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apocalypse noun

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apoc-a-lypse | \ə-ˈpā-kə-ˌlɪps\ plural apocalypses

Definition of apocalypse

- 1 a : one of the Jewish and Christian writings of 200 b.c. to a.d. 150 marked by pseudonymity, symbolic imagery, and the expectation of an imminent cosmic cataclysm in which God destroys the ruling powers of evil and raises the righteous to life in a messianic kingdom
b capitalized : REVELATION sense 3
2 a : something viewed as a prophetic revelation
b : ARMAGEDDON
3 a : a large, disastrous fire : INFERNO
// Most foresters agree that small, "prescribed" burns, carefully controlled, are essential to prevent the larger apocalypse. — Lance Morrow
b : a great disaster
// an environmental apocalypse

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Synonyms for apocalypse

Synonyms calamity, cataclysm, catastrophe, debacle (also débâcle), disaster, tragedy

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Examples of apocalypse in a Sentence

// His book tells of an environmental apocalypse.
// The fear that the next global pandemic could be an apocalypse of biblical proportions

Recent Examples on the Web

// The way out of this confusion is neither feel-good solutionism nor submitting to the apocalypse. — Liza Featherstone, The New Republic, 22 July 2021
// Simply put, this is an experiment in zombie storytelling that no one else is even close to, not even Black Summer's sibling show, Z Nation, which took a much more comedic bend to the apocalypse. — Paul Tassi, Forbes, 21 June 2021

These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'apocalypse.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. Send us feedback.

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First Known Use of apocalypse

before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at sense 1a

History and Etymology for apocalypse

Middle English Apocalypse "Revelation (the New Testament book)," borrowed from Anglo-French, borrowed from Late Latin apocalypsis "revelation, the Book of Revelation," borrowed from Greek apokalypsis "uncovering, disclosure, revelation," from apokalyp-, stem of apokalyptein "to uncover, disclose, reveal" (from apo- APO- + kalyptein "to cover, protect, conceal," of uncertain origin) + -sis -SIS

NOTE: Greek kalyptein is associated in older handbooks with Indo-European *kel- "conceal" (see CONCEAL), though neither the vocalism nor the supposed extension *-up- are easily explicable.

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Time Traveler for apocalypse

The first known use of apocalypse was before the 12th century. See more words from the same century

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"Apocalypse." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apocalypse. Accessed 28 Aug. 2021.

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apocalypse noun

English Language Learners Definition of apocalypse

: a great disaster : a sudden and very bad event that causes much fear, loss, or destruction

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