

John Muir Study Guide
Science Lesson Plan
Grade Six
John Muir on Earthquakes

Earthquakes can be one of the most devastating natural disasters on Earth. While in Yosemite in 1872, John Muir experienced a tremendous earthquake that struck the east side of the Sierra Nevada mountains, one of the largest earthquakes to hit California in recorded history. Again in 1906, he felt one of the most devastating earthquakes to hit California in recent times at his home in Martinez. This was the Great San Francisco Earthquake which occurred when there was significant movement along California's San Andreas Fault.

Excerpt from *Our National Parks* by John Muir (1901):

"At half-past two o'clock of a moonlit morning in March, I was awakened by a tremendous earthquake, and though I had never before enjoyed a storm of this sort, the strange thrilling motion could not be mistaken, and I ran out of my cabin, both glad and frightened shouting, 'A noble earthquake! A noble earthquake' feeling sure I was going to learn something. The shocks were so violent and varied and succeeded one another so closely, that I had to balance myself carefully in walking as if on the deck of a ship among waves, and it seemed impossible that the high cliffs of the Valley could escape being shattered. In particular I feared that the sheer-fronted Sentinel Rock, towering above my cabin would be shaken down and I took shelter back of a large yellow pine, hoping that it might protect me from at least the smaller out-bounding boulders. For a minute or two the shocks became more and more violent--flashing horizontal thrusts mixed with a few twists and battering explosive upheaving jolts -- as if Nature were wrecking her Yosemite temple, and getting ready to build a better one."

Source:

http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/

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