

Floods occur when water flows over land that is usually dry. In the United States, most floods are caused by too much rain that makes rivers, lakes, or oceans overflow. Floods can also be caused by too much rain that results in a broken levee. A **levee** is a wall built along a river so the river will not overflow. Floods can wash away crops, destroy homes and property, wash away roads, kill people and animals, and contaminate the water supply.

Droughts occur when less rain than expected occurs. Droughts are difficult to predict and usually occur when winds change direction so that no rain clouds move over the land. Some droughts last for years. The Dust Bowl was formed by a severe drought in the United States in the southern Great Plains. It lasted from 1931 to 1938. During a drought, crops fail, and animals and people can die from lack of water and lack of food since no crops will grow.

Examples of **windstorms** are hurricanes, tornadoes, **waterspouts**, twisters, whirlwinds, and cyclones. A waterspout is a tornado over the water. It lasts longer but is not as strong as a tornado; its winds are lower than fifty miles per hour. **Dust devils** are tornadoes that occur in the desert.

A strong thunderstorm makes wind spin around and around and can turn the wind into a **tornado**, which is an enormous spinning wind. Its winds are so fast and strong that it can blow houses and buildings apart. It can be very loud; some sound like trains. Tornadoes can drive a piece of straw through cement, shred wood into splinters, and throw cars into the air. Most last fewer than ten minutes, and some last just a few seconds. Tornadoes hang down from thunderclouds like an elephant's trunk. The outside edge of a tornado contains winds exceeding 240 miles per hour. A tornado's shape is formed when the bottom of a cloud twists to form a funnel.

A **blizzard** is one of the most powerful storms. It has strong winds and heavy snow. The abundance of snow creates **snowdrifts**, huge piles of snow that can be more than twenty feet tall. Because it is cold, the snow does not melt; it just piles up. Wind can knock down power lines and trees. In a blizzard, it can snow so hard that it is difficult or impossible to see. This is called a **whiteout**, where everything appears completely white from the snow.

Answer the Following

1. What causes a drought? _____
2. What damage can a flood cause? _____

3. What is a tornado? How is it created? _____

4. What is a waterspout? _____