

English

Studying Non-Fiction Texts

Preview

Volcano Set to Erupt

Story by Jade Jenkins, the Sydney Morning Herald's journalist on duty in Japan, Monday, 28th November.

KYUSHU, JAPAN: There were continuous ash emissions from the Kyushu volcano in Japan yesterday, with an ash plume rising to an altitude of 3 km! The Kyushu volcano has had the most intense activity in 100 days, says a Japanese authority. Authorities are advising caution for both tourists and residents.

Recent footage released revealed white-hot molten lava flows and plumes of ash rising from the crater, signifying that new magma has been found there. "The magma is rich in ash," a scientist confirms that a new magma eruption has occurred at the site.

A scientist from the Tokyo VAAC (Volcano Ash Advisory Centre) said Japan has over 100 volcanoes, more than almost any other country in the world. It alone accounts for 10% of all active volcanoes worldwide.



In fact, Japan forms part of the so-called 'Pacific Ring of Fire', the area of volcanic activity caused by the reduction in the Pacific plates beneath the earth and ocean. This involves continental and ocean plates below the earth's surface.

Authorities are observing the volcanic activity in Kyushu. It is expected that the crater will not provide a major threat, since, according to the Tokyo VAAC, "activity generally calms down, and the emissions usually become strong steaming rather than continual full-blown magma emissions."

If wind activity increases, ash-rich emissions will spread to more heavily populated areas, posing potential health issues for those with respiratory problems such as asthma.

People are warned to be aware, but not to panic. "We are proud of our record of observations and notifications", said a spokesperson in Tokyo. Although 17 of our volcanoes have been recorded as being in eruption, throughout our long history, a background check shows that we are well-prepared for evacuations onto other islands, such as Shikoku and Honshu, if necessary."

Certainly, current messages to the public have been mild in tone, advising tourists and residents to avoid the crater and surrounding area. Health warnings have yet to be released for sufferers of respiratory disorders, though it is considered wise to have medications and other treatments to hand.



Map of Japan

For Upper Primary



Contents

A News Report	Page 3
Opinion Piece	Page 4
Drawing Comparisons 1	Page 5
Drawing Comparisons 2	Page 6
Drawing Comparisons 3	Page 7
Objective And Subjective Language	Page 8
Identifying Bias.....	Page 9
Analysing Images.....	Page 10
Who Is Bias?.....	Page 11
What's Your Opinion?.....	Page 12
Answers.....	Page 13-14

Preview

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A News Report

- News reports are non-fiction. They aim to present their information as factual. Read the news report then complete the activity pages which follow.

Volcano Set To Erupt

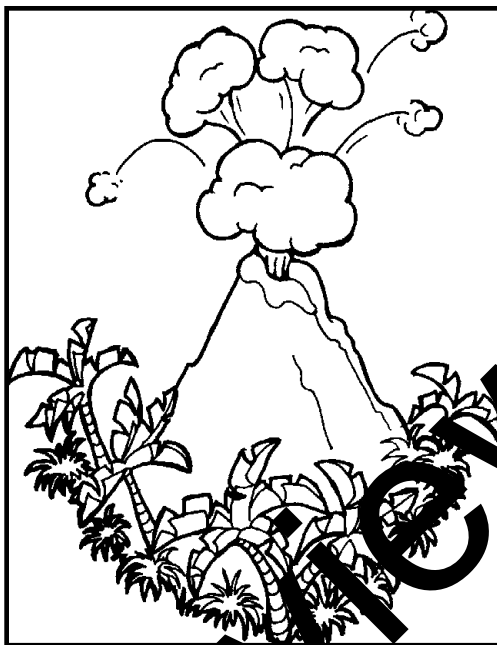
Story by Jade Jenkins, the Sydney Morning Report's journalist on site in Japan. Friday, 28th November.

KYUSHU, JAPAN:
There were continuous ash emissions from the Kyushu volcano in Japan yesterday, with an ash plume rising to an altitude of 3 km! The Kyushu volcano has been the site of intense activity in recent days, with Japanese authorities advising caution for both tourists and residents.

Recent footage released has revealed white-hot fountains arising from the crater, signifying that new magma has arrived there. "The magma is rich in ashes. This confirms that a new magma eruption has occurred at the site, established a scientist from the Tokyo VAAC (Volcano Ash Advisory Centre).

Japan has over 100 volcanoes, more than almost any other country in the world. It alone accounts for 10% of all active volcanoes worldwide. In fact, Japan forms part of the so-called 'Pacific Ring of Fire', the area of volcanic activity caused by the reduction in the Pacific plates beneath the earth and ocean. This involves continental and ocean plates below the earth's surface.

Authorities are observing the volcanic activity in Kyushu. It is



expected that the crater will not provide a major threat, since, according to the Tokyo VAAC, "activity generally calms down, and the emissions usually become strong steaming rather than continual full-blown magma emissions."

If activity increases, ash-rich emissions will spread to more heavily populated areas, posing potential health issues for those with respiratory problems such as asthma.

People are warned to be aware, but not to panic. "We are proud of our record of observations and notifications", said a spokesperson in Tokyo. Although 17 of our volcanoes have been recorded as being in eruption, throughout our long history, a background check shows that we are well-prepared for evacuations onto other islands, such as Shikoku and Honshu, if necessary."

Certainly, current messages to the public have been mild in tone, advising tourists and residents to avoid the crater and surrounding area. Health warnings have yet to be released for sufferers of respiratory disorders, though it is considered wise to have medications and other treatments to hand.



Map of Japan

Opinion Piece

- **Opinion pieces, or 'op-eds,' are articles through which the writer expresses his/her personal opinion. Often, this is controversial or is meant to provoke discussion and debate about a particular issue or item of news. After you have read the news report *Volcano Set to Erupt*, read the opinion piece below.**

The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity

By Noa Saito, a concerned citizen. Originally published on her blog Seeking Truth. Friday, 28th November.

Recent volcanic activity in Kyushu has caused the transmission of volcanic ash throughout our city. People can be seen in the streets, shopping and attempting to go about their daily business, while wearing surgical masks to prevent ingestion of the ash. Yet, our government officials tell us not to worry.

Indeed, a local official is quoted, in the 'Sydney Morning Reporter', as saying that there is little reason for concern. The official further reassures us that Japan's so-called amazing track record shows that we are well prepared for emergencies such as 'health warnings and evacuations'.

Well-prepared? For medical emergencies? I doubt it. In a recent article in the online journal PubMed, a journal on public medicine, researchers noted that Japan's general hospital system was not adequate for large scale emergencies. If the volcanic activity suddenly increases and people suffer breathing difficulties and other related illnesses, there will be little room for them to receive medical care in our local hospitals. The hospitals are already crowded, with nurses and doctors being run off their feet.

Evacuation plans in Japan are also sadly lacking. During the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, it was not the government's evacuation plans that maintained peace and order in chaos. No, it was the character of we, the law-abiding citizens of Japan. We maintained civilisation in the midst of chaos and rapidly thrown together evacuation plans. The government should thank us, not try to treat us like children with empty comments on supposed excellent track records for well-prepared emergency plans.

What is the truth behind the Kyushu volcanic activity?

The truth is that our government is, sadly, unprepared for large scale emergencies.

The truth, also, is that our government is trying to boost our economy through tourism and so it doesn't want to discourage tourists from coming to Japan, or from cancelling their trips because of volcanic activity.

The real truth is that we need to trust ourselves and our local communities to stockpile medication and provide safe exits for local families. The real truth is that our good characters as faithful citizens of Japan are our strongest asset. If we band together we can help each other in the shadow of risk from volcanic activity. And not rely on our poor, ineffective national emergency plans.

It is we locals who will suffer if we do not take power and responsibility into local hands.

That's the real truth.

Let's take action and prepare ourselves now.



PREVIEW

● *Drawing Comparisons 1*

- After reading the news report entitled *Volcano Set To Erupt* and the opinion piece entitled *The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity* complete this activity sheet.

**Opinion Pieces provide commentaries on an event.
News reports aim to report the facts of an event.**



- Let's try analysing the news report *Volcano Set To Erupt* and the opinion piece *The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity* by completing the table.

	NEWS REPORT	OPINION PIECE
	<i>Volcano Set To Erupt</i>	<i>The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity</i>
What is the story about?		
What is the writer's opinion of the Japanese government?		
Is the tone formal or informal? Give examples.		
Does the text use statistics? Give examples.		
Does it use any technical language? Give examples.		

Preview

● *Drawing Comparisons 2*

- Identify seven similarities between the news report and the opinion piece. You might look at the structure, subject, tone, vocabulary, visuals, etc.

	NEWS REPORT	OPINION PIECE
	<i>Volcano Set To Erupt</i>	<i>The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity</i>
Similarity 1:		
Similarity 2:		
Similarity 3:		
Similarity 4:		
Similarity 5:		
Similarity 6:		
Similarity 7:		

Preview

● Drawing Comparisons 3

- Identify seven differences between the news report and the opinion piece. You might look at the structure, subject, tone, vocabulary, visuals, etc.

	NEWS REPORT	OPINION PIECE
	<i>Volcano Set To Erupt</i>	<i>The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity</i>
Difference 1:		
Difference 2:		
Difference 3:		
Difference 4:		
Difference 5:		
Difference 6:		
Difference 7:		

Preview

● *Objective And Subjective Language*

- In the news report *Volcano Set To Erupt*, the writer (Jade Jenkins) wants to sound as objective (unbiased) as possible. To do this she uses objective language (“facts”) rather than subjective language (“opinions”).
- The writer of the opinion piece *The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity* uses lots of subjective language (“opinions”) but also includes some objective language, to make her text look believable.
- Give examples of objective and subjective language used in both texts. Write in the table below.

NEWS REPORT	OPINION PIECE
<i>Volcano Set To Erupt</i>	<i>The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity</i>
e.g. “With an ash plume rising to an altitude of 3km!” (objective)	e.g. “Well-prepared? For medical emergencies? No doubt it.” (subjective)

Preview

- Which text do you trust more? Why?

● Identifying Bias

- Read the opinion piece *The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity*, then complete this activity sheet.

When you read, there are some questions you can ask yourself to help you identify bias. For example, you can ask: "Where did the author get this information?" Sometimes the answer to this question can help you figure out how the article might be biased.

Three possible sources of bias are:

A The writer has received or provided incomplete information.

B The writer is trying to influence or convince the reader by use of words and persuasive techniques.

C The writer's past experience is influencing his or her thinking.

- Write three points the writer has made concerning what she considers to be the truth behind Kyushu volcanic activity. Next to each point, state which type of bias is demonstrated, from the list above.

Point 1 _____ _____ _____	Bias _____ _____ _____
Point 2 _____ _____ _____	Bias _____ _____ _____
Point 3 _____ _____ _____	Bias _____ _____ _____

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Research your local council or state emergency plans. You can find this information on government websites. Do you think it is an effective plan? Write an opinion piece on the plan, expressing your point of view.

● *Analysing Images*

- The news report *Volcano Set To Erupt* includes a map of the island of Kyushu. We can analyse the map to help us critically view the author's argument.

It is helpful to learn how to analyse and interpret information that is represented in graphs, charts, tables, diagrams, and maps. The information often adds to our understanding of the text. We can learn to breakdown graphics in information texts and maps in a step-by-step process.

1. View the graphic. What type of graphic are you analysing?

2. What information is the visual providing?
List three pieces of information.

- _____
- _____
- _____



Map of Japan

3. The writer argues that the government is well-prepared to evacuate people from Kyushu to other islands of Japan, such as Shikoku and Honshu, in emergency situations. Look at the map. Look at where the islands are situated. How close are they? Do you think that they are easily accessible?

4. Can you think of a different way to visually represent the information on the map? Explain why this visual representation might be effective in representing the information.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Do some research to find other maps of Kyushu that show the information differently, for example, railway lines or road maps. With your partner, compare the information on these maps.

● Who Is Biased?

- Re-read the news report *Volcano Set To Erupt* and the op-ed *The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity*, then complete this activity page.

Sometimes people use bias on purpose in writing.

For example, if you want to persuade someone to agree with your point of view, you can include information that supports your position and leave out other information which doesn't support your point. This is intentional bias or selection of detail.

Another kind of bias is unintentional. It occurs in writing when a person tries to be accurate but does not have sufficient information and has not carried out adequate research.

BIAS IN THE NEWS REPORT

Can you find any bias in the news report? Think about use of information, identification of sources, word usage, and inclusion of "facts".

1. What type of bias is this (intentional or unintentional)? _____
2. Why do you think this? Use examples from the text to support your answer.

3. What is the effect of this bias? For example, does it persuade? Does it cause you to question the information? Explain why.

BIAS IN THE OP-ED

Identify the bias in the op-ed. Think about use of information, identification of sources, word usage, and inclusion of facts.

1. What type of bias is this (intentional or unintentional)? _____
2. Why do you think this? Use examples from the text to support your answer.

3. What is the effect of this bias? For example, does it persuade? Does it cause you to question the information? Explain why.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Have a debate in your small group on the topic: The news report is more accurate than the opinion piece. Use your arguments above to help you plan your arguments.

● *What's Your Opinion?*

The editorial page of a newspaper is a good place to find biased writing. Editors try to persuade readers.

- **Read an editorial in a local newspaper, online or in print. Identify the bias in the editorial. Then read the editorial to your class, and discuss any bias you find in it.**

1. What is your opinion? _____

2. Do you agree or disagree with the editorial? Why? _____

3. Do you need to research the event or issue to discover more information that will help you form your opinion?

- **After your discussion and research, write your own opinion piece on the same topic as the editorial. Remember to use persuasive language.**

Topic: _____

Introduction: _____

Body: _____

Conclusion: _____

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Have a class competition to share your opinion pieces. Vote for the three most persuasive texts.

Answers

Page 5

What is the news story about?

Both stories are about the Kyushu volcanic eruption.

What's the writer's opinion of the Japanese government?

The news report does not criticise the government, rather it seems to support its opinions. The opinion piece, in contrast, criticises the government and claims that the Japanese government is deceptive and misleading.

Is the tone formal or informal?

The tone used in the news report is more formal ("advising tourists and residents to avoid the crater and surrounding areas"). The tone in the opinion piece is more informal as it includes colloquial language, such as, "run off their feet".

Does the text use statistics?

The news report uses several statistics ("10% of all active volcanoes"; "100 volcanoes"; "17 of our volcanoes"). The opinion piece does not use any statistics making it appear less factual.

Does it use any technical language?

The news report uses a lot of technical language, such as, "crater", "plates", "emissions", "ash", "plume", altitude, "magma", "eruption", "Pacific Ring Of Fire", etc. In comparison the opinion piece uses very little.

Page 6

Similarity 1: Both include visuals to support information.

Similarity 2: Both report on the erupting volcano in Kyushu, Japan.

Similarity 3: Both include quotations from "experts", such as an official and a scientist. Similarity 4: Both agree that the volcano has released ash into the air.

Similarity 5: Both agree that the Japanese government claim that the volcanic ash should not pose any major threat to citizens' health. Similarity 6: Both are written at the same time and are current.

Similarity 7: Both include a headline and a byline.

Page 7

Difference 1: The news report includes statistics, e.g. "account for 10% of all active volcanoes". The opinion piece does not include any statistics making it seem less factual.

Difference 2: The news report supports the government's claim that the volcanic ash is not a major threat to people's lives. The opinion piece claims that the volcanic ash is dangerous and does pose a health risk.

Difference 3: The news report agrees with the government that the Japanese hospitals are well-prepared for emergencies. The opinion piece claims that the hospitals are not well-prepared for medical emergencies.

Difference 4: The news report uses more facts. E.g. "Pacific Plates beneath the earth and ocean". The opinion piece uses more subjective language, "Well-prepared?" ... I doubt it."

Difference 5: The tone of the news report is more formal and detached, "It is considered wise to have medications and other treatment to hand." The tone of the opinion piece is less formal and more critical, "nurses and doctors being run off their feet".

Difference 6: The news report does not include rhetorical questions. The opinion piece includes several rhetorical questions and addresses the reader, "What is the truth behind the Kyushu Volcanic activity?"; "let's take action ..."

Difference 7: The news report does not criticise the Japanese government. The opinion piece is highly critical of the Japanese government claiming that the government is misleading the people.

Page 8

Students might say that they trust the news report more than the opinion piece because it has a more formal tone, includes more technical language, less colloquial language and includes statistics.

Page 9

Opinion Piece

Point One: The government is not well-prepared for emergency.

Bias: 1. The writer has received or provided incomplete information.

2. The writer is trying to influence or convince the reader by use of words and persuasive techniques.

Point Two: The well-behaved citizens of Japan saved the people in the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake, not the government's emergency plans.

Bias: 2. The writer is trying to influence or convince the reader by use of words and persuasive techniques.

3. The writer's past experience is influencing his or her thinking.

Answers

Point Three: The government is not giving all the facts about the volcanic activity as it is worried about losing tourists and affecting the economy.

Bias: 1. The writer has received or provided incomplete information.

2. The writer is trying to influence or convince the reader by use of words and persuasive techniques

Page 10

1. A map of Kyushu, including some areas of other islands.
2. What information is the visual providing? List three pieces of information.
 - * Important cities and towns on Kyushu.
 - * Relationship of Kyushu to the ocean.
 - * Relationship of Kyushu to other parts of Japan.
3. The map shows that the islands are detached by water so the evacuation would be difficult and expensive. Evacuating to surrounding cities may be easier.
4. Can you think of a different way to visually represent the information on the map? Explain why this visual representation might be effective in representing the information. Students could consider a table, showing the distance between the cities of Kyushu.

Page 11

Bias in the news report: The article shows that the effects of the Kyushu volcanic emissions is minimal. It only uses one source for this information, the government body.

What type of bias is this (intentional or unintentional)? Perhaps intentional to support government concerns in avoiding conflict.

Why do you think this? Use examples from the text to support your answer. The report uses the same source twice - "The magma is rich in ashes. This confirms that a new magma eruption has occurred at the site," established a scientist from the Tokyo VAAC (Volcano Ash Advisory Centre)"; and "It is expected that the crater will not provide a major threat, since, according to the Tokyo VAAC, "activity generally calms down and the emissions usually become strong steaming, rather than continual full-blown magma emissions."

What is the effect of this bias? For example, does it persuade? Does it cause you to question the information? Explain why. The information is presented as factual and persuades the reader to accept that the volcanic emissions are not troublesome.

Bias in the op-ed: The op-ed is biased against the government. It includes the author's opinions with reference to one article and one past event.

What type of bias is this (intentional or unintentional)? Intentional, as the article is written to persuade.

Why do you think this? Use examples from the text to support your answer. The author uses emotive language, rhetorical questions and quotes part of a source, "Well-prepared? For medical emergencies? I doubt it."; "In a recent article in the online journal PubMed, a journal on public medicine, researchers noted that Japan's general hospital system was not adequate for large scale emergencies. If the volcanic activity suddenly increases and people suffer breathing difficulties and other related illnesses, there will be little room for them to receive medical care in our local hospitals. The hospitals are already crowded, with nurses and doctors being run off their feet."

What is the effect of this bias? For example, does it persuade? Does it cause you to question the information? Explain why. The writer encourages us to think about an alternate viewpoint with her persuasive language. She also encourages further research to check her sources.

Page 12

Answers will vary but students should demonstrate

1. Evidence of research;
2. Use of persuasive language;
3. Coherent text using a paragraph structure such as TEEL – Topic sentence, Example, Explain, Linking sentence.