

POETRY: "The Tornado" • SKILL: Reading Comprehension, page 1 of 3

# Analyzing "The Tornado"

**Directions:** Below is Irene Latham's poem "The Tornado," which appears on page 9 of the September 24, 2012, issue of *Scope*. Use the poem to help you answer the questions on the next pages.

## The Tornado

By Irene Latham

The story comes grumbling  
 2 over the hill. It tumbles  
 hailstones and cracks tree-trunks.  
 4 It craves front-page news,  
  
 so it musters all speed  
 6 and muscle. It tears across  
 Main Street, steals shingles  
 8 and un-parks cars.  
  
 It whirls, whistles  
 10 screams and teems with twists  
 no one sees coming.  
 12 We huddle, hunch  
  
 brace ourselves for the end.  
 14 When sunshine arrives,  
 we unfold, emerge.  
 16 Our words echo  
  
 and soothe as we join  
 18 hands with our neighbors.  
 Together  
 20 we sift through rubble  
  
 to shape a new story.  
 22 It rises like *hallelujah!*  
 as a goldfinch gathers  
 24 thistle to rebuild its nest.

## Multiple-Choice Questions

**1. Who are the speakers of the poem?**

- Ⓐ Lyric, Dana, and Shelby
- Ⓑ Irene Latham and Lauren Tarshis
- Ⓒ two tornadoes
- Ⓓ residents of a town that was hit by a tornado

**2. Sometimes poets use words in unconventional ways, or even invent new words, to achieve a desired effect. This is known as *poetic license*. Irene Latham uses poetic license in line 8 when she writes that the tornado "un-parks" cars. Latham most likely uses the made-up word *un-parks* to**

- Ⓐ show that the tornado has only a mild effect on cars.
- Ⓑ show how the tornado threw the town into disorder.
- Ⓒ add humor to the poem.
- Ⓓ suggest that people should not have left their cars parked outside.

**3. Which of the following is an example of personification?**

- Ⓐ lines 4–6: "It craves front page news,/so it musters all speed/and muscle."
- Ⓑ lines 12–13: "We huddle, hunch/brace ourselves for the end."
- Ⓒ lines 19–21: "Together/we sift through rubble/to shape a new story."
- Ⓓ lines 22–24: "It rises like *hallelujah!*/as a goldfinch gathers/thistle to rebuild its nest."

**4. At the end of the poem, Latham writes, "a goldfinch gathers thistle to rebuild its nest." This image**

- Ⓐ reveals that the whole poem is actually about birds.
- Ⓑ creates a mood of hopelessness at the end of the poem.
- Ⓒ contrasts with the situation of the poem's speakers.
- Ⓓ parallels the situation of the poem's speakers.

## Pencil to the Poem

Follow the directions below by marking up on the poem on page 1 of this activity.

- 5. Find five examples of alliteration in the poem. Draw a circle around each pair of alliterative words.
- 6. a. Use a red pencil to underline all of the verbs that describe the action of the tornado.  
 b. Use a blue pencil to underline all of the verbs that describe the actions of the people.

## Short-Answer Questions

- 7. Look at the verbs you underlined. What observations can you make about the poet's use of verbs in this poem? How are the verbs the poet uses to describe the tornado's actions different from the verbs she uses to describe the people's actions?

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