

# Duck and Cover

DING. DING. DING. DING.

Peter and the rest of his 4th grade class dove under their desks and covered their heads with their arms.

After a few minutes, the bell rang again.

DING. DING. DONG. DING. DING. DONG

“Okay class, you can come out now,” said their teacher.

Peter dusted his pants off and sat back in his chair. The class went on as if nothing happened.

Two weeks later, the bell rang again.

DING. DING. DING. DING.

This time, Peter's class was at lunch in the cafeteria. There the students sat on the floor under the long tables. They waited for the ‘all is clear’ bell to ring.

Peter felt someone tap his shoulder.

“Do you have these drills often?” said Hugh, the new student from Florida.

Peter shrugged. “They’re duck and cover drills. We have them once or twice a month.”

Hugh crunched his brows together. “Duck and cover? What for?”

“Well,” said Peter, “they’re kind of like fire drills. But, instead of protecting us from fire, it’s to protect us from earthquakes.”

“Earthquakes?” said Hugh. “We didn’t have them where I lived.”

DING. DING. DONG. DING. DING. DONG.

The students crawled out from the tables and went back to eating lunch.

“It’s kind of scary, having to worry about earthquakes,” said Hugh.

Peter nodded. “Yeah. Hey, come over my house later and we’ll ask my older sister about it.”

At Peter’s house, the two boys asked Peter’s sister, April, what the deal was with the earthquake

drills.”

“Well,” said April. “Some earthquakes can be strong and may weaken a building’s structure. The school teaches you to drop to the ground, so you won’t be knocked down by the shaking. Then cover your head and neck with your arms to protect you from falling or flying debris. Being prepared and knowing what to do keeps you safe.”

Hugh’s face grew long. “This is pretty scary. What exactly is an earthquake?”

“Well,” said April. “There are plates, or layers of stone, near the surface of the earth. Sometimes those plates shift suddenly and cause tremors and shaking.”

April put her arms around the boys. “Don’t worry about it. That’s why they prepare us in school, so everyone knows what to do.”

“You sure?” said Peter.

“I’m sure,” said April.

That put Peter and Hugh’s minds at ease.

“Come on, Hugh,” said Peter. “Let’s go to the park and play some ball.”

**Questions**

1. Why did the school have drills?
2. Compare how Peter and Hugh each felt about the situation
3. How did April put Peter and Hugh's minds at ease?
4. What causes an earthquake?