



## **Language of the Earth: Exploring Natural Hazards through a Literary Anthology**

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This paper explores natural hazards teaching and communications through the use of a literary anthology of writings about the earth aimed at non-experts. Teaching natural hazards in high-school and university introductory Earth Science and Geography courses revolves mostly around lectures, examinations, and laboratory demonstrations/activities. Often the results of such a course are that a student 'memorizes' the answers, and is penalized when they miss a given fact [e.g., "You lost one point because you were off by 50 km/hr on the wind speed of an F5 tornado."] Although facts and general methodologies are certainly important when teaching natural hazards, it is a strong motivation to a student's assimilation of, and enthusiasm for, this knowledge, if supplemented by writings about the Earth. In this paper, we discuss a literary anthology which we developed [*Language of the Earth*, Rhodes, Stone, Malamud, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008] which includes many descriptions about natural hazards. Using first- and second-hand accounts of landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and volcanic eruptions, through the writings of McPhee, Gaskill, Voltaire, Austin, Cloos, and many others, hazards become 'alive', and more than 'just' a compilation of facts and processes. Using short excerpts such as these, or other similar anthologies, of remarkably written accounts and discussions about natural hazards results in 'dry' facts becoming more than just facts. These often highly personal viewpoints of our catastrophic world, provide a useful supplement to a student's understanding of the turbulent world in which we live.