

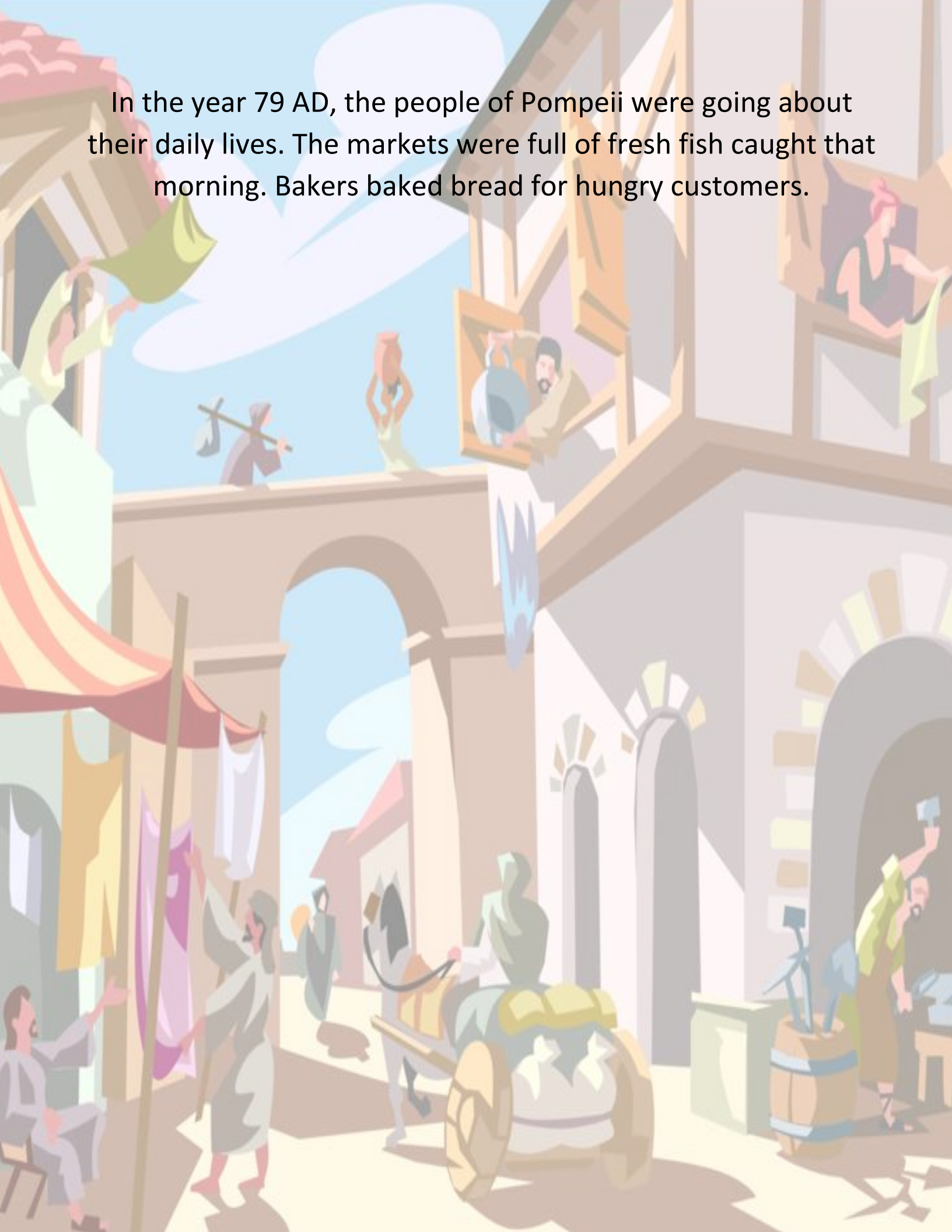


# Tales of Ancient Worlds

## In the Shadow of the Volcano



In the year 79 AD, the people of Pompeii were going about their daily lives. The markets were full of fresh fish caught that morning. Bakers baked bread for hungry customers.





Farmers made wine in the countryside, stomping grapes between their toes. It was a typical day in the Roman Empire, the ancient superpower that spanned Europe and the Mediterranean.



The citizens of Pompeii had no idea that their whole town would soon be destroyed, though a few residents might have noticed some suspicious warning signs.





A small earthquake had rocked Pompeii a few weeks earlier and wells across the town had gone dry. They might have wondered if these strange events had anything to do with Mount Vesuvius, the volcano that stood menacingly over the town.



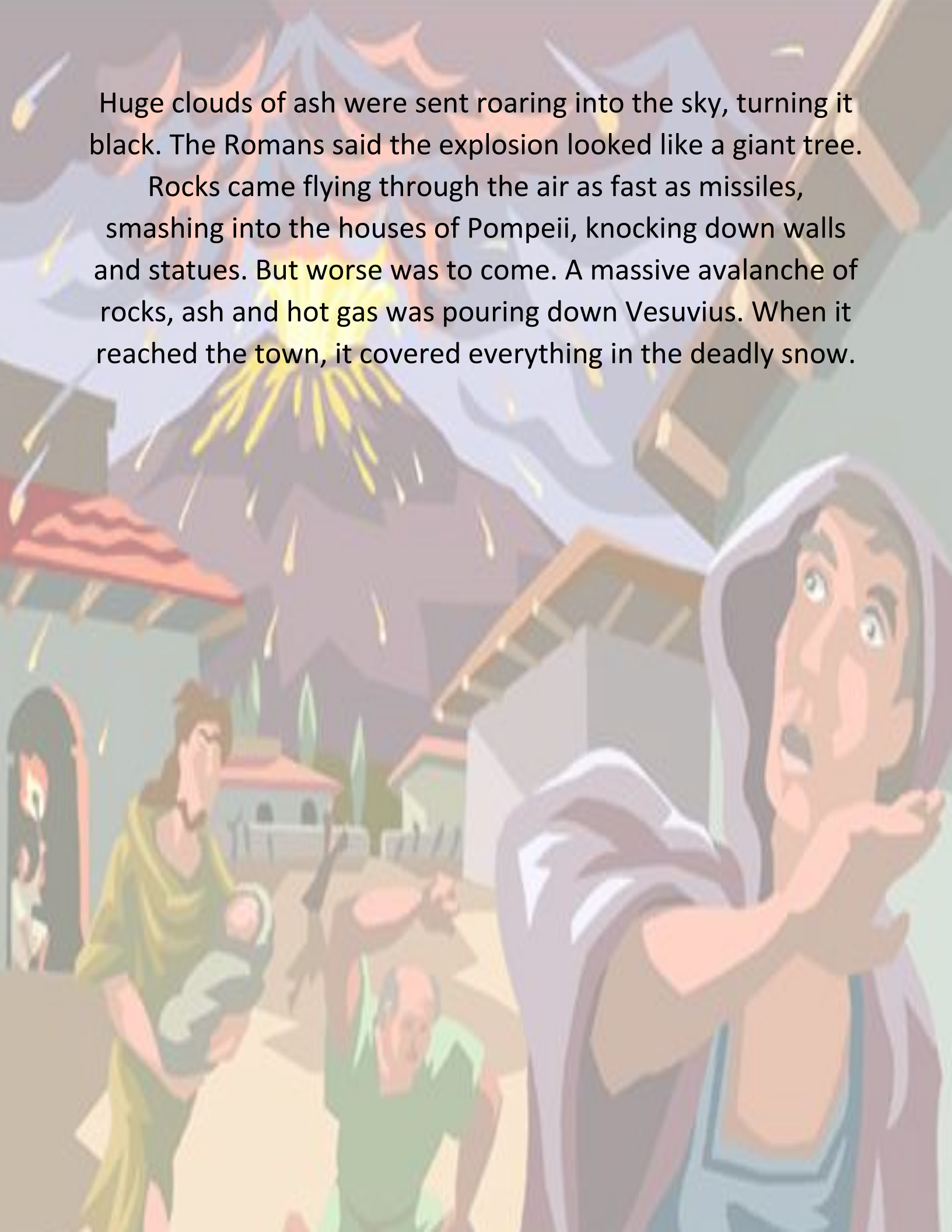
BOOOOM! Krraaaackkghgkck!! Vesuvius erupted, shaking the earth like a bowl of jelly! Glasses and pottery smashed, cats and dogs hid under tables and stairs, and people were thrown to the ground.





Huge clouds of ash were sent roaring into the sky, turning it black. The Romans said the explosion looked like a giant tree.

Rocks came flying through the air as fast as missiles, smashing into the houses of Pompeii, knocking down walls and statues. But worse was to come. A massive avalanche of rocks, ash and hot gas was pouring down Vesuvius. When it reached the town, it covered everything in the deadly snow.



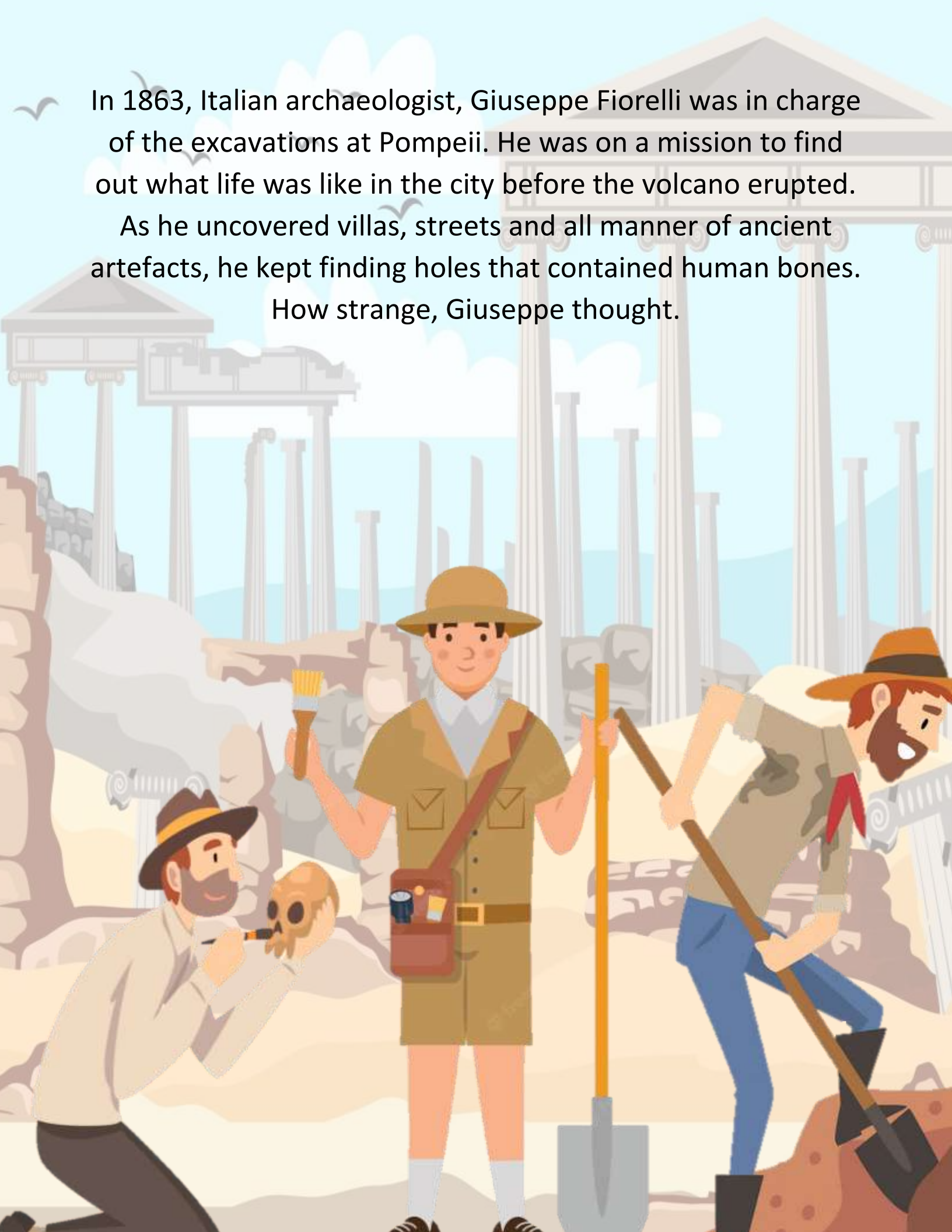
Houses, restaurants, animals, people – everything. Those who were lucky escaped on boats at the harbour. As they looked back at the raging volcano, they saw their town in ruins, vanishing before their eyes. It would be almost 2000 years before anyone would see Pompeii again.



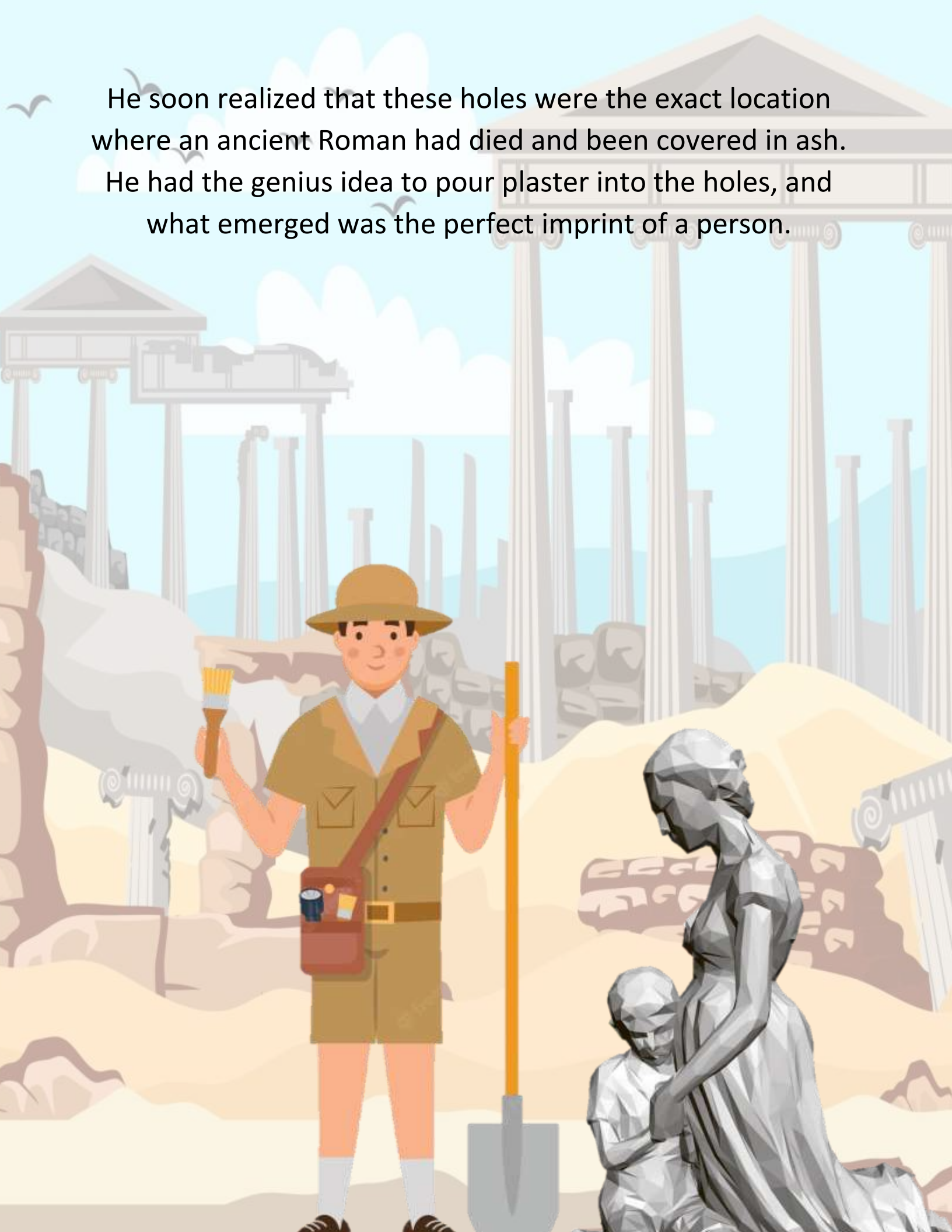


In 1863, Italian archaeologist, Giuseppe Fiorelli was in charge of the excavations at Pompeii. He was on a mission to find out what life was like in the city before the volcano erupted.

As he uncovered villas, streets and all manner of ancient artefacts, he kept finding holes that contained human bones. How strange, Giuseppe thought.

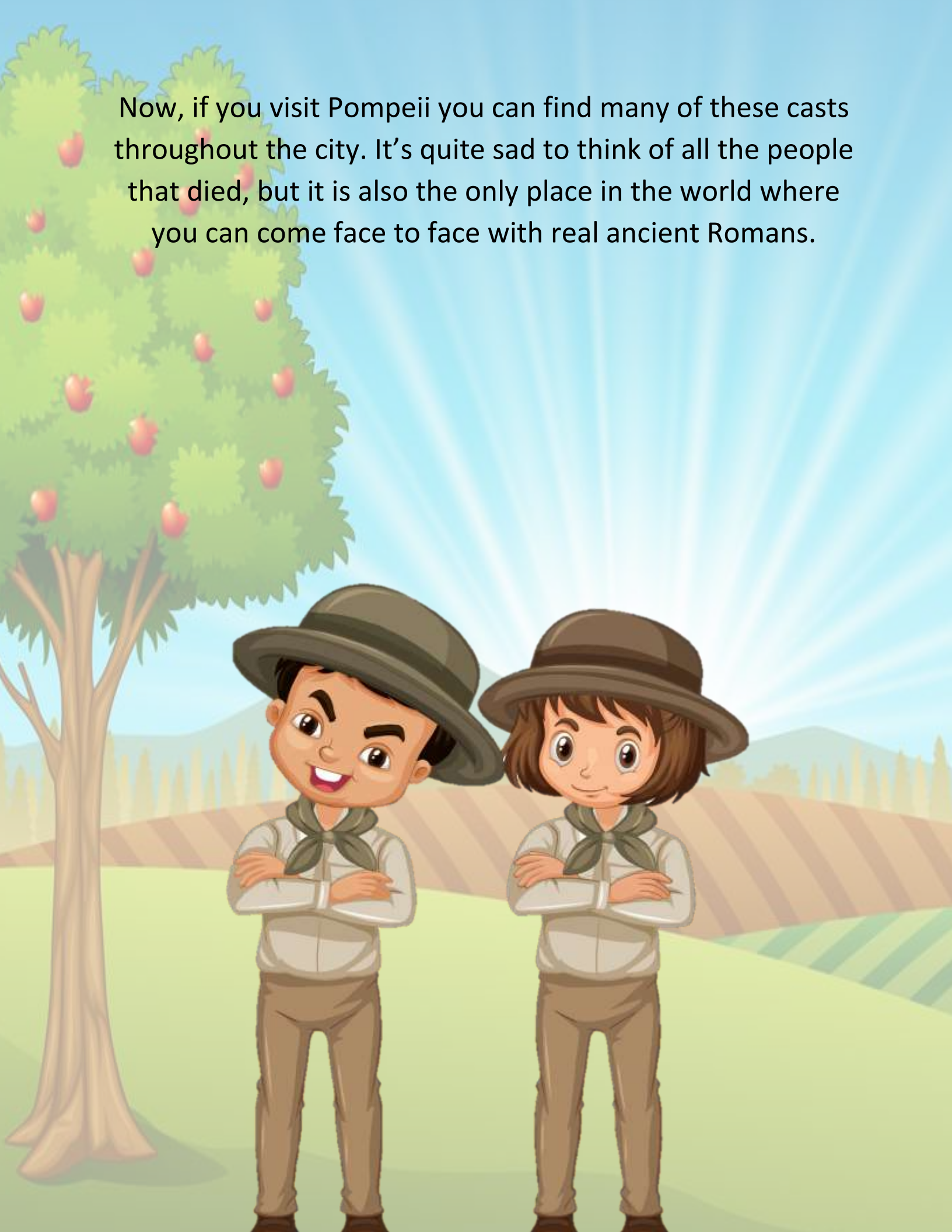


He soon realized that these holes were the exact location where an ancient Roman had died and been covered in ash. He had the genius idea to pour plaster into the holes, and what emerged was the perfect imprint of a person.





Now, if you visit Pompeii you can find many of these casts throughout the city. It's quite sad to think of all the people that died, but it is also the only place in the world where you can come face to face with real ancient Romans.



It's not just the bodies they found that make Pompeii such a special site. Lavish houses and streetside restaurants have been found with colourful paintings on the wall. Delicious round loaves of bread have been unearthed that were divided into eight pieces, as well as eggs with their shells intact. Archaeologists also discovered huge bronze gladiator helmets that protected fierce warriors while they were in combat.





They even found public toilets with 20 seats in a row, and no walls between them. You and all your friends could sit down and have a poo together. Romans would even share the same brush to wipe their bum!

Walls of a few of the buildings were covered in graffiti: some of it friendly, some of it funny, some of it really mean. The graffiti has even given archaeologist a clue to when Vesuvius erupted – probably sometime in October.



It's no exaggeration to say that Pompeii is one of the most extraordinary archaeological sites in the entire world. Nowhere else can provide us with so much information about life in the ancient world.





# The Warrior of Bover



The Caucasus Mountains, nestled between Europe and Asia, used to be a violent and wild frontier. In this area two worlds collided: the world of settled farming towns and the world of the grassy plains, or steppe, where nomadic people roamed on horseback.





The kingdoms here were almost always at war, fighting off nomadic raiders that sought to plunder their towns. As a result societies, like the Kingdom of Urartu, prepared everyone for war men and women alike.

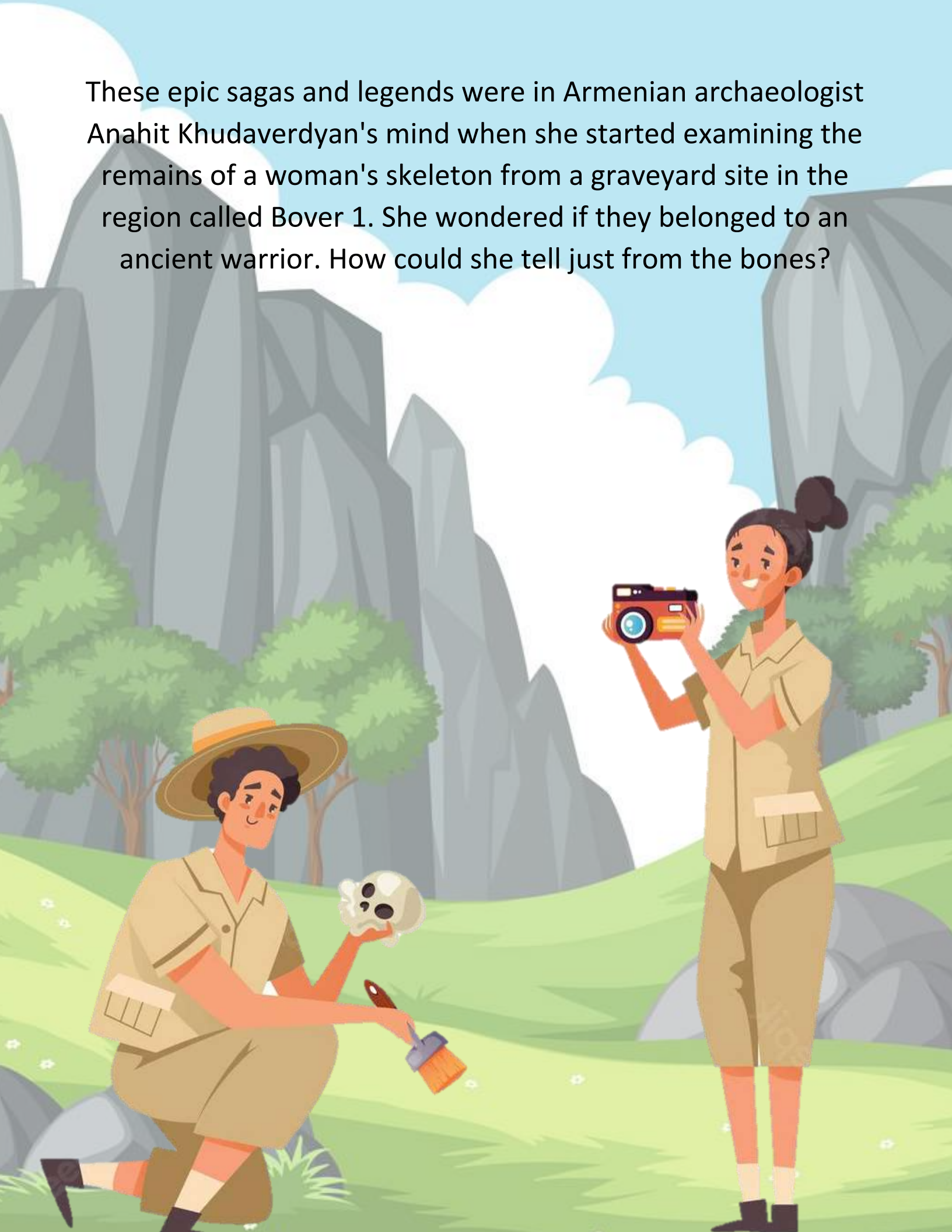


Exciting tales of the female warriors are recorded in local stories such as the Nart sagas, in which women were said to be able to "cut out an enemy's heart with their swift, sharp swords". The ancient Greeks also had tales of female warriors from this region, called Amazonians, who mastered martial arts.





These epic sagas and legends were in Armenian archaeologist Anahit Khudaverdyan's mind when she started examining the remains of a woman's skeleton from a graveyard site in the region called Bover 1. She wondered if they belonged to an ancient warrior. How could she tell just from the bones?



The first move was to date them. This woman, who the archaeologists called N 17, died around the year 700 BCE, during the time of the Kingdom of Urartu. So she definitely lived at the right time. Anahit looked at the bones more closely. If you exercise very hard, you will develop lots of strong muscles. These muscles leave marks on the bones where they're connected to them.





Finally Anahit could see injuries on N 17. At one point she had been shot in the leg. It didn't kill her because the bones healed around the arrow, but for the rest of her life she had an arrow in her. She also probably died from a wound on her hip, perhaps from some sort of sword. Putting all these pieces together, it is likely that N 17 was a warrior!



# The Trophies of the Celts





Thousands of years ago in Gaul (that's what the Romans called France), warfare was common. Different Celt chiefs vied for power and sometimes tribes would join together to raid the Greek colonies in southern Gaul. In 390 BCE, a Gaulish king named Brennus even captured Rome.



The celts were well known for many things, including their metalwork, blue body paint and mysterious druids. But they're probably most famous for their ferocious – and sometimes naked – sword-wielding warriors.





As a result of all this war, the Celts collected trophies to show everyone how tough they were. The most gruesome trophies of all were human heads.

Greek and Roman authors describe some of the gory Gaulish practices at the time. Apparently, the Celts would tie the heads of defeated enemies to their horses.



They would also cover the heads in a substance from pine trees, called resin, to preserve them. That way they could bring them out at special occasions for everyone to gawk at. Imagine being a kid back then? Instead of going to the cinema, you go to the town square to look at some fresh heads!





One problem, though, is that we sometimes don't know if the Romans and Greeks were exaggerating to make their enemies look bad, or whether the Celts really did this. To answer this question, Salma Ghezel and a team of scientists from France analysed the remains of ancient skulls found at Celtic sites. Pine resin is very, very VERY sticky. So even though it has been 2000 years ago, on fragments from 11 different skulls the team found the tiny, microscopic residue of pine resin.



So, it seems the Greeks and Romans were not exaggerating. If you angered a Celt, you had better watch out – or else your sticky head might end up on someone's mantelpiece.







# THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

