Roman Pompeii

At 1:00 P.M. on August 24, A.D. 79, Mount Vesuvius, a long-dormant volcano overlooking the Roman city of Pompeii, suddenly erupted. Within hours this lively and beautiful city became an ash-covered tomb. Two thousand people died; the survivors fled—never to return.

For almost two thousand years Pompeii's villas, sculpture, paintings, temples, and marketplaces remained buried and untouched. When archaeologists uncovered the city they even found bread, baked that day, in the ovens. The ruins show us that everyday life in Pompeii was like ours today. Houses even had watchdogs; they had warning signs done in mosaic tile that say CAVE CANEM—Latin for "Beware of Dog."

In their atrium, a Pompeian mother and daughter stare in shock at the towering column of fiery ash pouring from Vesuvius.

1. A mosaic is made of little squares of colored ceramic tile. It was a very popular form of art in ancient times, especially in Rome. Designing a mosaic is simple. First sketch in the basic shape of the dog. Then break up the figure into small squares. Do the same with the background. Notice that the rows of mosaic pieces follow the form of the dog.

2. After you've drawn all the squares (it takes time) add tones of gray or color to create the full picture. But first try this idea. On a copy machine make copies of your basic mosaic drawing. Now you can experiment with different colors and still have your basic drawing. Another idea: enlarge your picture and fill it with squares of colored paper instead of paint.