My Earthquake Experience in Tokyo (by Andrew Pateras)

About the passage

Read to understand

A. Answer these questions with reference to the context.

1. Where was the writer at this time?
   Ans. He was lined up at Bullet Train ticket counter to enquire about a trip to Nagoya.

2. What made him act his way?
   Ans. Violent shaking of the ground made him act his way.

3. What did he compare the experience to?
   Ans. He compared the experience to the deck of a ship being tossed by swells.

4. What was he reminded of at this moment?
   Ans. He reminded of the World Trade Center crashing to the ground at that moment.

B. Answer these questions.

1. What was the writer’s response to the rumbling initially? Why?
   Ans. The writer ignored the rumbling initially, as did everyone around him because it was almost imperceptible, like a subway rumbling through a tunnel far beneath his feet.

2. Why was the writer still uneasy even though he was in a park?
   Ans. The writer was still uneasy even though he was in a park because the ground continued to tremble, although less violently.

3. The writer says making his way back was an epic journey. What does he mean by this?
   Ans. By saying this, he meant that his journey was adventurous and unforgettable. This was so because the rail system in Tokyo was completely shut down, millions were trying to make their way home on foot and the streets were gridlocked.

4. Why does he say that this was the most harrowing experience in his life?
   Ans. He says that this was the most harrowing experience in his life because he saw hundred-storey buildings sway like palm trees in the wind as the earth revolted beneath his feet.
5. What further shocking information did he get later in the day?
Ans. The writer came to know later that the quake was of magnitude 8.9, the strongest earthquake to hit Japan in recorded history. The coastal areas of Japan, especially a few hundred miles to the north, were devastated beyond recognition by a tsunami.

6. Why do you think the writer says ‘Now I’ve seen it all’?
Ans. When the writer says ‘Now I’ve seen it all’, he wants to assert that he has witnessed many frightening days but the earthquake of magnitude 8.9 in Tokyo has been the most catastrophic event of his life. He saw hundred-storey buildings sway like palm trees in the wind as the earth revolted beneath his feet.

Discuss and write
1. What options did the commuters have after the rail system was shut down? What would you have done if you were in that situation?
Ans. After the rail system was shut down, the commuters did not have any option but to make their way home on foot. If I was in that situation, I would have done the same thing.

2. What reactions to the disaster did Andrew observe in the people?
Ans. Andrew observed mixed reactions that disaster had on the people of Tokyo. Some people were visibly shaken. There were a few women crying, people pointing up at the buildings as they shook, but many others appeared calm and relaxed.