



The Ball and the Tsunami

"I was listening to the news on the radio this morning," Dale said. "There was an amazing story about a soccer ball and a tsunami."

"I know that soccer is a ball game. I know that a tsunami is a very large ocean wave caused by an underwater earthquake or volcanic eruption. Now tell me how the two go together," Lena said.

Dale answered, "A man named David Baxter was beachcombing in Alaska. He found a soccer ball that had washed up on shore. There were messages written in Japanese on the ball. The characters in the messages were still **legible**. Since Baxter could read them, he was able to do some investigating. He was able to track down the owner of the ball!"



Dale continued, "The ball belonged to Misaki Murakami. Misaki was a sixteen-year-old from Japan. The ball had been given to him five years before, when he was in third grade. He had moved schools, and the ball had been a parting gift from his schoolmates. His schoolmates had written his name and words of encouragement on the ball.

"Misaki lost the ball on March 11, 2011," said Dale. "That was the day a huge tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast. Misaki's village of Rikuzentakata felt the full force of the wave. All of Misaki's family's furniture was washed out to sea. All of Misaki's personal items were washed out to sea, too. Everything was lost. There was nothing left. Nothing remained from Misaki's past.

"So you can imagine Misaki's surprise when he got a phone call saying his ball was going to be returned to him. This phone call did not come from someone close. It did not come soon after the tsunami. That's because the phone call was from the United States. It was from David Baxter! It came 13 months after the tsunami! Misaki's ball had been floating on the Atlantic Ocean all that time! It had traveled over 3,000 miles. Despite the salt water and rough seas, the ball did not sink. In addition, the ink didn't wash off. The messages remained legible. They were so legible, in fact, that Baxter could use them to track down Misaki!"

"Let's see," Lena said. "The ball floated for 390 days and traveled a total distance of 4,828 kilometers. That means the ball traveled an average of 30 kilometers a day."

"I'm not sure that's entirely correct," Dale said gently. "Perhaps I can help you with your calculations."

"Please do," said Lena. "Then I'll help you with your geography. There is one thing in your story that you have completely wrong."

The Ball and the Tsunami (cont.)

What is it that both Dale and Lena need help with? It is time to check facts.

Thesaurus



1. List two synonyms for *legible*. _____
2. Write your name legibly and illegibly. (Hint: *illegible* means “not legible.”)

Legibly _____

Illegibly _____



Metric Converter

1. How many kilometers equals 3,000 miles? _____
2. Dale said the ball traveled over 3,000 miles. Did Lena agree? **Yes** **No**

Calculator



1. If the ball traveled for 390 days and went 3,000 miles, what is the average distance the ball traveled per day in miles and kilometers?
_____ miles _____ kilometers
2. Lena said it traveled 30 km per day. Was she right? **Yes** **No**

Atlas



1. Find northeastern Japan or Rikuzentakata, Japan. Then find Alaska. Circle the name of the ocean that separates the two.

Indian

Atlantic

Pacific

2. Did Dale name the correct ocean? **Yes** **No**

Search Engine/Encyclopedia



Key Words:

1. What event caused the tsunami on March 11, 2011? _____
2. What was the magnitude (number) of this event? _____

In Your Own Words

On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph about one or two personal items that mean a lot to you. Tell where you got them, what they are, how they look, and why they mean something to you. Tell how you would feel if you lost them.