

The Cyclone

Name: _____

Before reading discuss with a partner:

Judging from the title and the pictures, what can you predict about this story?

Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the his wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great grey prairie on every side. Not a tree, nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the ploughed land into a grey mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same grey colour to be seen everywhere. Once, the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rain washed it away, so now the house was as dull and grey as everything else.

When Aunt Em came there to live, she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober grey; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were grey also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled now. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at. Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning until night and did not know what joy was. He was grey also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.



It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as grey as her other surroundings. Toto was not grey; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, little nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him and loved him dearly.

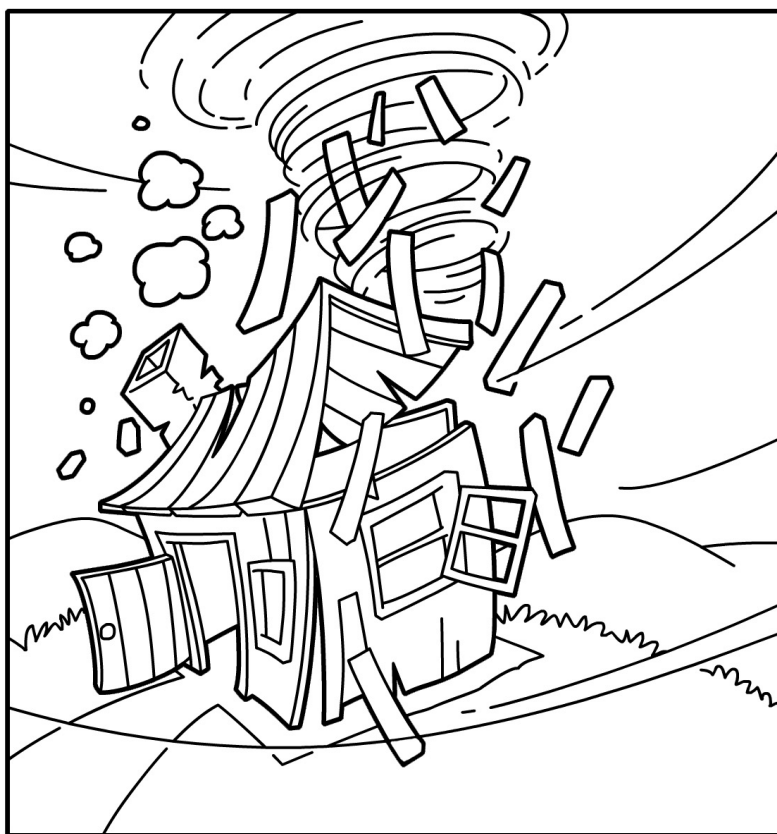
Today, however, they were not playing. Uncle Henry sat upon the doorstep and looked anxiously at the sky, which was even greyer than usual. Dorothy stood in the door with Toto in her arms, and looked at the sky too. Aunt Em was washing the dishes. From the far north they heard the low wail of the wind and Uncle Henry and Dorothy could see where the long grass bowed in waves before the coming storm. There now came a sharp whistling in the air from the south, and as they turned their eyes that way, they saw ripples in the grass coming from that direction.

Suddenly Uncle Henry stood up. "There's a cyclone coming, Em," he called to his wife. "I'll go look after the stock." Then he ran toward the sheds where the cows and horses were kept. Aunt Em dropped her work and came to the door. One glance told her of the danger close at hand.

"Quick, Dorothy!" she screamed. "Run for the cellar!"

Toto jumped out of Dorothy's arms and hid under the bed and the girl went to get him. Aunt Em, badly frightened, threw open the trap door in the floor and climbed down the ladder into the small, dark hole. Dorothy caught Toto at last and started to follow her aunt. When she was halfway across the room there came a great shriek from the wind, and the house shook so hard that she lost her footing and sat down suddenly upon the floor.

Then a strange thing happened. The house whirled around two or three times and rose slowly through the air. Dorothy felt as if she were going up in a balloon. The north and south winds met where the house stood, and made it the exact centre of the cyclone. In the middle of a cyclone the air is generally still, but the great pressure of the wind on every side of the house raised it up higher and higher, until it was at the very top of the cyclone; and there it remained and was carried miles and miles away as easily as you could carry a feather.



It was very dark, and the wind howled horribly around her, but Dorothy found she was riding quite easily. After the first few whirls around, and one other time when the house tipped badly, she felt as if she were being rocked gently, like a baby in a cradle. Toto did not like it. He ran about the room, now here, now there, barking loudly; but Dorothy sat quite still on the floor and waited to see what would happen.

You can read the rest of this story online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/55/55-h/55-h.htm#chap01>

After reading, complete the questions in your class workbook.

1. Use your dictionary to look up the meanings of these words

cyclone prairie lumber sober whirls

2. What type of writing do you think this story falls under – folktale, mystery story, true story, adventure story, fantasy story, fable, realistic fiction, biography or science fiction story? Give a reason for your answer. Write a definition of each type of story.
3. Do you think Dorothy’s relatives were happy before the cyclone? Give a reason for your answer.
4. Why was Dorothy living with her relatives?
5. Do you think Dorothy went to school? Give a reason for your answer.
6. How do you think Dorothy enjoyed living in Kansas?
7. Make up a new title for the story.
8. Which of these elements of a story exist in this story in its current state?

Beginning	Characters and setting are introduced.	
Middle	Events start to take place	
	A problem of some sort is introduced	
	Events start to lead to a climax	
	Climax or main event takes place	
End	Problem is sorted out	
	The story comes to an end	

9. What do you think happened next in the story? Make up your own ending.
10. Dorothy loved having Toto to play with. Do you have any animals that you love to play with? Explain your answer.