

Name: _____

I Survived The Great Molasses Flood, 1919



CLOSE-READING QUESTIONS AND LETTER-WRITING ASSIGNMENT

CLOSE-READING QUESTIONS:

1. What happened in Italy in 1908? How did it affect Carmen and her parents?

2. Why did Carmen and her father leave Italy and come to America?



3. How is the molasses in the giant tank used? Explain the process.

4. Why does Carmen end up living with the Grassos?

5. What does Carmen overhear the Grassos talking about that leads to a misunderstanding?
What is the misunderstanding?

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CLOSE-READING QUESTIONS AND LETTER-WRITING ASSIGNMENT *(CONTINUED)*

6. What is the first sign that the molasses tank is going to explode? What happens next?

7. What does being stuck in the molasses flood feel like to Carmen? What is it doing to her?

8. What helps Carmen when she is sinking into the muck like it's quicksand? What does she hear?

9. What does Tony tell Carmen about how the molasses company is explaining the flood? Why does it make Carmen angry?

10. When Nonna comes to Boston, what does she tell Carmen about bringing her back to Italy?

ANSWERS

CLOSE-READING QUESTIONS:

1. In 1908, a powerful earthquake struck the south of Italy, followed minutes later by a tidal wave. Carmen and Papa survived, but Carmen's mother was swept away.
2. Even several years after the earthquake, their village hadn't recovered fully. Papa realized there was no future there—Carmen's school still hadn't reopened, and it was getting harder for Papa to earn money as a farmer.
3. The molasses is sent to a factory where it's boiled down into industrial alcohol, and then used to make dynamite and bombs.
4. Papa gets sick with the deadly new flu that is spreading across the country. After he dies, Carmen goes to live with the Grassos.
5. Carmen overhears Mr. and Mrs. Grasso talking about a long, tough journey on ship that leaves in a week and thinks they're sending her back to Italy. But they're actually talking about the trip Carmen's grandmother is making, to come see Carmen.
6. First, the ground under the tank starts shaking. Then the tank starts making strange noises, and rocking back and forth, its sides bulging in and out. The metal groans and squeaks, and then the bolts start shooting out like bullets. Finally, the tank shatters apart, sending sheets of metal flying through the air.
7. The molasses is thick and gooey and feels like a thousand snakes wrapping themselves around her, pulling her down. Running becomes impossible as the molasses rises higher and hardens around her.
8. Carmen hears Papa's voice in her head, telling her to "Hold on," just like he did when they were in the tidal wave after the earthquake. He inspires her to keep going and not give up without a fight.
9. Tony tells Carmen that the molasses company is saying someone put a bomb in the tank, which is why it shattered. Carmen gets angry because everyone in the North End knew the tank wasn't built right, since it had been leaking from the moment it was built.
10. Nonna tells Carmen she can see that Boston—and the Grassos—are her home now, and that the Grassos would be sad if she left, especially Tony.

LETTER-WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Answers will vary.