



America's Great Disasters

By Martin W. Sandler

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For more than two centuries, Americans have proven themselves to be courageous and strong. These qualities are never more important than in the face of nature's destructive forces or the dangers brought about by the innovations of the industrial revolution. The San Francisco earthquake, which reduced much of the city to rubble; the sinking of the steamship Sultana, the worst American maritime disaster of all time; and the Johnston flood, which washed away an entire town, are only a few of the calamities to have befallen this country.

Through the use of photographs, engravings, and newspaper clippings that detail some of the worst disasters ever to confront this country, author Martin W. Sandler presents the American people at their best, standing firm in situations of great danger. In doing so, a fascinating picture emerges of a nation's bravery, resilience, and humor -- traits that continue to characterize Americans today.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-7-Dramatic material, archival photographs, and an accessible text combine to create an appealing title. The nine chapters cover calamities at sea, floods, droughts and dust, fire, hurricanes, blizzards, disease, earthquakes, and volcanoes. The short chapters are filled with interesting facts focusing on a particular event, but often with comparisons to others of a similar nature. Sandler includes such well-known disasters as the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, but also some that are less often covered, such as the explosion of the *Sultana* at the end of the Civil War. The chapter on the Blizzard of '88 adds some tidbits not found in Jim Murphy's award-winning *Blizzard!* (Scholastic, 2000). The chapters end with commentary on the influence these events had on safety laws, building codes, medical procedures, etc. The black-and-white photographs add authenticity and immediacy.

Edith Ching, St. Albans School, Mt. St. Alban, Washington, DC

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 4-6. Rousing reading for disaster buffs, this account of nine major catastrophes (with briefer references to several more) highlights the overwhelming scope and loss of life resulting from events such as the 1889 Johnstown Flood, the Galveston hurricane of 1900, the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 ("the dead bodies are stacked about the morgue like cord wood"), and the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Sandler does not mention 9/11, but he includes several other disasters perpetrated by human beings--notably, the explosion of the overloaded Civil War riverboat *Sultana*, which took more American lives than the sinking of the *Titanic*. The book is illustrated with rather muddy-looking photos and prints, many of which depict widespread devastation. This won't need book-talking to find its way into readers' hands. *John Peters*

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About the Author

Martin W. Sandler is the author of many books, including *The Story of American Photography*, which was a Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Honor Book. He has been nominated twice for the Pulitzer Prize, and is one of America's most respected television producers, with five Emmy Awards to his credit. He is the author of five other Library of Congress Books: *Pioneers*, *Cowboys*, *Immigrants*, *Presidents*, and *Civil War*. Mr. Sandler and his wife, Carol, live in Massachusetts.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Harold Hutchison:

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