

# Night of the Twisters

by Ivy Ruckman

## Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

### SYNOPSIS

Dan Hatch remembers back to the day in June when seven tornadoes devastated his Nebraska home town of Grand Island. Summer vacation is just beginning, and twelve-year-old Dan and his best friend, Arthur Darlington, are biking home from the riverfront park, accompanied for part of the way by two of Arthur's six sisters — skinny ten-year-old Ronnie Vae and beautiful fourteen-year-old Stacey, the object of Dan's crush. At the end of a hot, muggy day, clouds are building up and heavy winds are beginning to blow. Back home at the Hatches', Arthur stays for dinner with Dan, his mother and father, and baby brother Ryan; Dan resents Ryan's intrusion into the family and the attention the infant commands.

After dinner, Mr. Hatch goes out to his father's farm to help repair the tractor. Aunt Goldie, Mrs. Hatch's younger divorced sister, stops in to borrow a bowling ball on her way to the Meves lanes. Dan arranges for Arthur to spend the night, as the wind steadily rises. Shortly after eight o'clock, Mom and the two boys hear a tornado warning on the TV; Mrs. Hatch leaves to make sure their elderly neighbor Mrs. Smiley knows about the warning, instructing the boys to take Ryan to the basement bathroom immediately if the siren starts to sound, which it soon does. Dan tries to call the farm to warn his grandparents and father, then as the lights flicker and the drains make sucking sounds and his ears pop, he grabs Ryan and rushes with Arthur to the basement.

Cowering in the downstairs bathroom underneath a blanket, inside the shower stall, the boys hear the roaring tornado shriek down on them and the house disintegrate above them. After what seems like an eternity, the noise subsides; the boys are thrilled to be alive, but the house is gone, they're trapped in the basement being pelted with hailstones and chilling rain, and they are worried sick about what has happened to their families. Dan's attitude toward Ryan changes as he realizes he has saved his little brother's life; protecting Ryan warms Dan, reassuring him. Arthur's sister Stacey arrives with the news that their mother and sisters have all survived, and she helps the boys and Ryan climb out into the yard, where they discover that the entire neighborhood is gone, devastated.

The youngsters head for Mrs. Smiley's, looking for Dan's mother, who rushes out to meet them with the news that the deaf old lady is trapped in the basement of her damaged home, not responding to calls. Mrs. Hatch and Ryan take an evacuation bus to the Kmart shelter, while Dan, Arthur, and Stacey remain, finding and extricating Mrs. Smiley. Next, a police officer drives the youngsters toward the Kmart, but

retreats urgently when another tornado heads straight toward them; when the officer is blinded by shattered glass, Dan guides the cruiser to the Public Safety Center. Along with a handful of other survivors, Dan, Arthur, and Stacey bunk down for the night in the local jail, Dan desperately worried about reports of more tornadoes in the vicinity of his grandparents' farm and everyone shocked that the business center of Grand Island has been destroyed.

The next morning, the children make their way to the armory, where Mr. Darlington works; Arthur and Stacey have a joyous reunion with the rest of their family. Dan goes on to the Kmart, only to find that all the refugees had been evacuated during the night. He heads back toward the remains of his home — and crosses paths with Mom, Dad, and Ryan in the family pickup truck!

Remembering back a year later, Dan recalls how he, his parents, Ryan, and Arthur spent the summer on his grandparents' farm (the Darlingsons, being such a large family, had to split up temporarily after the tornadoes). Most people, using insurance and government loans, rebuilt their homes, except for Aunt Goldie (who also survived after being missing for several days after the storms). Although it was a long and difficult process getting Grand Island back to normal, it seemed that everyone — neighbors, Americans near and far — helped.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ivy Ruckman was born May 25, 1931, in Hastings, Nebraska, growing up during the Depression years and sharing a world of rich imaginary play with her older brother William. She graduated in 1953 from Hastings College and became a high school English teacher in Colorado and then Utah. She married in 1955, divorced in 1963, and remarried in 1965; she has three grown children, a daughter and two sons, whose experiences and interests have often been reflected in Ruckman's writings for young people. Since 1974, Ruckman has been a full-time writer for children, particularly middle-grade students and young adults. She has commented in *Something About the Author* that writing is a difficult, slow process for her, and that her main objective is to make her characters live: "I want the reader to care about what happens to them, to laugh at their foolishness and cry over their sorrows....I succeed as a writer, I feel, only to the extent readers share my involvement."

### CRITICS' CORNER

*Night of the Twisters* was a Junior Literary Guild selection, serialized in *Cricket* magazine, and recognized as outstanding

by the Children's Book Council. *School Library Journal* found the story "exciting and fast paced, sure to keep even the most reluctant readers interested." *Booklist* admired the novel's consistent and believable characterization, fast pace, and vivid scenes, and the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* praised the author's skill in creating and maintaining suspense, writing fitting dialogue for the stress situation, and giving her characters depth and differentiation.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To gain an understanding about the physical and emotional effects of a natural disaster and the ways in which people cope with such an event
2. To discuss possible personal reactions when engulfed by a natural disaster
3. To examine the nature of self-reliance, courage, and resourcefulness
4. To analyze the nature of sibling jealousy and how it may be overcome
5. To consider the nature and benefits of friendship

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the experiences of the various members of the Hatch and Darlington families during and after the night of the tornadoes
2. To gain an understanding about tornadoes - warning signs of their approach, and their effects
3. To trace the change in Dan's attitude toward Ryan because of their experiences during and after the tornado
4. To analyze the effectiveness of the author's writing style, including use of first-person narration, building and maintenance of suspense, fast pace, and full characterization
5. To identify ways in which the novel's young characters exhibit courage, resourcefulness, and self-reliance
6. To learn more about resources available to U.S. citizens whose lives and homes are affected by natural disasters

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. "Baby's cutting teeth." (p. 18) "Have you tried rubbing his gums with paregoric?" (p. 24)  
(*Dan's baby brother Ryan is cutting teeth - the first, baby teeth are starting to emerge from the gums. This often makes babies irritable and fussy, crying and hard to comfort. This is just one example of the ways in which Ryan disrupts what used to be a peaceful family life, which has caused Dan to resent his brother since the baby was born. One way to relieve a teething baby's discomfort is to rub the baby's gums with paregoric, an*

*ointment that lessens the pain.*)

2. the National Guard Armory (p. 35)  
(*The National Guard consists of volunteer ground and air militia units, established by each state, equipped by the federal government, and subject to being called into action by either the governor of the individual state or the president of the United States. An armory is a place where arms and military equipment are stored and where military reserve units do their training. The National Guard is often mobilized in individual states in cases of natural disaster, as it is in Grand Island when the tornadoes hit. Arthur's father works at the local National Guard Armory, which becomes a shelter for civilian evacuees, including the Darlington family.*)
3. Civil Defense Emergency (p. 49)  
(*Civil defense in general refers to the protective measures and emergency relief activities undertaken by a government on behalf of its citizens in case of enemy attack or natural disaster. In the United States, civil defense programs are the responsibility of the Department of Defense, which establishes and provisions shelters in public buildings in cases of natural disaster. On the night of the twisters, as the tornado approaches Grand Island, the TV flashes notice that a civil defense emergency has been declared and that a natural disaster is imminent.*)
4. He was caught in the mobile. (p. 51)  
(*Baby's cribs often have mobiles hanging over them, a moving construction of wires, strings, and shapes that catches a baby's attention. When Dan is in a desperate hurry to get Ryan out of his crib and down to the basement shelter, the baby gets tangled in his mobile, and Dan can't get him untangled until he gets to the basement.*)
5. My biggest worry right then was hypothermia. (p. 81)  
(*Hypothermia is a potentially life-threatening condition in which the body temperature falls below normal. Dan is worried about hypothermia after the tornado because he is soaked from the rain and is so cold that he is shaking uncontrollably.*)
6. storm cellar (p. 100)  
(*Students may be familiar with storm cellars from the movie The Wizard of Oz. In areas of the U.S. where tornadoes are common, homes may have a storm cellar - a cellar, or covered excavation in the ground, specifically dug and designed for protection from dangerous windstorms like tornadoes. Dan's grandparents' farm has a storm cellar; Dan worries that it is a long way from the farmhouse and that its doors are very hard to open.*)
7. evacuees (p. 102)  
(*Dan, Stacey, and Arthur have become evacuees - people removed by the authorities from a dangerous area, in this case their tornado-devastated neighborhood, where leaking gas and downed power lines are hazards. Their*

other family members have also become evacuees and have to stay in public shelters.)

8. "Auxiliary power's gone. Must have blown the generator." (p. 129)  
(Buildings such as hospitals and police stations usually have their own generators, machines that produce electricity and are used in case the public power supply fails, as it does during the tornado. When Dan, Stacey, and Arthur are spending the night at the public safety building, the place has power thanks to the generator, but even that fails during the night.)
9. "Mama quotes Scripture" (p. 128)  
(Mrs. Darlington recites passages from the Bible when she gets upset; this soothes her. During the night Dan is so worried about what has happened to his father and grandparents, Stacey suggests that she and Dan say the Twenty-Third Psalm and visualize its words in order to comfort themselves.)
10. Mennonites (p. 148)  
(Mennonites are members of a Protestant religious group that rejects military service; many Mennonites come to Grand Island to help in the wake of the disaster.)

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

#### Literal Level

1. Describe the experiences of the members of Dan's family during and immediately after the night of the twisters.  
(Dan and Ryan survive the tornado that destroys their house by huddling under a blanket in the downstairs bathroom's shower stall. Mom barely beats the funnel to Mrs. Smiley's house, where she rides out the tornado under Mrs. Smiley's dining room table, clutching onto the table legs. Mom, Dan, and Ryan find each other after the storm; then Mom and Ryan go to an evacuation center while Dan helps Arthur and Stacey rescue Mrs. Smiley and then spends the night with the other two youngsters at the local jail. Dad was out at his parents' farm, which escaped the tornadoes, and headed back into town in the early-morning darkness to search evacuation centers for the other family members. They all find each other the following morning. Aunt Goldie was trapped at the Meves bowling lanes the night of the twisters and was taken by a trucker to Omaha afterwards; she came to herself there several days later.)
2. Describe the experiences of the members of Arthur's family during and immediately after the night of the twisters.  
(Arthur survives the tornado by huddling under a blanket with Dan and Ryan in the downstairs bathroom's

shower stall at Dan's house while the house is destroyed above them. Most of Arthur's sisters hid under a bed at their home during the storm, while Stacey, Ronnie Vae, and Mrs. Darlington huddled on the floor nearby; Ronnie Vae was sucked out a window, thrown into the neighbors' bushes, and knocked out, but was fine afterward. Mr. Darlington was at work at the armory, which became an evacuation shelter. After Arthur and Stacey, with Dan, rescue Mrs. Smiley and spend the night at the local jail, they are reunited with the rest of their family at the armory.)

3. Describe what the novel tells about the warning signs of a tornado and what happens as the tornado approaches and hits.  
(The sky is greenish, and looks bottom-heavy. The wind begins to blow, building strongly. Clouds boil. Tornadoes are sighted touching down in the vicinity, so a tornado watch is announced. When the watch turns to a warning and the siren sounds, it's time to head for the basement or storm cellar; by now the wind is blowing so hard, it's roaring outside. The sink drains start to make a sucking sound, and your ears pop. There is a momentary lull, and then a roaring shriek as the tornado hits and the building above you begins to disintegrate.)

#### Interpretive Level

4. What is Dan's attitude toward Ryan at the beginning of the novel? How does this attitude change in the course of the novel, and why?  
(As the novel opens, Dan expresses his resentment of Ryan's advent. Mom used to be jolly and look attractive; now her hair is stringy and her nerves are frazzled. Ryan has taken over Dan's old bedroom. Meals are no longer peaceful, and any daily news Dan has to share then comes second to whatever Ryan is burbling or doing; Mom and Dad don't pay much attention to Dan at meals any more, he thinks. The happy little family of three no longer exists. During the tornado, Dan saves Ryan's life by grabbing his baby brother out of the crib and escaping to the basement bathroom with the infant. Ryan's serene acceptance of Dan as his protector and nurturer during the storm distracts Dan from the terror of the tornado and makes Dan feel strong and emotionally comforted. Once Dan realizes how small and vulnerable Ryan is and that he has saved Ryan's life, his attitude toward his little brother changes permanently to a protective, loving, appreciative one.)
5. Describe the relationship between Dan and Arthur. How do they help each other out during the disaster?  
(Dan and Arthur are inseparable best friends, although they're very different physically and in personality. During the tornado, Dan and Arthur huddle together in the basement shower stall, offering each other the comfort of another person during the terror; afterward, they help each other find a way out of the basement, and Arthur gives Dan moral support and encouragement as they go to search for Dan's mother. Arthur has the idea of getting Mrs. Hatch to let them look for Mrs. Smiley,

and together the two boys search Mrs. Smiley's basement and find the old lady and help her out – Arthur figuring out how to get in to the basement and Dan how to get out. Arthur and Dan again give each other emotional support during their night at the jail.)

6. What are the aftereffects of the disaster? (Physically, Grand Island and the homes of the novel's main characters are devastated. Emotionally, Dan learns to value his baby brother and to realize that the well-being of family members is what really matters, not material goods. He also learns that he is courageous and self-reliant. The Hatches, the Darlingtons, and the rest of Grand Island's citizens come to appreciate deeply the spirit of volunteerism as people from all over and all walks of life pull together to restore Grand Island's buildings and way of life. Dan and the other people of Grand Island also learn first-hand about the resilience of the human spirit and the willingness to rebuild after tragedy.)

#### Critical Level

7. What does the first-person narration add to the novel? (By telling the story in the first person, the author allows young readers to experience the night of the twisters and its aftermath from the point of view of a young person reacting to the events in much the way they might themselves. This could be a friend or classmate relating an event, in terms young readers themselves would use. The first-person narration adds immediacy: young readers can imagine themselves huddled in the shower stall as the terrifying tornado storms above or frantically searching through their own devastated neighborhood and town for their own missing loved ones.)
8. How does the author maintain suspense as the novel goes on, even after the tornado has hit and gone on? (The author uses a fast pace to keep the reader turning the pages. In the novel's earlier chapters, numerous warning signs of the impending tornado keep us reading, knowing that a tornado is going to strike and wondering what will happen to Dan and the others when it does come. After the storm, the fate of both Dan's and Arthur's family members is uncertain, especially with Dan's family having been separated – Dad, Mom, and Aunt Goldie were each at a different place when the tornado hit. The suspense isn't over until Dan is finally reunited with Dad, plus Mom and Ryan, at the end of the novel's next-to-last chapter.)
9. What does the novel show about courage, resourcefulness, and/or self-reliance? (Students may choose one, two or three attributes to discuss.) (Dan shows courage in his rescue of Ryan from the crib; Dan, Arthur, and Stacey demonstrate courage in the aftermath in searching for Mrs. Hatch and rescuing Mrs. Smiley in spite of the dangers. The three youngsters show resourcefulness and self-reliance in getting themselves out of the Hatches' basement and Mrs. Smiley out of hers, and in holding themselves together during the

night at the jail and in tracking down the Darlingtons the next morning. Dan shows self-reliance in continuing his search for his missing family members the next morning, and courage and resourcefulness in driving the police cruiser to the public safety building after narrowly escaping a second tornado. In general, the youngsters demonstrate self-reliance, resourcefulness, and courage in coping with the disaster and reuniting themselves with their families largely on their own, without adult help or supervision.)

#### Creative Level

10. Imagine that Minerva the cat survived the tornado and was later reunited with Dan. Tell her story from her point of view. (Answers will vary.)
11. Describe Dan's father's thoughts and feelings as he is trapped on the farm during the night of the twisters, worrying about the fate of his wife and his two sons. (Answers will vary.)
12. Write a newspaper account of Mrs. Smiley's rescue by three young people. (Answers will vary.)

#### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

##### Science

1. Create an illustrated report on tornadoes and their effects. Explain how the tornadoes in the novel differed from usual tornado behavior. (Also Art.)
2. Learn about how weather forecasts are made, and how a person goes about becoming a meteorologist.
3. Explain scientifically why sink drains make a sucking sound and ears pop when a tornado is about to touch down.

##### Language Arts

1. With a group of classmates, discuss other adventure and/or disaster novels you have read and compare them with *Night of the Twisters*.
2. Write some episodes of the novel from the point of view of a character other than Dan.

##### Social Studies/Geography

1. On a map of Nebraska, locate the place names mentioned in the novel.
2. Find out what the Federal Emergency Management Administration is and what it does when natural disasters like tornadoes strike.
3. Dan's cat is named Minerva. What is the origin of this name?
4. Dan's grandparents' farmhouse was built during the Great Depression. What was this? What effect did it have on the United States?

### Mathematics

Suppose a family got a special government loan to rebuild after a natural disaster like a tornado. Such a loan would have a much lower interest rate than a regular home-building loan. Decide how much a family was going to spend to rebuild and then figure how much the family might save by getting a government disaster loan instead of a regular loan.

### Health

1. Demonstrate to the class various first-aid techniques that disaster relief workers would be likely to have to know and apply.
2. Dan worries about hypothermia. What is this? What causes it, what are its symptoms, and how do you treat it?

### Art

1. Create a model or illustration of Dan's family's home before and after the tornadoes, or of Grand Island or one of its neighborhoods before and after the tornadoes.
2. Create a collage, sculpture, or other artwork from the remains of a demolished building.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. At the library, find the news accounts of the Grand Island tornado disaster. Photocopy these and display them in class. Include, if possible, photographs of post-tornado rebuilding in Grand Island.
2. Learn more about some particular part of history by interviewing an older relative, friend, or neighbor.
3. Visit a National Weather Service office or TV news/weather station to learn more about weather forecasting and the career of being a meteorologist.
4. Create a class photo display of a tornado's approach, touching down, and aftermath.
5. Discuss with classmates the question Arthur asks Dan about why disasters or other bad things happen "to us."
6. List and describe the various groups mentioned in the novel that respond to the disaster and help the survivors.
7. Find out what disaster aid would be available to you and your family if a disaster like a tornado or hurricane hit.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Ivy Ruckman, the novel's author, has said that her main objective in writing is to make the reader "care about what happens to" her characters, "to laugh at their foolishness and cry over their sorrows." Describe in detail how you feel the author succeeded in doing this in the *Night of the Twisters*.
2. List the main characters in the novel, and describe the experiences of each of them during the night of the tornadoes.

3. Make a list of props that would be needed for a TV movie of the novel. Note which scene(s) each would be needed for, and why.

### OTHER BOOKS BY IVY RUCKMAN

*Melba the Brain* (1979)  
*The Hunger Scream* (1983)  
*In a Class by Herself* (1983)  
*What's an Average Kid Like Me Doing Way Up Here?* (1983)  
*This Is Your Captain Speaking* (1987)  
*No Way Out* (1988)  
*Who Invited the Undertaker?* (1989)  
*Melba the Mummy* (1991)  
*Spell It M-U-R-D-E-R* (1994)  
*Pronounce It Dead* (1994)

### RELATED READING

*Courage at Indian Deep*. Jane Resh Thomas  
*Downwind*. Louise Moeri  
*The Exeter Blitz*. David Rees  
*The Half-a-Moon Inn*. Paul Fleischman  
*Hobie Hanson: Greatest Hero of the Mall*. Jamie Gilson  
*Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express*. Margaret K. Wetterer  
*The Silent Storm*. Sherry Garland  
*Storms*. Seymour Simon  
*Tornado!* Hilary Milton  
*Weather*. Brian Cosgrove  
*The Weather Sky*. Bruce McMillan

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*Booklist*, December 1, 1984, p. 528.  
*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, November 1984, p. 55.  
*Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 111. Detroit: Gale, 1984.  
Holtze, Sandy Holmes, ed. *Sixth Book of Junior Authors & Illustrators*. New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1989.  
*School Library Journal*, December 1984, p. 86.  
*Something About the Author*, Vol. 37. Detroit: Gale, 1985.

### VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. He's smart. He studies things. As Arthur himself says, he cogitates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Arthur chortled as he zipped his pants up right there in plain sight.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Every time, Arthur recited his sisters' names deadpan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. We heard it next. The lull. The deadliest quiet ever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Dad's rocker-lounger was wedged into the basement hallway ahead of us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "He's blue," Arthur said, jouncing him up and down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. We found the intersection strewn with the litter of Aunt Goldie's house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. We went past the sad hulk of the Darlington's house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Mom cuffed me one as I turned and fled.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Smiley could see how our neighborhood had been devastated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. "I'd sure enough have perished if it hadn't been for you kids."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. We were buffeted by wind strong enough to compete with the radio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. At the same time, miraculously, the patrol car lurched forward.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I felt us accelerating, rocking from side to side, speeding away.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. This heavysset man in tan work clothes came out and glowered at us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Mixed with hail, the rain pelted the roof over our heads.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. "Dan," Stacey whispered, her voice suddenly grown quavery, "this really scares me."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Outside, dawn showed us a gray and sodden world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I skirted along the edge of the parking lot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. The six or seven funnels that touched down didn't follow tornado rules at all. Not for size, direction, or velocity.

a. glared  
b. speed  
c. going faster  
d. sidestepped  
e. scattered

f. crammed  
g. laughed  
h. trembling  
i. calm  
j. soaked

k. beat  
l. wreck  
m. destroyed  
n. hit  
o. died

p. slapped lightly  
q. without expression  
r. suddenly moved  
s. thinks  
t. bouncing

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- |               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| a. Dan        | f. Aunt Goldie     |
| b. Arthur     | g. Mrs. Smiley     |
| c. Mrs. Hatch | h. Stacey          |
| d. Mr. Hatch  | i. Mrs. Darlington |
| e. Ryan       | j. Mr. Darlington  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. He's a mechanic. He loves getting his hands into greasy old engines and making them purr again.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. He grows plants at the Lewis Greenscape during the day and is maintenance foreman at the National Guard Armory at night.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. She's just a little bitty thing, but with legs like parentheses, she walks funny.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. ...one of those yellow-haired, freckle-faced types; a doer, bonkers over bikes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. She looked so beautiful hanging over that windowsill, her hair whipping across her red and swollen cheek.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Now her hair was kind of stringy and her nerves were frazzled.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A blond curly-top wearing pink shorts and a frilly blouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. He's not gross, you understand, but he could live on his own fat cells for a month if he had to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. He looked up at me so bright-eyed and solemn I had to smile.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. She's one of those soft cushiony types with a round face and pink cheeks who's as nice to her kids' friends as she is to her kids.

### Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose an ending to complete each statement correctly. Place the letter of your answer in the blank to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Dan is desperate to find out if any tornadoes hit a) Omaha. b) Phillips. c) Sioux Falls. d) Mennon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When the tornadoes strike, Aunt Goldie is at a) home. b) church. c) Meves bowling lanes. d) the Kmart.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Dan loses this family member to the tornadoes a) Aunt Goldie. b) his dog. c) his grandmother. d) his cat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. This person dies during the year after the tornadoes a) Ryan. b) Mrs. Smiley. c) Mrs. Darlington. d) Dan's grandfather.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. When Dan and his family first move back to their property, they live in a a) trailer. b) tent. c) house. d) garage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Mrs. Smiley has given Arthur her old a) cookies. b) hearing aid. c) screen door. d) Bible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Before the night of the tornadoes, Dan deeply resents a) his parents. b) Arthur's baby sister. c) his baby brother Ryan. d) Stacey.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Just before the tornado hits, Dan's mother leaves the house to check on a) her parents. b) her in-laws. c) Arthur's family. d) Mrs. Smiley.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The letters CD on the TV screen stand for a) compact disc. b) civil defense emergency. c) current danger. d) call dispatch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A weather science specialist is called a a) meteorologist. b) paleontologist. c) public safety official. d) genealogist.

**Part III: Fill-In (30 points)**

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. Dan and Arthur live in the U.S. state of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Another name for a tornado is a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. During the tornado, Mr. Hatch is at his parents' \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Dan and Arthur are taking Aunt Goldie's \_\_\_\_\_ class that summer.
5. Arthur brings a Hopi Indian \_\_\_\_\_ to Aunt Goldie's class.
6. Dan's cat is named \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The street where Dan and his family live is named \_\_\_\_\_ Drive.
8. Arthur is reunited with his family at the \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Dan and Arthur are \_\_\_\_\_ years old when the tornado strikes.
10. Arthur's mother gets the names of her girls from \_\_\_\_\_.
11. The tornado disaster occurs in the month of \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Eustacia Marie is \_\_\_\_\_'s formal name.
13. During the tornado, Dan and Arthur huddle in the \_\_\_\_\_.
14. After the tornado, Dan and Arthur are pelted by \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Not long after the tornado, \_\_\_\_\_ has another baby.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose any *three* to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Describe Mrs. Smiley's experiences during and after the tornadoes.
2. Why are Dan and Arthur home alone with the baby?
3. How does Dan feel about Ryan before the night of the tornadoes? After that night?
4. What positive things come out of the tornado?



## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. Use each name only once.

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| a. Dan           | f. Aunt Goldie     |
| b. Arthur        | g. Mrs. Smiley     |
| c. Mrs. Hatch    | h. Stacey          |
| d. Mr. Hatch     | i. Mrs. Darlington |
| e. Officer Kelly | j. Mr. Darlington  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "What if *I* caused that tornado? The *bull-roarer*? That sound is supposed to bring on the whirlwind."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "I've read to page one fourteen and *still* nothing's happened."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "Reporting injury affecting my eyesight...returning to headquarters assisted by minor male passenger."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "I'm driving on over there to make sure she has her TV set on. I won't be long."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "I'm a dancer, you know? It's just not my thing. I'd almost rather stay home and straighten my hair."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "Arthur, we made it...we're alive!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "Where *were* you? I got through to Dan's place, searched everywhere."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "Mama tried to get everyone under the big bed, but she and Ronnie and I wouldn't fit. We had to flatten out on the floor."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "The sun doesn't rise and set on you!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "I'm eighty-one years old, boys. Don't you think I'm better off to stay down here?"

### Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two- or three-word answer for each of the following questions.

1. What vehicle does Dan drive the night of the storms? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the formal name for a twister? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What leaking substance makes staying in the wrecked houses dangerous? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What sound officially tells the townspeople to go to their basements for shelter? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who is Angélique? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where do Arthur, Dan, and Stacey sleep the night the tornado hits? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What store becomes an evacuation center where Mrs. Hatch and Ryan go for shelter? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many sisters does Arthur have? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who is Minerva? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Who is teaching a crafts class that Dan and Arthur attend? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What is the name of Dan and Arthur's home town? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Who gets sucked out a window by the tornado? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Who is Dan's baby brother? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Who is the author of this novel? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Where do Dan and his family live during the summer after the tornadoes? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

Choose an ending to complete each statement correctly. Place the letter of your answer in the blank to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. After the tornadoes, Dan's father and grandfather work at restoring Mr. Hatch's a) Corvette. b) Porsche. c) tractor. d) Chevy Citation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In the morning, Arthur finds his family at a) the bowling lanes. b) his house. c) the armory. d) the church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Arthur says his family considers babies a) troublemakers. b) God's jewels. c) too expensive. d) bad omens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The novel is set in the state of a) Kansas. b) Oklahoma. c) Nebraska. d) Iowa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Aunt Goldie stops by Dan's house to borrow Mrs. Hatch's a) cookbook. b) car. c) weather radio. d) bowling ball.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. This member of Dan's family is missing for several days after the night of the tornadoes a) Dan's father. b) Dan's mother. c) Dan's brother. d) Aunt Goldie.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When a tornado is about to strike, the weather service issues a tornado: a) watch. b) warning. c) forecast. d) advisory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. After the tornado, Dan and Arthur are in danger of suffering from a) typhoid fever. b) hallucinations. c) hypothermia. d) blindness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. While the tornado roared outside, Mrs. Smiley spent her time a) praying. b) screaming. c) sleeping. d) sewing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Dan's father is a a) mechanic. b) dentist. c) storekeeper. d) lawyer.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose any *three* to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Describe Aunt Goldie's experiences during and after the tornadoes.
2. How and why do Dan and Arthur blame themselves for the tornadoes?
3. Give some examples of Dan acting with self-reliance during the disaster.
4. What happens to Arthur's family the night of the storms?

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 1. s  | 11. o |
| 2. g  | 12. n |
| 3. q  | 13. r |
| 4. i  | 14. c |
| 5. f  | 15. a |
| 6. t  | 16. k |
| 7. e  | 17. h |
| 8. l  | 18. j |
| 9. p  | 19. d |
| 10. m | 20. b |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 6. c  |
| 2. j | 7. f  |
| 3. g | 8. b  |
| 4. a | 9. e  |
| 5. h | 10. i |

#### Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. c  |
| 2. c | 7. c  |
| 3. d | 8. d  |
| 4. b | 9. b  |
| 5. a | 10. a |

#### Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

- |                |                                     |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Nebraska    | 9. twelve                           |
| 2. twister     | 10. romance novels                  |
| 3. farm        | 11. June                            |
| 4. crafts      | 12. Stacey                          |
| 5. bull-roarer | 13. basement                        |
| 6. Minerva     | bathroom/shower stall               |
| 7. Sand Crane  | 14. hail/rain                       |
| 8. armory      | 15. Mrs. Darlington/Arthur's mother |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary somewhat. Samples follow.

1. Dan's mother arrives and takes Mrs. Smiley to the basement of her home. The old lady turns her hearing aid off, so she sleeps on her basement couch while the roof of her house rips off and her back porch collapses. She is awakened by Arthur and Dan, who help her climb up a set of old bedsprings and out a basement window, no mean feat for an eighty-one-year-old. Mrs. Smiley is then evacuated to a shelter on a minibus. She dies of heart failure before the tornadoes' one-year anniversary.
2. Dan's father has gone out to his parents' farm to help repair a tractor. Dan's mother has gone over to be sure Mrs. Smiley knows about the tornado warning and is taking shelter in her basement; Mrs. Hatch plans to be right back, and leaves Ryan in Dan's care. Arthur is there because he is spending the night with Dan.
3. Dan resents Ryan because his baby brother has ruined the peaceful family of three Dan has known for the past twelve years. Dan's mother is frazzled, and family dinner hours focus on Ryan now instead of Dan being able to share stories with his mom and dad about his day. After saving Ryan's life, though, Dan suddenly feels protective and parental about his little brother and cherishes the baby's life.

4. Dan learns to love his baby brother. The people of Grand Island experience a heartening outpouring of volunteer help and confirm within themselves the resilience of the human spirit in the face of disaster. Those who lost their homes appreciate the value of family versus possessions.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. a  |
| 2. i | 7. j  |
| 3. e | 8. h  |
| 4. c | 9. d  |
| 5. f | 10. g |

#### Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. police car                    | 9. Dan's cat           |
| 2. tornado                       | 10. Aunt Goldie        |
| 3. gas                           | 11. Grand Island       |
| 4. siren                         | 12. Ronnie Vae         |
| 5. Arthur's baby sister          | 13. Ryan               |
| 6. jail/public safety building   | 14. Ivy Ruckman        |
| 7. Kmart                         | 15. grandparent's farm |
| 8. six (seven after the tornado) |                        |

#### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. a | 6. d  |
| 2. c | 7. b  |
| 3. b | 8. c  |
| 4. c | 9. c  |
| 5. d | 10. a |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

1. When the tornadoes hit, Aunt Goldie is at the Meves bowling lanes, hiding in the ladies' room and trapped by steel beams. She vaguely remembers a trucker driving her to safety in Omaha, where she came to herself two days later in a motel room. Her house was destroyed, and she chooses to live in an apartment closer to town rather than rebuild.
2. Arthur momentarily blames himself for swinging the bull-roarer inside Aunt Goldie's house; the Hopi Indians didn't let their children play with bull-roarers indoors because of the roaring sound they make, which is supposed to bring on the whirlwind and death and destruction. Dan feels he is being punished with a tornado for resenting his helpless baby brother, for wishing Ryan out of existence countless times.
3. He saves his baby brother's life by getting to the basement shelter and crawling into the shower stall. He gets himself and Ryan out of the basement and rescues Mrs. Smiley from her basement, with Arthur's help. He drives the police cruiser when Officer Kelly is blinded. He searches out and finds his family the next day. He does all this without adult help or supervision.
4. Arthur rides out the storm with Dan in the Hatches' basement, then with Dan and his sister Stacey rescues Mrs. Smiley. He spends the night at the local jail, and finds his family the next morning in the armory. Arthur's mother and sisters survive the storm in a bedroom of their home, although the house is destroyed and Ronnie Vae is sucked out a window. Stacey finds Arthur and Dan at the Hatches' house. Mr. Darlington is at work at the armory, where eventually he is reunited with his whole family.



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