



Classroom Guide

Title: **Hill of Fire**

Author: **Thomas P. Lewis**

Illustrator: **Joan Sandin**

Theme: An exploration of one of Mother Nature’s most awesome spectacles, the volcano, reveals how the Earth was created.

Program Summary: Based on the true story of the eruption of the Paricutin volcano in Mexico, a volcano is born in a poor farmer’s cornfield. At Volcano National Park in Hawaii, LeVar is only 2000 feet from a major eruption of Kilauea. He explains why volcanoes occur and describes two kinds of lava. Viewers learn what is inside the earth that causes volcanoes, as LeVar talks to volcanologists who are learning to predict eruptions. LeVar also visits an artist who creates raku pottery.

Topics for Discussion:

Before watching, ask students what they know about volcanoes and make a list of their responses. Revisit this after watching the episode.

Why did the villagers give the volcano the name, “El Monstruo” (The Monster)? Discuss with students the villagers’ lack of understanding about what was happening.

Discuss why volcanologists would be interested in the Paricutin volcano. (Because few people have ever witnessed the formation of a volcano, they can learn more about how it happens.)

Curriculum Extension Activities:

In the program, LeVar introduces viewers to many vocabulary terms associated with the earth and volcanoes. For students to understand these words more fully, divide the class into small groups. Have one group make a large cutaway drawing of the earth, showing the inner core, outer core, mantle, and crust. (Before they make the drawing, they might be interested in knowing that when representing the Earth with a four-inch diameter circle, the crust would be less than the width of a pencil line. This fact will help them to figure, proportionally, how relatively thin the Earth’s crust is.)

Have another small group make a large cutaway drawing of a volcano, labeling all the parts, including the magma chamber, vents, lava flow, layers of lava and ash from previous eruptions, and the cone.

Have a third group prepare an illustrated glossary of terms, including those used by the groups making the drawings of the Earth and volcano, as well as other words from the program and their research on volcanoes. These terms might include pumice,



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pahoehoe, aa, seismograph (or seismometer), dormant, active, extinct, crater, and additional terms they find interesting. Display the glossary along with the drawings.

Provide books about volcanoes for students to look through for information about famous eruptions, such as Paricutin (Mexico), Mount St. Helens (Washington state), Vesuvius (Italy), Mount Etna (Sicily), Mauna Loa and Kilauea (Hawaii), Krakatoa (Indonesia), Surtsey (Iceland), and others. (Encourage them to research online, watch the evening news and newspapers for word of any active volcanoes.) Have them locate the sites of these volcanic eruptions on a map of the world and mark the spots with word labels.

Discuss with students whether the story, *Hill of Fire*, is fact or fiction. (It is a fictionalized account of an actual event.) Have them find details about the event and complete a chart: Who? (Dionisio Pulido); What? (had a volcano erupt in his cornfield); Where? (near the small village of Paricutin in Mexico); When? (February 20, 1943); Other facts? (The cone of the volcano grew to 35 feet overnight, 150 feet by midday the next day, and 460 feet within a week. Paricutin and another village were destroyed, but no lives were lost. Over 2000 people had to move away.)

Divide the class into cooperative groups to report Paricutin's eruption on the television news. Students might interview the farmer and his son and some townspeople about what is happening. They might interview a volcanologist about the activity. A reporter might be on the scene describing the eruption as it happens. A newscaster might be in the studio, showing the site on a map and providing information about other volcanoes that have erupted. A reporter might interview the farmer a year later to see what his reactions are to the volcano and his new life. Allow the groups to rehearse and then present their reports to the rest of the class.

Have students research Hawaii. Look at maps of the islands. Investigate the climate and agriculture. Locate photographs of the scenery. Have a tasting party of fruit that grows there. Read Hawaiian folktales and listen to Hawaiian music. Invite someone who is of Hawaiian descent or has lived in Hawaii to speak to your class.

Supplementary Booklist:

Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes by Manlio Argueta, illustrated by Elly Simmons

Volcanoes by Franklyn M. Branley, illustrated by Marc Simont



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Volcanoes by Michele Ingber Drohan

Volcano: The Eruption and Healing of Mount St. Helens by Patricia Lauber

Volcanoes: Mountains That Blow Their Tops by Nichola Nirgiotis, illustrated by Michael Radencich

Volcanoes by Seymour Simon

Volcano & Earthquake by Susanna Van Rose

Related Themes:

- natural disasters
- rocks and minerals
- islands

Related Reading Rainbow Programs:

- Program #66 — The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth
- Program #86 — Come A Tide

About the Author: Thomas P. Lewis was born in Mt. Vernon, New York, and is a graduate of Columbia University. He began writing children’s books while working for a publishing company in New York. Fascinated by the circumstances surrounding the eruption of Paricutin in Mexico, he wrote *Hill of Fire* as an “I Can Read Book.”

About the Illustrator: A native of Tucson, Arizona, Joan Sandin is the author/illustrator of additional books in the “I Can Read” series. The illustrations for *Hill of Fire* were sketched at the actual Paricutin site.