

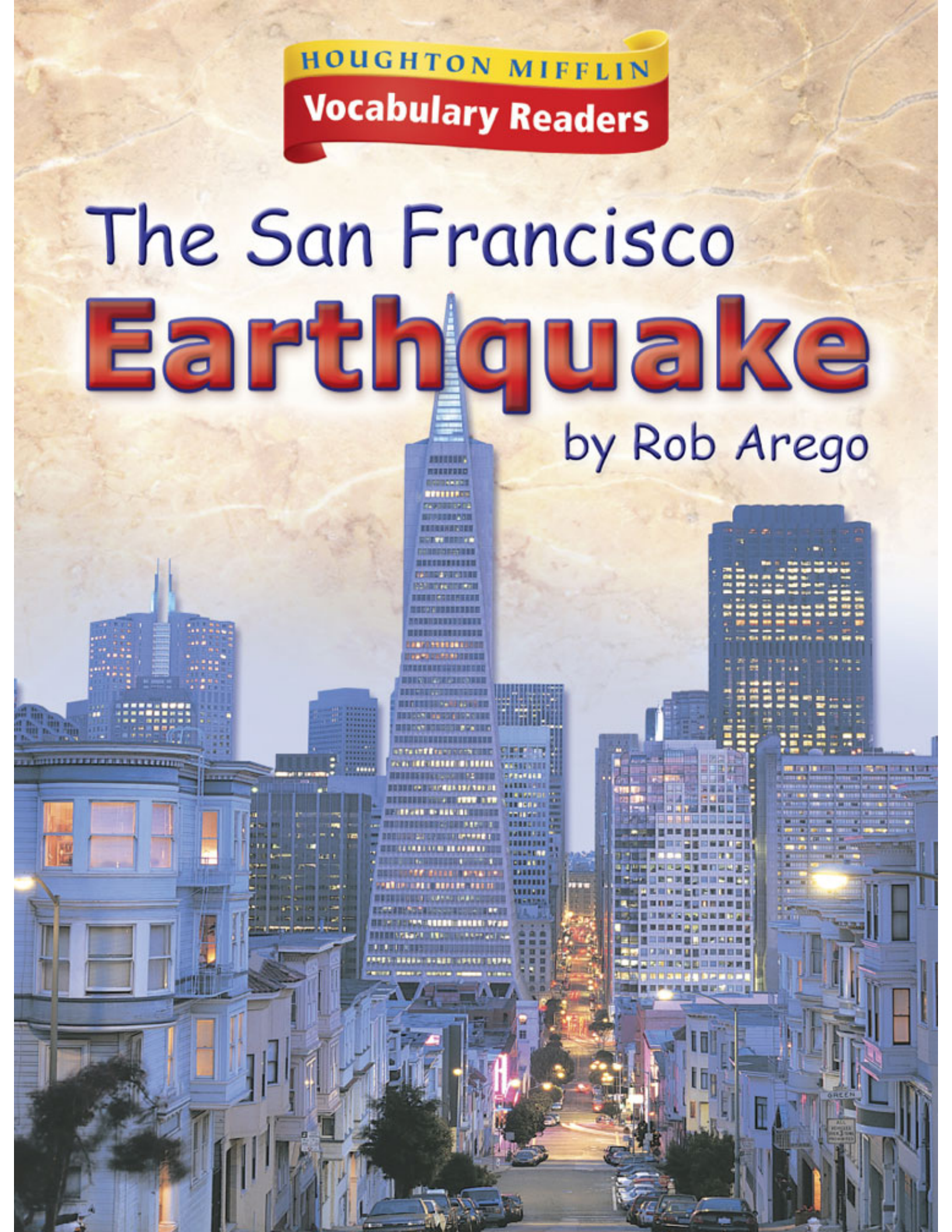
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Vocabulary Readers

The San Francisco

# Earthquake

by Rob Arego



# Number of Words: 618

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# The San Francisco **Earthquake**



by Rob Arego

## Strategy Focus

When an earthquake strikes a city, it can cause major problems. As you read, **predict** how the people of San Francisco will respond to the natural disaster.



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

## Key Vocabulary

**debris** what is left of something destroyed

**devastation** destruction or ruin

**earthquake** a shaking of the ground

**fault** a crack in the ground

**impact** the hitting of one thing against another

**jolt** a sudden jerk or bump

**shuddered** shook or vibrated

**susceptible** easily affected; at risk

**undulating** moving in smooth waves

**upheaval** a lifting or upward movement

### Word Teaser

When buildings crumble or forests  
burn, I am always left behind.

What am I?



Enrico Caruso

It was early on an April morning in 1906. At a hotel in San Francisco, California, a man was sleeping. He was the most famous opera singer in the world. His name was Enrico Caruso. The night before, he had sung at a nearby opera house.

Suddenly, a **jolt** shook the hotel. It felt like an explosion. Then the hotel started moving up and down, like a ship on **undulating** ocean waves.



When Caruso first felt the shaking, he thought he was dreaming. But the shaking didn't stop. Caruso jumped up and went to his window. What he saw made *him* shake, too.

San Francisco had been struck by one of the strongest earthquakes that ever hit North America.



The ground **shuddered** and shook for less than a minute. But for Caruso and thousands of others, the earthquake seemed to last for hours. Its force, or **impact**, was amazingly strong. Walls crumbled and crashed into the streets. Churches rocked back and forth. Church bells rang throughout the city.



Caruso dressed and ran out to the street. Debris and dust from the crumbled buildings lay everywhere. Streets and rail lines were twisted. Caruso walked through the streets for a long time. He didn't know where to turn. Finally, a man with a horse and wagon stopped and picked him up. He took Caruso and his belongings to a safe place.

Many people weren't as lucky as Caruso. Some were trapped inside their homes. Others were killed when buildings collapsed.





Soon after the first earthquake stopped, a smaller quake hit the city. A number of smaller quakes struck before the end of the day. Each one added to the **devastation** and destruction.

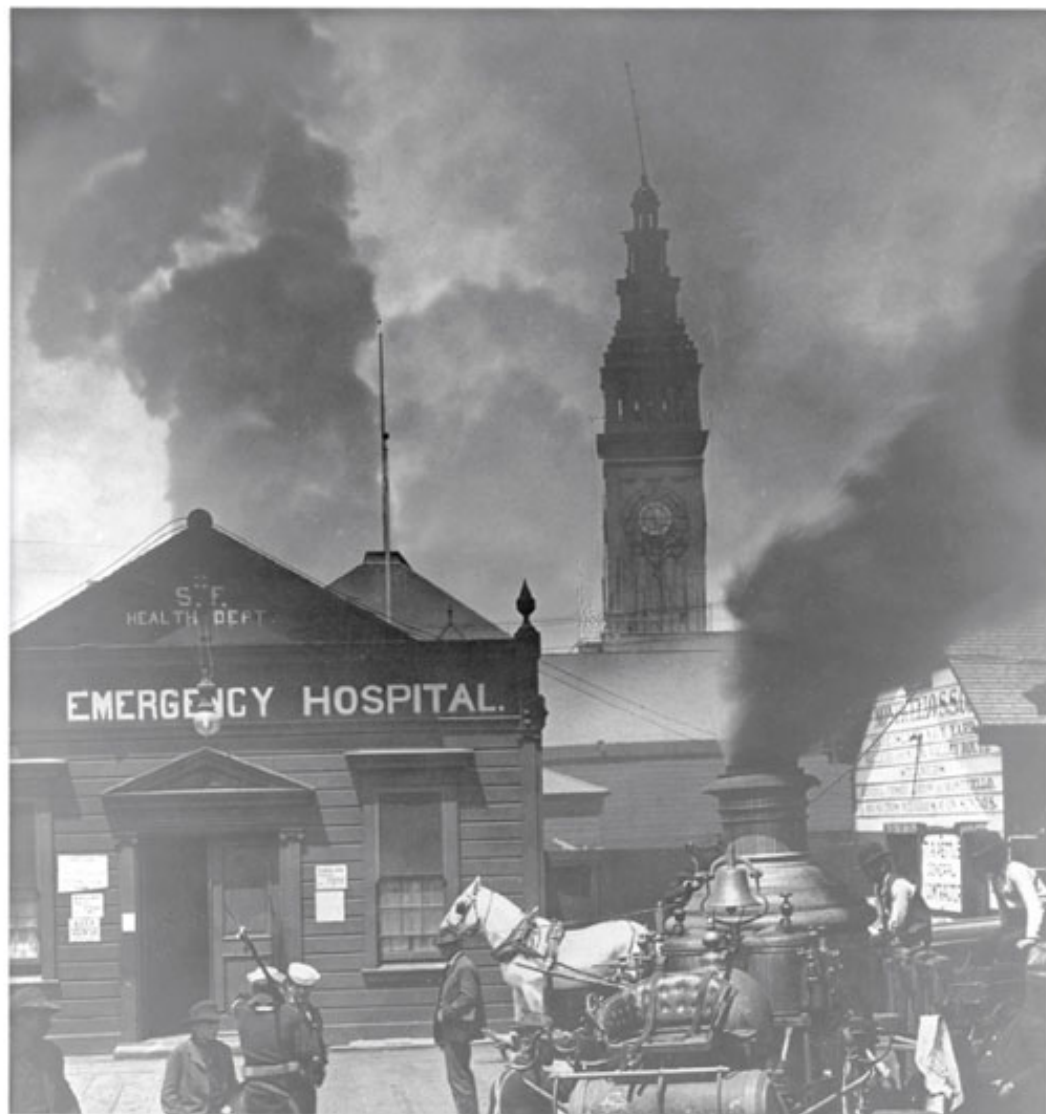


The quakes caused many more problems. The upheaval, or shifting of the ground, broke many gas pipes, wood stoves, and lanterns. That led to fires. The fires spread across the city.

Firefighters with horses and fire wagons hurried out into the streets. But when they hooked up their hoses to fire hydrants, no water came out. Most of the city's water pipes were broken. The earthquake had cracked them.



The city had some hidden water tanks for emergencies like this. Only a few people knew where the tanks were. The fire chief was one of those people. But the fire chief couldn't tell anyone. A smokestack had crashed into his fire station during the earthquake, and he was badly hurt.



The fires got out of control. Building after building went up in flames. Smoke could be seen from 100 miles away. By evening, thousands of people were homeless.



The fire went on for days. It destroyed almost 500 city blocks before firefighters got it under control. The fire burned down 30 schools, 80 churches, and thousands of homes. Much of San Francisco lay in ruins.



Within days, the people began to rebuild their city. Meanwhile, scientists began to study the earthquake. They wanted to learn more about what caused it. They wanted to prepare for the next one.



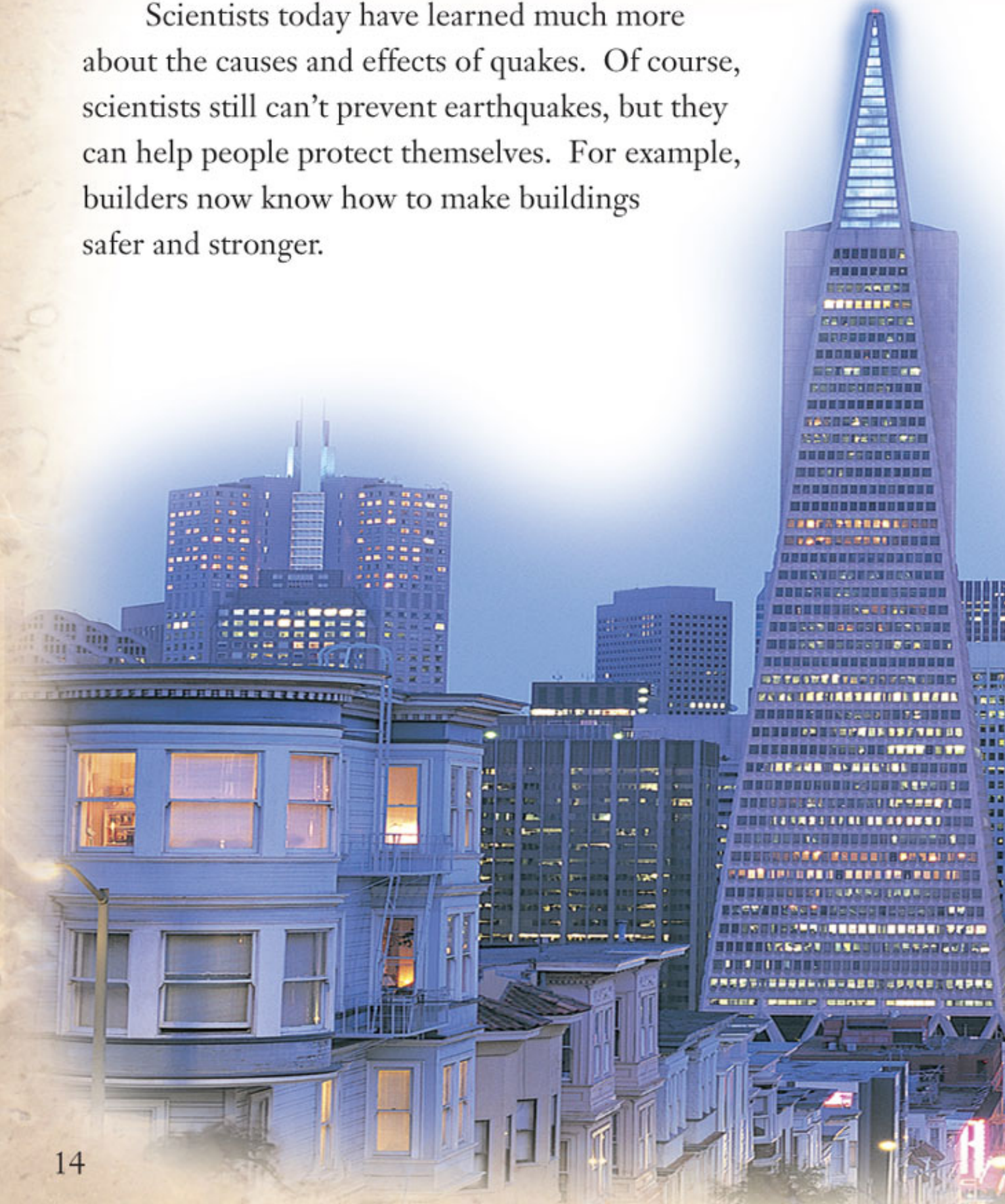
Scientists were especially interested in a crack in the earth called a **fault** that runs through California. The crack was where the earthquake began. Scientists now know that places on faults are very **susceptible** to earthquakes, or at risk for them.



Two huge pieces of the earth's crust slide past each other at the San Andreas fault. As they move, they sometimes cause the land to shift suddenly. That's when earthquakes happen.



Scientists today have learned much more about the causes and effects of quakes. Of course, scientists still can't prevent earthquakes, but they can help people protect themselves. For example, builders now know how to make buildings safer and stronger.





San Francisco was much better prepared when the next big earthquake hit the city, in 1989. This powerful quake did not cause as much damage as the earlier one.

Many people still call the 1906 earthquake America's greatest natural disaster.



## Responding

### Putting Words to Work

1. What kind of **debris** might you find in a city street after an **earthquake**?
2. Describe what happens in an earthquake, using at least two of these words: **undulating, impact, jolt, upheaval, devastation**
3. Is the area where you live **susceptible** to earthquakes? Why or why not?
4. Complete the following sentence:  
A **fault** is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

### Answer to Word Teaser

**debris**

## Word Builder

**Earthquake** is a compound word made up of the words *earth* and *quake*. Many other compound words have to do with natural events. Copy the chart below. Add an explanation of each word.

Compound Word	Explanation
earthquake	a trembling or shaking of the earth
thunderstorm	
landslide	
rainbow	

## Write About It

Choose one of the natural events you listed above. Write a paragraph describing it.

## Key Vocabulary

debris

devastation

earthquake

fault

impact force

jolt

shuddered

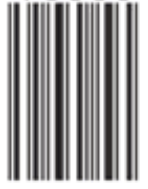
susceptible

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