

Title (up to 20 words) - A grave Mistake

Strapline (up to 40 words) - A horrible disaster leading to the death of 144... and it was all preventable.

I'm starting in Inmedia Rez.

Copy (between 900 and 1000 words) -

The ground seemed to be panting, the walls surrounding me shook vigorously and the world around me

slowed. It took seconds.... Probably less than seconds for the classroom door to be broken down by such a force that continued to chase after us students locking us within the unstable facility of what was once a warm and welcoming classroom. Days seemed to pass before the violent shaking of the ground came to ease and something other than a continuous sound of passing rubble was heard, but once it happened a new sound took over my senses, filling my mind to the brim of passing out. A high pitched ringing seemed to embrace the room of which I was captured in, my own thoughts could not be heard. The ringing continued for what felt like a lifetime before I could hear my breath echoing off of the debris enclosing me, before I could hear the quiet whimpering of children, before I could form my own string of coherent thoughts.

“What was happening? Where was Winnie? Has anyone died? Where were my friends? Was Winnie dead? Were my friends dead? Where were mum and dad? Has everyone died? Would I die?” The tragic thoughts kept occurring, my head spinning as I tried to remember my whereabouts in the classroom. I looked for the door where the room number would be written but to no avail did I find anything. I looked for any standout wall display to only be met with a faceful of heavy smog, clouding up my lungs causing me to cough and splutter into my hand and to scrunch my eyes up in hopes of freeing my sight from the blackness dimming my view. As my senses all slowly returned, I was hit with an overwhelming sensation of pain, radiating from my left leg; the pain was uncomparable to anything I had ever felt before. After observing the injury, of which was down to a chair leg lodging its way just above my knee cap, I decided that my best options were to either leave it alone and just deal with the pain, or to rip the sleeve off of my long sleeve shirt and use it as a bandage to limit blood loss after removing the chair leg. Either way, I understood that I would be incapable of putting much weight onto my leg, but it was better than not having a leg.

I tried to stand.... The pain only intensified, but I needed to get out, I needed to find my parents and tell them I was okay, I needed to find Winnie and I needed to make it out alive. On my way to hopeful safety, I found several of my classmates lying motionless on the floor, half of their bodies unrecognisable due to the sheer amount of rubble which had made its home onto their corpses. It wasn't just students who were dead either, there lay my teachers, their wrinkled faces now at peace, no longer strained with troublesome students. I fell to the ground, finally allowing the immense pain and sadness to fully course through my body, finally allowing the long awaited tears to run like rivers down my dirt covered cheeks and onto the remains of my friends of whom I

had known all of my life. I gave up. Hope was gone. I no longer had the will to try. I patiently awaited death, begging it to swallow me whole and accept me into its cold embrace.

A couple more hours passed before I finally heard a muffled voice echoing through the disaster, they were calling out names. The names of my deceased friends, the names of my dead teachers. "Teddy? Penelope? Sophia, is anyone there? Alastair?" It took a while for the realisation to hit me that they were here to help, I tried to call out, tried to alert them that I had survived but there was no noise, just a faint cry. "Did you hear that?! Is someone there? Please tell us your location or call out!" I made the same noise, this time I was found. I clung onto their luminous yellow jackets as they freed me from the nightmare which had captured me, my leg was wrapped with clean and crisp bandages, carefully and I was finally passed to my parents. Their faces stained with tears and newly formed wrinkles from the worry. I cried into my fathers shirt and breathed in my mothers perfume, I felt safe. No longer was I trapped, I had been freed. Unlike so many of my classmates, unlike so many of my teachers...

"Where is Winnie? H-have they found her yet?" my uneasy voice wavered through the crying crowd. My parents didn't answer, but they didn't have to. Their eyes said it all, my mother only cried harder at her mention, my father just brought me closer to him. I know what they were thinking, I knew they were thinking the exact same thing I was. I begged and prayed that my thoughts would remain thoughts and never turn to reality. We stayed at the site of the disaster for hours following my rescue, families came and went bearing the bad news of their loved ones being found dead. Mothers cried, fathers wept, older siblings clung to their parents and younger siblings asleep in their parents arms. It had been seven hours and the paramedics were now dragging the lifeless bodies out of their miserable resting places. At the 47th body, a devastating cry resonated from my mother, she flung herself onto the newly presented body and refused to be taken away from her demised 6 year old daughter, Winnie Williams. Her curly blonde hair matted around her, a dry trail of blood trickling from her nose and her mouth slightly agape. Her eyes were closed, in a strange sense.... She looked peaceful. I like to think that she didn't suffer and that she died quickly without realising what was happening.

This is my take on the Aberfan disaster following the story of (a made up character) 11 year old Alastair Williams. I hope you enjoyed it.

Kind regards Aimee Carr, Longdendale High School.