

**SOURCE A: THE ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS**

*It was not clear at that distance from which mountain the cloud was rising (it was afterwards known to be Vesuvius); its general appearance can best be expressed as being like an umbrella pine, for it rose to a great height on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches, I imagine because it was thrust upwards by the first blast and then left unsupported as the pressure subsided, or else it was borne down by its own weight so that it spread out and gradually dispersed. In places it looked white, elsewhere blotched and dirty, according to the amount of soil and ashes it carried with it.*

*My uncle's scholarly acumen saw at once that it was important enough for a closer inspection, and he ordered a boat to be made ready, telling me I could come with him if I wished. I replied that I preferred to go on with my studies, and as it happened he had himself given me some writing to do. As he was leaving the house he was handed a message from Rectina, wife of Tascus [a friend], whose house was at the foot of the mountain, so that escape was impossible except by boat. She was terrified by the danger threatening her and implored him to rescue her from her fate. ... He gave orders for the warships to be launched and went on board himself with the intention of bringing help to many more people besides Rectina, for this lovely stretch of coast was thickly populated.*

*He hurried to the place which everyone else was hastily leaving, steering his course straight for the danger zone. ... Ashes were already falling, hotter and thicker as the ships drew near, followed by bits of pumice and blackened stones, charred and cracked by the flames: then suddenly they were in shallow water, and the shore was blocked by the debris from the mountain....*

**(Extract from a letter written by Pliny the Younger, c 106 AD to his friend Tacitus giving an eyewitness account of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, 79 AD)**

1. Is the above source primary or secondary? Explain.

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2. At first, why was Pliny unable to identify which mountain the 'cloud' was rising from?

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3. How does Pliny describe the shape of the cloud?

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4. Why didn't Pliny travel on the boat from Misenum to Pompeii with his uncle?

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5. What evidence is there in the extract to show that Pliny's uncle was a brave man?

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6. Why do you think '*this lovely stretch of coast was thickly populated*'?

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7. Why wasn't the ship able to reach the shore?

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8. Mention one strength of a letter as an historical source.

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