



The Year Without a Summer

1 In 1816 the weather went crazy. Summer forgot to come to North America and Europe. Many people thought it was the end of the world.

Hot days were followed by freezing days. The temperature jumped up and down. Sometimes big changes happened on the

same day. Often days went from 35°C to almost zero — just in a few hours! This caused huge problems for everyone. Thousands of people froze to death.

2 North America was in trouble. Crops were buried under snow. The price of corn and oats doubled, then doubled again and

again. Many of the poor could not buy food. People starved. Many families moved to the Midwest looking for a new start.

Things were worse in Europe. Napoleon had led France in a war against many of its neighbours. The war was over, but food was short. Poor summers had also added to this shortage.

With no food in the shops, there were fights in the streets. In France and England crowds raided grain stores, taking the food they needed for their families. People felt helpless.

- 3 So, why didn't summer come in 1816? Was it a new Ice Age? No. The answer is very simple.

Mount Tambora, an Indonesian volcano, had erupted over a period of ten days. It blasted huge clouds of dust into the sky. These clouds covered the Earth in a thick blanket. Sunlight could not break through the dense layer of dust. Temperatures quickly fell in many countries.

That summer it snowed in North American cities. Italy also had snow, but it was red! Hungary reported brown snowfall. This was from high levels of volcanic ash in the skies. Rivers froze over. It seemed the weather had gone mad.

- 4 Tambora did have some help in causing all this. Two other large volcanoes had

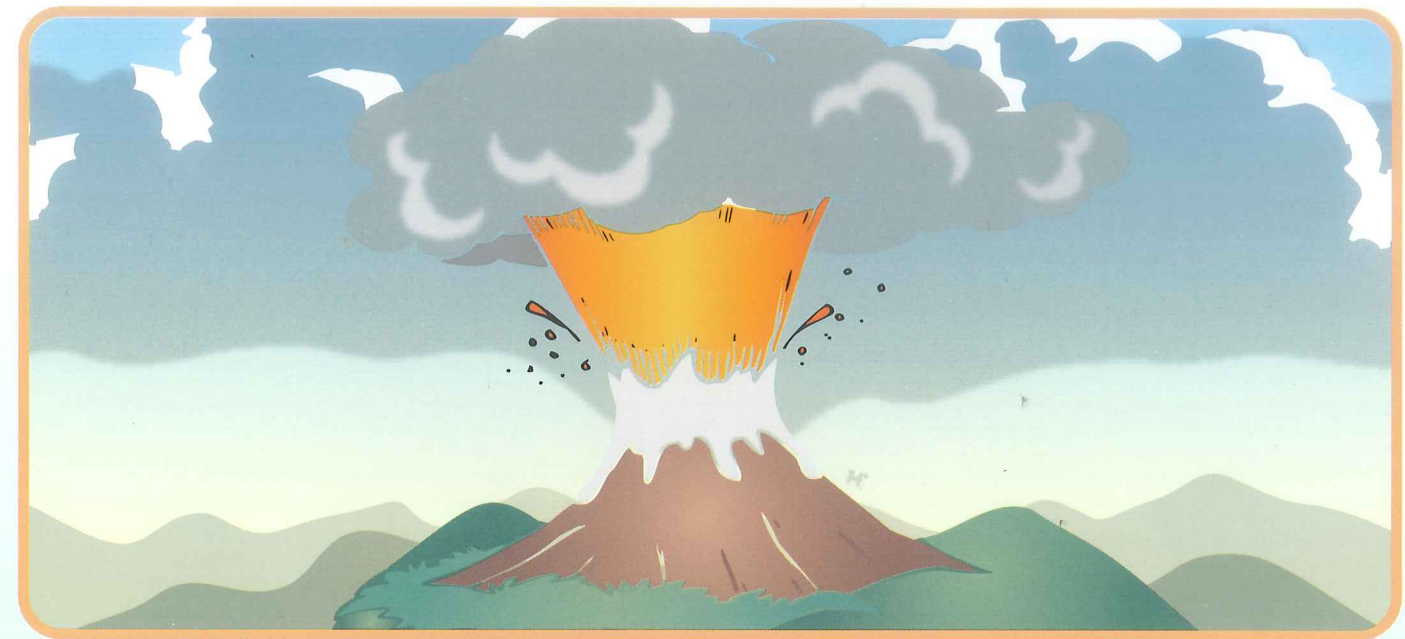
erupted earlier. One in 1812 and the other in 1814. These had already filled the sky with some dust. Tambora was the just the last, and biggest, of the three.

The year 1816 — known as the “Poverty Year”, “The Year Without a Summer” and also “Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death” — did have a good side.

- 5 Some friends were on holidays in Switzerland. Outside, the weather was so bad they spent every day indoors. To pass the time, they held a contest to find the best horror story. Two stories won. These were Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and John Polidori's *Vampyre*, which are still read today.

Poor crops meant there was not enough food for horses. A German inventor, Karl Dreis, tried to think of a new way that people could travel. The result of his work was the invention of the *velocipede*. This was an early form of the bicycle.

It was also reported that Tambora gave everyone the most beautiful sunsets they had ever seen. Sunsets that weren't repeated until Krakatoa blew to bits in 1883.



Questions

- Tambora erupted in
 - 1812.
 - 1814.
 - 1816.
- Tambora was in
 - France.
 - Hungary.
 - Indonesia.
- Why was the snow a different colour?
 - It was very thin.
 - It was very thick.
 - It was full of ash.
- What was one of the best things to come from the summer of 1816?
 - Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*.
 - The motorbike was invented.
 - More people could go skiing.
- The strange beautiful sunsets often come after
 - it snows.
 - volcanoes erupt.
 - the temperature drops suddenly.
- Why was the food shortage worse in Europe?
 - It had more snow.
 - It was closer to Tambora.
 - It hadn't recovered from the war and had some poor summers.

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues.
The brackets show the text sections ().

crops summer sunset
starved contest

- 7 Had a lack of food (2)
- 8 Large amounts of plants (2)
- 9 A season (3)
- 10 An event where people compete for a prize (5)
- 11 When the sun disappears over the horizon (5)

Grammar

Find a **noun** (person, place or thing) in these sentences.

- 12 The weather was crazy in 1816.
- 13 Some friends were skiing.
- 14 This was an early bicycle.
- 15 There wasn't enough food.

Back To The Text...

- 16 In section 3 the word *huge* is used as
a an abverb. b an adjective.
- 17 In which part of the library would you find this text?
a fiction b non-fiction

- 18 Another good name for this text would be:
a Strange Snow
b The Poverty Year

Think About This

- 19 The illustration on page 3 probably shows
a one of the sunsets.
b Mt Tambora erupting.
c Snow in Hungary.
- 20 The Poverty Year of 1816 was caused by
a Mount Tambora alone.
b other volcanoes.
c a combination of reasons.
- 21 The main idea in section 2 relates to
a food shortages.
b the war in Europe.
c the move to the Midwest.
- 22 The word *shortage* in section 2 is best replaced with
a war. b decay.
c famine. d move.
- 23 The writer first looks at the lighter side of the Tambora eruption in
a section 3. b section 5.

Challenge Option

Writing: Write about what it would be like if it never rained.

