



# Maggie's Activity Pack

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Haiti: A Country in Need

*On January 12, 2010 a big earthquake shook the country of Haiti. The center of this earthquake was close to the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Thousands of people were hurt or died. Soon aid started to pour into the country. The people of Haiti will need support for a long time. Where is this country? What did it look like before the earthquake? Read on to find out more.*

### The Geography of Haiti

The Republic of Haiti is found on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. It shares this island with the Dominican Republic. Haiti is the third largest country in the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic is the second largest country. Cuba is the largest country.

Haiti has tall mountains and beautiful river valleys. Many birds live in Haiti's mountains. Thousands of plants grow here, too. But, unfortunately, in recent years Haiti's forests have been cut down. This has caused erosion. Adding to the troubles of Haiti are big hurricanes. These have hit Haiti during the last few years. They have meant flooding and mudslides.

### Troubled History

Haiti has had a troubled history since Christopher Columbus "claimed" the area for Spain. Europeans brought diseases to the island. Those who lived on Haiti were forced to work for these rulers. Soon people from Africa were brought to Haiti as slaves. Later, France took over parts of the island. In the early 1900s, the United States occupied Haiti. In recent years, Haiti has had many political troubles.

### Education in Haiti

Even before the earthquake, many organizations were working to help Haiti. This country is one of the poorest countries in the Americas. About 80% of people live below the poverty level. About half of the people cannot read or write. Many children do not even reach sixth grade. Like other developing countries, children are needed to work at home and on the family farms. Organizations from many countries are trying to build schools. These agencies also run orphanages and offer food to those who need help.

### Need for Help

Haiti has been a country in need of support. Now with the earthquake, the people of Haiti need even more help. Many organizations are rushing to support this island nation. How can you help?

## Thinking About Haiti

*Think about the facts in the article. Think about the people of Haiti. Then write complete sentence answers to these questions.*

1. What happens when trees are cut down? What does this mean for both people and the environment?

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2. As you read, strong hurricanes have hit Haiti. How might these storms have hurt this country?

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3. Many children leave school before sixth grade. Others may not attend at all. How might this lead to problems?

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4. In California there are codes to make sure buildings will stand in an earthquake. Imagine buildings and homes in Haiti. Why do you think so many buildings were destroyed?

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Think about these questions: What made this earthquake so terrible? What might make relief efforts difficult? Have a class discussion. Share your ideas.

Dear Colleague,

Like you, we at Maggie's Earth Adventures, were saddened to hear about the terrible earthquake that hit Haiti on January 12, 2010. We knew you would be talking about this tragedy with your students and wanted to help you educate your class about this country. As you are aware, Haiti is a country that has struggled both historically and in recent years. In discussing this issue with Mason Bryant Howard, our Executive Director, we thought about Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Unlike stage theorists, Vygotsky suggests children can and will understand "big" ideas if we ask the correct questions and get them closer and closer into the "zone" where this thinking can take place and will result in critical conclusions. We knew it would be important for your students to better understand the many factors that must be taken into consideration as rescue teams make their way to this island nation. So, while the final questions might seem advanced, we carefully planned the preceding questions to get your students into the ZPD to better consider the "big" ideas. Below, we offer some thoughts to these questions and even suggestion for scaffolding questions to help you guide your students.

1. Deforestation means that soil is more easily eroded. If this is all your students say, you can follow-up by asking what soil erosion might mean for the amount of food being grown. Students should be questioned to result in the idea that this erosion means farms will not produce the number of crops necessary to both sustain a family and sell any excess. This leads to greater poverty. You can then ask if they would stay on a farm that wasn't growing enough food or if they would go in search of a job. This may have led to even more crowding in the city, Port-au-Prince, where the earthquake struck.
2. Recent storms mean that many buildings, roads, and coasts are already damaged, making them even more vulnerable to the effects of the earthquake. You may want to talk about climate change. Scientists tell us that storms, like the hurricanes that hit Haiti, will become more severe due to our changing climate. Encourage children to consider how this impacts people in the poorest nations who often must build shelter using poor building materials.
3. Ask children to think about all they are learning because of this activity. Children who do not go to school do not have these opportunities. They may not understand the role of deforestation or of climate change. Additionally, during the relief effort, it is likely that pamphlets and signs will be posted explaining the help that is available. Those who cannot read will be at a disadvantage as they struggle to find the necessary assistance.
4. Depending on the background information of the students in your class, you may need to show them photos of homes in Haiti. Discuss how these homes do not have steel beams, etc to help protect against earthquakes thus resulting in a great deal of devastation.

It is our hope that the above questions and answers will lead to a meaningful discussion in your class that helps children understand the immense devastation in Haiti. As we write this activity, there are many relief efforts being mobilized. Please let us know what your school is doing!

Thank you,  
Kathy and Mason

**Goals:**

Students will read an article that briefly explains the history, geography, environmental factors, and current situation in Haiti. Follow-up questions are designed to get students into the Zone of Proximal Development so they can critically consider why the consequences of the Earthquake of 2010 are so severe for this island nation. This activity is available on the primary and intermediate levels and correlates with the National Social Studies Standards: Culture; Power, Authority, and Governance; and Civic Ideals and Practices.