

Earth Science Tornadoes

Did you ever see the movie *The Wizard of Oz*? A **tornado**¹ sweeps up Dorothy and Toto, sending them to a new world where there are witches and talking lions! That entire story is **fiction**², but tornadoes are real and they are serious business. In fact, they can be the most dangerous storms of all.

Tornadoes are sometimes referred to as twisters or **cyclones**³. They are shaped like a **cylinder**⁴. They are born in thunderclouds. The winds inside a tornado swirl around and around and can be more than 300 miles per hour (mph). The winds are so strong that tornadoes can lift animals, cars, and even houses.

The United States has more tornadoes than any other country in the world. States such as Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska are hit hard by tornadoes. This part of the country is known as “Tornado Alley.” Tornado season is during the springtime and summer. If the conditions are right, a tornado can happen any time of year.

¹ **tornado** – a violent, whirling wind with a funnel-shaped cloud

² **fiction** – writing or information that is not true

³ **cyclone** – a violent windstorm

⁴ **cylinder** – a hollow or solid object that is shaped like a tube or a pipe

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where do tornadoes begin?
 - a. in the ocean
 - b. underground
 - c. in cyclones
 - d. in thunderclouds

2. Why does the author mention *The Wizard of Oz* at the beginning of the passage?
 - a. to give a famous example of a tornado
 - b. to give a history of tornadoes
 - c. to show that hurricanes are not real
 - d. to explain why tornadoes are dangerous

3. Based on the passage, people who live in Tornado Alley should
 - a. expect tornadoes only during the summer.
 - b. be very familiar with the movie *The Wizard of Oz*.
 - c. be prepared for the dangers of tornadoes.
 - d. think about moving to the United States.

4. Read the following sentence: "Tornado season is during the springtime and summer. If the **conditions** are right, a tornado can happen any time of year."

The word **conditions** means

- a. preparations
 - b. dangerous hazards
 - c. the way things are
 - d. lucky feelings
-
5. What is the main idea of this passage?
 - a. Some states get tornadoes more than other states.
 - b. Tornadoes are dangerous storms that affect the U.S.
 - c. Tornadoes are different from how they are in movies.
 - d. Many tornadoes do not cause a lot of damage.

6. Explain what a tornado is and what it looks like.

7. Why can tornadoes be considered “the most dangerous of all storms”? Explain using at least one specific detail from the passage.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Tornadoes hit some places very often, _____ the states in Tornado Alley.

- a. but
- b. moreover
- c. especially
- d. after

9. Read the following sentence.

In the United States, during springtime and summer, tornadoes are a hazard for many people because of the enormous damage they cause.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. What? tornadoes
- 2. What are tornadoes? _____
- 3. When? _____
- 4. Where? _____
- 5. Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** fiction: writing or information that is not true.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 850

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: Tornadoes are a dangerous storm in which the winds can twist up to 300 mph. Tornado season in the U.S. is spring and summer.

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 - d. in thunderclouds**

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5. What is the main idea of this passage?

- a. Some states get tornadoes more than other states.
- b. **Tornadoes are dangerous storms that affect the U.S.**
- c. Tornadoes are different from how they are in movies.
- d. Many tornadoes do not cause a lot of damage.

6. Explain what a tornado is and what it looks like.

Suggested answer: Tornadoes are dangerous storms that start with thunderclouds. They are shaped like a cylinder. The winds inside a tornado swirl around at up to 300 mph.

7. Why can tornadoes be considered “the most dangerous of all storms”? Explain using at least one specific detail from the passage.

Suggested answer: Tornadoes are dangerous because their strong winds can reach 300 miles per hour and can move cars, houses, and animals.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

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- a. but
- b. moreover
- c. **especially**
- d. after

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- 2. What are tornadoes? **a hazard for many people**

3. When? **springtime and summer**
4. Where? **in the United States**
5. Why? **because of the enormous damage they cause**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** fiction: writing or information that is not true.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.