distance. They called it Vesuvius, the Gentle Mountain.

Could anyone feel safer than here, Tranio wondered? Was anything more beautiful?



Tranio was the son of Dion the actor and lived with his parents near the Theatre District of Pompeii. He'd often sneak to the harbour at the mouth of the River Sarnus and hide behind sacks of grain. There he'd watch pots of wine, oil and spices being carried to and from the ships, or fishermen unloading their rich catches.

Sometimes Tranio went to the forum to watch the politicians make their speeches, the stall-holders argue, and listen to the poets sing. His favourite song was:

"Rumble down, tumble down,
great city walls,
Feel the ground grumble,
the citizens stumble
When the earth shakes, and
rumble down, tumble down."

Everyone would join in, laughing as they remembered the earthquake tremors. A few years before Tranio was born there had been a big earthquake in Pompeii, and parts of the town had still not yet been fully repaired. But nobody took tremors seriously any more.



Comprehension questions

REMEMBER: when answering comprehension questions to write in FULL SENTENCES.

- 1) What bay can be seen from Pompeii?
- 2) What does Tranio say is Pompeii's greatest protector?
- 3) Do you think that Pompeii is safe? Give your reasons.
- 4) Where did Tranio live?
- 5) What did Tranio do with his time?
- 6) What words indicate that he wasn't supposed to be by the harbour?
- 7) What did Tranio do at the forum?
- 8) Why did people laugh about the earthquake?
- 9) Do you think they were scared that another one might happen?
- 10) Do you think they are right not to take the tremors seriously?
- 11) What do you predict might happen next?