Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Main Ideas & Summarize

Read the short story and answer each question.

When Tsunamis Strike

Tsunamis are giant waves caused by powerful shifts in the ocean floor. Most tsunamis happen after **underwater earthquakes**, but they can also be caused by landslides or volcanic eruptions beneath the sea. The sudden movement pushes huge amounts of water, sending waves racing toward the shore.

At sea, a tsunami may seem small, only a few feet high. But as it nears land, the ocean becomes shallower, and the wave **rises and speeds up**. Tsunamis can reach heights of over 100 feet and move faster than a jet plane. When they crash into land, they can destroy buildings, sweep away roads, and cause major flooding.

Scientists called **seismologists** study earthquakes and tsunamis. They use underwater sensors and satellites to detect early warning signs. If they detect a tsunami, they send alerts to coastal areas so people can evacuate.

Some places have **tsunami warning systems**, including loud sirens and emergency broadcasts. Coastal communities also run practice drills and post signs showing evacuation routes. These actions can save lives when every minute counts.

Tsunamis are dangerous and unpredictable, but with science, planning, and education, communities can prepare and respond more effectively.

Name:

When Tsunamis Strike

1. What is one main idea of the text?

A. Tsunamis are caused by sudden shifts in the ocean floor.

B. Tsunamis only happen during thunderstorms.

C. Tsunamis are the same as hurricanes.

D. Tsunamis can only happen in cold climates.

2. What is another main idea from the text?

A. Scientists and communities work together to detect and prepare for tsunamis.

B. Most tsunamis happen in the desert.

C. Tsunamis are stopped by tall buildings.

D. Tsunamis cannot be predicted or studied.

3. Fill in the blank:

A tsunami can travel faster than a _____ as it moves across the ocean.

4. What details support the idea that tsunamis are powerful and dangerous natural events?

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5. Summarize this text using both main ideas and at least two supporting facts.

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Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: U
Lexile Level: 925L-1075L
Grade Level: 5th Grade, Middle of the Year
Genre: Informational – Earth Science

Introducing the Text

"This nonfiction article explains what causes tsunamis and how scientists and communities prepare for them. Students will identify two central ideas, connect them to supporting evidence, and summarize the passage clearly and concisely."

Vocabulary: tsunami, earthquake, seismologist, evacuation, warning system

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you already know about tsunamis or natural disasters?
2. Why might it be important to warn people quickly during emergencies?
3. What kinds of tools or systems might help scientists predict disasters?

During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What causes a tsunami to become more powerful as it nears land?
2. How do scientists detect and track tsunamis?
3. What systems do communities use to warn and protect people?

After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What are the two main ideas of this passage?
2. Which details help support each main idea?
3. Why is this information important for people who live near the ocean?

Activity Idea

Have students design a visual "Tsunami Safety Poster" that includes both a scientific explanation and a community safety plan. Each poster should include two main ideas from the passage and one supporting detail or image for each.