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# Hurricane Warning!

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**S**eñor Garcia stood at the window. He saw waves tossing and **thrashing**.

"We must go," he whispered to his wife. "The **hurricane** is coming!"

"No, I will never leave my home," she said.

So the two of them stayed in the little village of La Carbonera, Mexico. The weather grew wilder. The wind reached 120 miles per hour. Señor Garcia had never seen a storm so full of **fury**.

Suddenly, the hurricane tore into the Garcias' house. It ripped off the roof and knocked down walls. Somehow, Señor Garcia escaped injury. But his wife lost her life in the storm.

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## The Power of Gilbert

Hurricane Gilbert was the worst storm to come out of the Atlantic Ocean in 80 years. It began off the coast of Africa in September, 1988. At first, it was only a small **cluster** of thunderclouds. But it gathered strength as it moved over open water. It picked up heat and moisture. When it reached the Caribbean Islands, it was a **monster**.

By then the storm stretched over 450 miles. It carried heavy rain and strong winds. At the eye of the storm, the wind reached hurricane level. It measured an amazing 175 miles per hour.

This wind was deadly. It smashed buildings. It ripped up telephone poles and street lights. It sent



25-foot waves crashing onto beaches. It even carried a big ship for five miles and dumped it onto the sand.

### Jamaica's Nightmare

The island of Jamaica caught the worst of the storm. There the wind tore the roofs off 80 **percent** of all homes. It left half a million people homeless. It also destroyed crops. Banana trees, coconut trees, and sugar cane plants were ruined.

As Gilbert approached Jamaica on September 12, tourists rushed to get off the island. Many made it. But hundreds did not. Those who were stuck on the island gathered in big hotels. But even there they were not safe. The storm shattered hotel windows. It broke down walls. It sent furniture flying.

"It was like being hit by an atom bomb," one tourist later said.

"Sixty-foot trees were just **plucked** out of the earth," another said.

One man summed it up. "There was no power, no water, no phones, nothing. The place was wrecked."

After leaving Jamaica, Gilbert raced through the Cayman Islands. Then it rushed on to Mexico. There the howling wind and rain did new damage. The storm leveled thousands more homes. It flipped cars and ruined roads. And it flooded mile after mile of land.

### Death of a Hurricane

On September 17, Gilbert finally lost its great strength. The wind died down. The rain grew lighter. But **evidence** of the storm remained. It had caused billions of dollars in damages. Over 800,000 people had no homes. The death count reached 300.

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But things could have been worse. In the past, a hurricane like Gilbert would have killed thousands of people. It would have hit without warning. There would have been no way to **predict** its path.

This time, at least, everyone knew Gilbert was coming. Weather experts used new tools to study Gilbert's path. These experts sent out plenty of warnings. The warnings gave many people time to **flee**. Others could at least try to protect themselves and their property from the wind. Luckily, most people lived through Hurricane Gilbert. They were able to dry out and start again after the fury of Gilbert had passed.

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## Do You Remember?

■ In the blank, write the letter of the best ending for each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Hurricane Gilbert began off the coast of  
a. Canada.      b. China.      c. Africa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The hurricane did the most damage in  
a. England.      b. Jamaica.      c. New Mexico.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Hurricane Gilbert destroyed Jamaica's crop of  
a. bananas.      b. potatoes.      c. rice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The hurricane caused  
a. snowdrifts.      b. flooding.      c. fires.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Weather experts were able to give people  
a. raincoats.      b. free food.      c. warning.

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## Express Yourself

■ Pretend that you are a tourist in Jamaica. You were trapped on the island by Hurricane Gilbert. Write a letter to a friend telling what happened and how you felt.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

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## Exploring Words

■ Find the best meaning for the word in dark print. Fill in the circle next to it.

1. The word **thrashing** means  
 a. moving wildly.       b. cooking.       c. singing.
2. The word **hurricane** means  
 a. hard candy.       b. high speed.       c. a bad windstorm.
3. The word **fury** means  
 a. wild and dangerous force.  
 b. ready to eat.  
 c. striped.
4. The word **cluster** means  
 a. dirty.       b. a group of something.       c. a ring.
5. The word **monster** means  
 a. lost.       b. huge.       c. sandstorm.
6. The word **percent** means  
 a. out of each hundred.       b. buy.       c. gift.
7. The word **plucked** means  
 a. painted.       b. tired.       c. pulled out.
8. The word **evidence** means  
 a. proof.       b. whirlwinds.       c. trash.
9. The word **predict** means  
 a. spend time in jail.  
 b. tell what will happen.  
 c. win a bet.
10. The word **flee** means  
 a. fly.       b. run away.       c. doesn't cost money.