Winchester, Simon. *Krakatoa, The Day The World Exploded: August 27, 1883.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.

On August 27th, 1883, the world’s most destructive volcanic eruption of modern history took place and killed thousands of people. Simon Winchester, the author of *Krakatoa, The Day The World Exploded: August 27, 1883,* believes that this event was the first to be “observed, recorded, and experienced” throughout the world. Is that to be true? With the evidence provided, Simon’s claim to his statement of worldwide exposure is true. Evidence from before the disaster, during the disaster, and after the disaster proves the impact of one eruption on the world.

Krakatoa is located on the island of Java in Indonesia and was seen as not a threat. A Dutch pilot by the name Waghenaer was the first to have located an area where the mountain was approximately located (Winchester, 27). Before modern technology, there was no way to record data of events that could be accessed in the future. It was mostly from word of mouth if something occurred. In the area of the Sunda Strait, there was no “record” of any volcanic activity or earthquake activity in that area of 1680s. Although on inspection, it seemed to have evidence of some kind of activity in the area. However, if other ships have no record of anything happening, it is easy to fabricate a story pending on the purpose (Winchester, 50). In February of 1883 , the rains were especially dreadful. Roads became impassable and dangerous (Winchester, 149). That time when the year started was considered peaceful in the amount of natural disasters they had recorded from January to May (Winchester, 153).

The evidence above shows that before in the 1600s up until 1883, the year of the eruption, people were not expecting what was to come their way. Nothing was recorded so that it was made public for everyone in the area and in some cases the data presented was fabricated. People did not know when something was meant to be documented and that is dangerous for the future to not know what to expect. This goes to show that before the event nothing was set in stone when it came to recording and observing data that has information for the future.

On the day that is known for the infamous disaster that was Krakatoa, three ships were in the area and recorded what they experienced. The first to sense something happening was the German corvette, *Elizabeth.* The corvette was returning home from being in Japan and China. It had to stop and ready for the next part of their trip in late May. By the time it was close to Java was the day of the eruption (Winchester, 156). Captain Hollman was the first to record the beginning of the event that explained the rumbling in the region (Winchester, 156). On the british ship, *Actaea,* The sky went from a green cloud to a ball of ash and dust, creating a sliver affect once the sky set. The *Zeeland*, a ship going back to Holland, was sailing past Krakatoa when her compass dial when crazy. Steam and debris came up from the island, followed by a noise compared to a machine gun. The captain saw a black cloud. The only method to alert someone was through a series of colored flags, since the radio was not invented at that time (Winchester, 159). The ships had a battle with the rising smoke and ash-infused air.

At the time, the rumbles were the only felt through the city and it was not the typical short spurts like an earthquake. Dr. Van der Stok eventually understood the type of rumbles presented and recorded the times of them to understand what to expect from the volcano (Winchester, 161). At that time the telegraph was functional and was used at this time. A telegraph was used to send reports of the event to those who needed to be there to assess what was happening. In the city, they used the gasometer to measure the times of the stages of the event taking place. What they did not know was how far the volcano would effect.

This shows how the public responded during the event and their efforts to document what was happening. Winchester uses these accounts to show the perspective of the people around the volcano when it happened and how it affected their lives. This also shows the use of advanced technology, by using the telegraph, to get the information where it needed to be in a timely manner. Through the advancement of technology, things could be documented quicker. THe gas pressure system helped to solidify the times of the stages of the event which is crucial to understanding what could happen next. This goes to show how the advancement of technology impacted the eruption and the information documented during the event.

What was thought to be the worst was quickly changed when the ocean became involved. The volcano had went beyond itself and slid into the ocean. From that collison, tsunamis were created to continue the havoc. The city of Ketimbang was one of the victims of the waves. The whole city was overtaken by the waves and many suffered like the Beyerinck family (Winchester, 230). It was not just Java that was in danger. It extended to the Philippines, Mexico, and Italy. What made the victims of this devastation was how the eruption got to them. A lot of the damage was done by clouds of sulfur-dioxide gas was spread and choked the victims to death. From the tsunamis, it drown those that stood in its way. What was a leading cause in the Krakatoan case was the thermal energy that took the lives of its victims. When the damage had finally passed, those who left had to bury the ones who did not make it. The Dutch had came in with a relief program to rebuild what was lost, but the people were no longer going to accept the Dutch (Winchester, 318, 320). After the event of Krakatoa, was the rise in Muslim related attacks. This created a political and religious movement. No one really knew what started the eruption, but what we can pinpoint it to today is the tectonic-plate theory.

Simon Winchester in the aftermath of the destruction used accounts of the victims to explain the effects of the devastation. From after the volcano eruption, to the start of the tsunamis, and lastly the aftermath, he shows how each step as impacted Java and the surrounding countries. The records, observations, and experiences have shaped what one volcano can do to so many people. The experience in the case of the people of Java sparked a change in their relationship with the Dutch. From what was presented from the past has shaped the impact that one geological event has done to the world. That being said, nothing has been more significant than Krakatoa on the rest of the world for that time period.