

The sweet syrup disaster of 1919

Do you know what molasses is? (*No, I don't. / Yes, it's...*)

Vocabulary

1. leaking 2. stricter 3. disaster 4. tragedy 5. injured 6. burst

True Story

On January 15, 1919, a huge _____ happened in Boston. A big tank filled with molasses, a thick, sweet liquid, broke. The tank was as tall as a five-story building and held 2.5 million gallons (9.5 million liters) of molasses. It was not well-built. It was _____ and making strange noises, but it was still used.

When the tank _____, a huge wave of molasses, 5 to 12 meters high and 49 meters wide, rushed out. It moved quickly, destroying buildings and cars. The thick molasses made it hard for people to move and rescue others. Sadly, 21 people died and about 150 were _____.

Afterwards, a court ruled in 1925 that the company had to pay for the unsafe tank. This disaster led to _____ building rules. For years, people wondered how molasses could be so dangerous. In 2016, scientists found that the cold weather made the molasses thicker, which made the _____ worse.

Quiz

1. What was the tank filled with?
2. What did the huge wave of molasses do?
3. What did the disaster lead to?

True or False

- | | | | |
|---|------|--|-------|
| 1. The tank was used, even though it was leaking and making strange noises. | True | | False |
| 2. 150 people died and 21 were injured in the disaster. | True | | False |
| 3. A court ruled that the company had to pay \$1925 for the unsafe tank. | True | | False |

Conversation

- A: Did you hear about the molasses flood?
 B: Molasses flood? You're joking!
 A: No, it's true! A tank burst and molasses went everywhere.
 B: That sounds sticky and dangerous!
 A: It was. Lots of people got hurt.
 B: That's scary! I can't imagine being caught in something like that.

Discussion

1. Why do you think people continued to use the unsafe tank?
2. Do you think companies should be responsible for their mistakes?
3. What would you do if you saw a flood of molasses?
4. Have you ever heard of a strange disaster before?
5. Can you think of any other foods that could be dangerous?