

Reading Strategy:
After reading each section
of the story, tell a friend
what you read.



Hurricane By Christen Brownlee Hunter

The plane sped through the sky. Rain pelted it. Winds bounced it. Dark clouds swirled ahead of it. Inside, the plane's crew rocked back and forth. They got ready for a stormy adventure.

One of the crew members, Chris Landsea, tightened his seat belt. He knew he was on a wild ride. The plane was flying into Hurricane Katrina.

At the time, the storm seemed like any other hurricane. The crew had seen many others. They are hurricane hunters. They fly into storms to study them. They didn't know that Katrina would become famous.

FLYING THROUGH

Why does Landsea care about hurricanes? He is a meteorologist. He is a scientist who studies weather. He also warns people whether a hurricane will strike near them.

He looked out one of the plane's windows. Katrina worried him. The powerful storm was nearing New Orleans. This city was built along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Much of it was below sea level. A large hurricane could sink it.

Katrina was becoming a super storm. It was 668 kilometers (415 miles) across. That is much bigger than New Orleans. That is bigger than many U.S. states.

Wind and Water

Katrina's winds whipped around at 278 kilometers (173 miles) an hour. That's as fast as a race car.

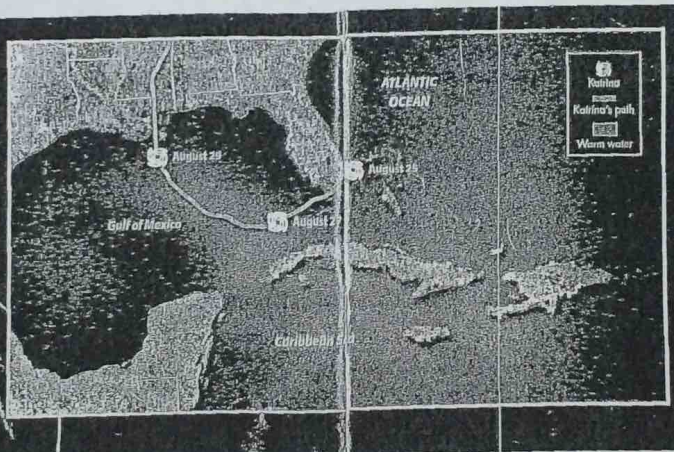
Wild winds can rip roofs off buildings. They can blow away houses.

Yet wind isn't the only part of a hurricane that causes damage. Water can be even more dangerous than wind. A hurricane can cause a storm surge. This is a tall wave made by a storm. This giant wave can sink a city.

Part of New Orleans was already built below sea level. A storm surge could flood the city.

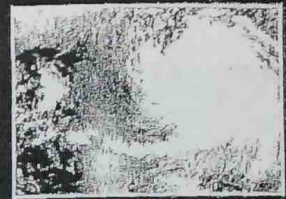
Warm Water, Strong Storm

Warm water makes a hurricane bigger and stronger. The water in the Gulf of Mexico in August 2005 was unusually warm. It turned Katrina into a super storm.



Growing Problem

As Katrina blew over the warm Gulf of Mexico, it grew bigger and stronger.



August 25, 2005. Hurricane Katrina forms. Its winds are 129 kilometers (80 miles) an hour.



August 27, 2005. Katrina gains strength as it travels over warm water. Its winds are 185 kilometers (115 miles) an hour.



August 29, 2005. Katrina's winds blow at 217 kilometers (135 miles) an hour as it nears New Orleans.



This family looks for a place to live in New Orleans several days after Katrina hit. The storm destroyed many people's homes.

Storm Warning

Landsea had to find out if the storm would pass over New Orleans. If so, people needed to know. They needed to pack and get ready. They needed to evacuate, or leave their homes.

To find out where Katrina would go, the hurricane hunters took measurements. They measured wind speed and they measured wind direction. Then they studied the measurements. They learned that Katrina was heading for New Orleans. They had to let people there know.

The news spread quickly. Radio and TV stations warned people. Officials told people to evacuate the city.

Deadly Disaster

Thousands of people fled New Orleans. Not everyone could leave the city, though. Some stayed in their homes. Others went to shelters. They thought they would be safe in the shelters.

The hurricane hunters were right. Katrina slammed into New Orleans. Wicked winds blew away homes. The storm surge flooded parts of the city. The surge was as high as a two-story building. More than 1,000 people died in the storm.

Katrina was large. It was deadly. It was a monster storm, and it may not be the last one. Global warming may trigger stronger storms.



A Coast Guard officer scans the ground from his helicopter. He is looking for storm survivors.

Stronger Storms?

Global warming is a rise in Earth's average temperature. It heats the land, air, and oceans. Hurricanes form only in warm ocean water. The water must be at least 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius). Warmer water could make stronger hurricanes.

Are hurricanes getting stronger? No one knows for sure. Meteorologists need to learn much more about how these storms form. They are learning from big storms such as Katrina.

"We still don't understand what makes hurricanes go," says Landsea. "The more we learn, the better prepared we will be."

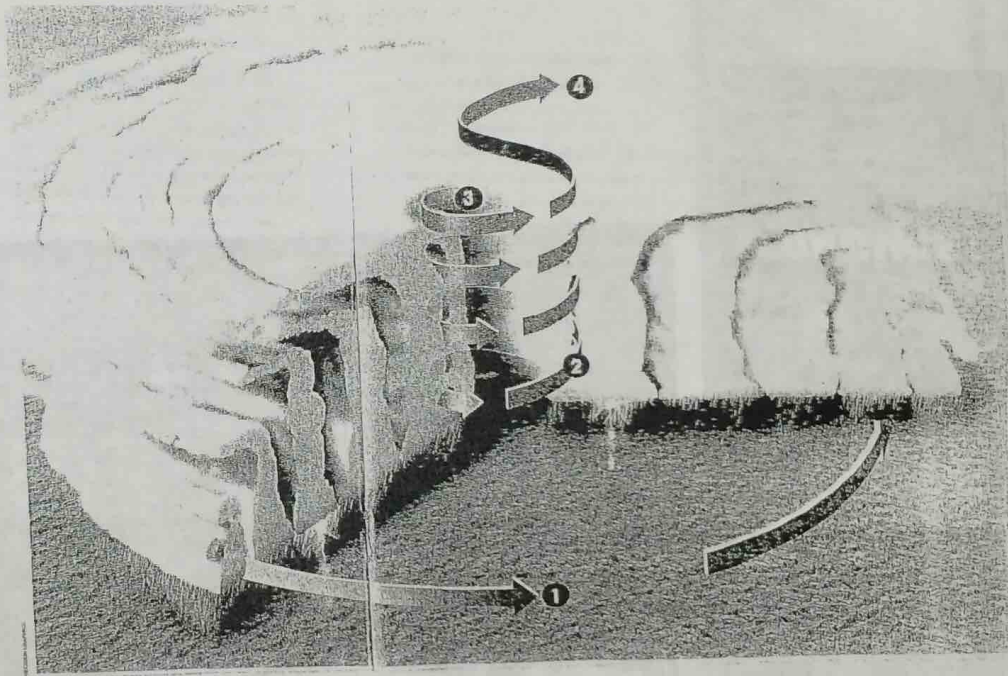
WORDWISE

evacuate: leave home
 global warming: rise in Earth's temperature
 meteorologist: scientist who studies weather
 sea level: height of the ocean surface
 storm surge: tall wave made by a storm

Eye of the Storm

Hurricanes are the largest storms on Earth. They may be 805 kilometers (500 miles) wide. Their winds blow at 119 kilometers (74 miles) an hour or faster. Yet no matter how big or strong a hurricane gets, they all begin the same way.

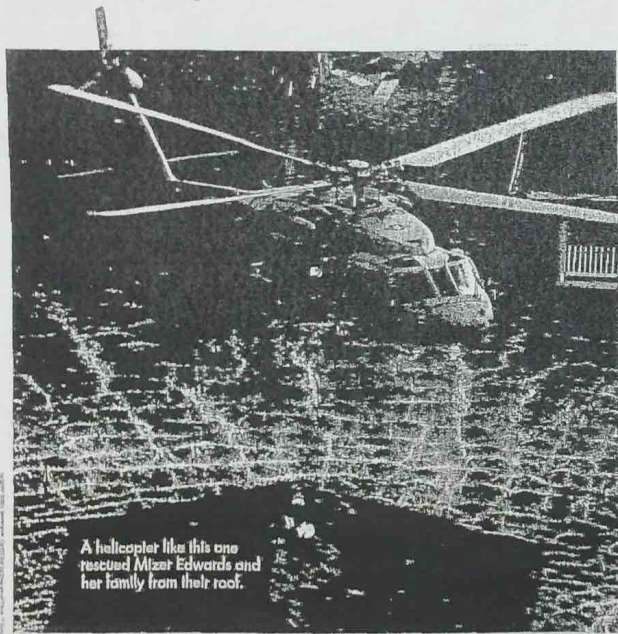
- 1 Winds blow in a circle toward the middle of the storm. That gives a hurricane its pinwheel shape.
- 2 The eyewall is the most violent part of a hurricane. Winds in the eyewall can whip around at 515 kilometers (320 miles) an hour.
- 3 The eye is located in the middle of a hurricane. The eye is usually about 32 kilometers (20 miles) wide. It is the calmest part of a hurricane.
- 4 Winds rise above a hurricane. These winds start to slow down as they rise.



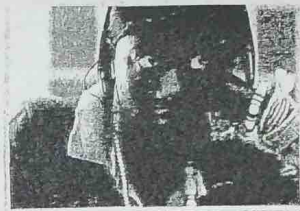
Surviving the Storm

For Mizer Edwards, August 29, 2005, was different from any other day. That day changed her life. It was the day Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Many people left the city before the storm. Her family stayed.

Hurricanes had hit the city before. Mizer's family had always made it through. Katrina was different, though. It was stronger than other hurricanes. Wild winds pounded Mizer's home. Muddy water flooded her street. The water rose. Soon it was pouring into her home.



A helicopter like this one rescued Mizer Edwards and her family from their roof.



After Hurricane Katrina, Mizer attended John Dibert School, where this picture was taken.

Scary Escape

Floodwaters quickly filled the first floor of Mizer's house. Her family climbed to the attic to escape. There, her father cut a hole in the ceiling. He climbed onto the roof. He stayed there, looking for a helicopter that could rescue them.

The family waited four days. Finally, a helicopter came. Mizer squeezed through the hole in the roof. She was pulled up into the helicopter. As they flew away, she looked down. Swirling water was everywhere. It surrounded the houses. Only the rooftops poked through.

The helicopter flew her family to the airport. A plane then flew Mizer's family to Texas. She didn't know if she would see her friends again. She didn't know if she would return home.

Floodwaters covered New Orleans for weeks. Even after the water receded, people could not return. Trash littered streets. Wind and mold had damaged houses. This was not safe. Debris needed to be cleared. Houses needed to be rebuilt.

New Beginnings

Mizer's family returned to New Orleans 18 months later. Nothing looked the same. Dried mud covered their home. Their belongings were gone. Her family had to start over. It would not be easy.

Mizer's family faced many problems. She needed to find a new school because her old one was still closed. Only a few schools had reopened nearby. The John Dibert School was one of them.

Mizer started classes there. She felt comfortable with the students and teachers. All of them had lived through Hurricane Katrina too. Everyone at John Dibert was starting over, so they could help one another.

Mizer made new friends at school. Her family rebuilt their house. Life began to seem normal again.

Each week, more people return to New Orleans. They are rebuilding their neighborhoods. There is a lot of work to be done. Still, they want to bring New Orleans back to life.

Name _____

Hurricane Hunters

1. Who is the author?
2. What magazine is this article in?
3. What is the date of the article?
4. What city did Hurricane Katrina destroy?
5. What state is that in?
6. How warm does the water have to be for a hurricane to form?
7. What part of a hurricane is the most violent?
8. What is the calmest part of a hurricane?
9. What date did Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans?
10. How long did Mizer and her family wait to be rescued?
11. When were Mizer and her family able to return to New Orleans?
12. Thousands of people fled New Orleans. What does this mean?
 - a. The people stayed in their homes.
 - b. The people watched for hurricanes.
 - c. The people left the city.
 - d. The people went to shelters.
13. Why might global warming trigger strong storms?
 - a. Warm weather causes hurricanes.
 - b. Hurricanes only form in warm ocean water.
 - c. Global warming makes stronger winds.
 - d. Storm surges are caused by global warming.
14. Which of the following statements is true?
 - a. Hurricane Katrina did not cause much damage in New Orleans.
 - b. All the residents of New Orleans left before the storm hit.
 - c. New Orleans is on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.
 - d. Scientists still don't know exactly what makes hurricanes go.