**8th Grade Earth Science**

**Literacy Fusion Article: “Experts Believe There Is No Relation Between Recent String Of Earthquakes Along 'Ring Of Fire'”**

 Over the last few weeks, earthquake activity seems to have increased dramatically. First there was the 5.2 magnitude shaker in Los Angeles on March 21st. Then came the more intense, 8.2 magnitude quake near Chile on April 1st, followed by one that measured 5.8 in magnitude the day after, in Panama. While they may all appear to be isolated incidents, the shakers do have one thing in common - They all occurred in locations along the dreaded 'Ring of Fire', the world's most active earthquake and volcano belt. Not surprisingly, this has led many people to speculate whether they are related and if there is something even more deadly, on the way. Given that earthquakes are not predictable, there are of course no guarantees, but most experts believe that there is no correlation between the three.

 According to John Vidale, a seismologist with the University of Washington, the earthquakes which are spread out a distance of 2,000 miles, are simply too far apart, to be connected. He also believes that the chances that they will be followed by more intense aftershocks is a very slim 5%. That's because if past history is any indication, aftershocks tend to be around the same size or just a tad bigger. That could have proven catastrophic for Chile, but fortunately it did not happen. The aftershock that rattled the country on late Wednesday measured in at 7.6 magnitude on the Richter scale and did not seem to have caused any additional damage. What's even more heartening is that while the original 8.2 earthquake did result in the evacuation of 928,000 people and cause structural damage to 2,500 homes, the loss of life was relatively low. So far it seems that only six people, four of who are believed to have died of a heart attack, lost their lives.

 Thanks to the hot malleable lava that lies below the Earth's crust the tectonic plates are constantly in motion. This means they often rub against or collide with each other. As a result, the plates sometimes get stuck together and pressure starts to build in the locked areas. When one these stuck sections suddenly gives away, the land tremors, resulting in what we call, earthquakes.

 The 'Ring of Fire', a 40,000 km horseshoe-shaped area that lies on the edge of the Pacific plate is the biggest and therefore most active of the nine tectonic plates that cover the Earth's surface. Not surprisingly, this is also where 90% of the world's quakes occur. The cities most susceptible to the whims of the tectonic plates around this 'Ring of Fire' include populated cities like Santiago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Tokyo and Lima.

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