



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2007 Volume IV: The Science of Natural Disasters

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## **Natural Disasters: An Adventure in Non-Fiction**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.04.12  
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Many teachers in primary grades are teaching in self-contained classrooms, generally focusing on literacy and math. I would like to build background knowledge for teachers to feel comfortable teaching about our Earth and its natural disasters, and performing experiments to build understanding. Often as teachers we do not have specific training or knowledge of a content area. My goal with this unit is to bring science into classroom reading.

First-grade students come to school in the fall ready to learn to read. During their young lives they have heard stories read to them or told to them. This type of literature, fiction, is their first introduction to reading, through modeled story-telling. I would like students to be introduced and aware of the genre of non-fiction. Through the excitement of learning about earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, and tornadoes, the students can transfer that excitement to the reading, consequently learning. Non-fiction surrounds us in daily life - newspapers, maps, assembly instructions, recipes, signs. Teaching students to read non-fiction is essential as we teach them to develop as readers.

My hope is that this curriculum will excite students about the natural world and spark some curiosity to learn more. It is important for children to see that science and reading are connected.

(Developed for Reading and Science, grade 1; recommended for Reading and Science, grades 1-2)

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