

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# What are Hurricanes?



Hurricanes are earth's largest storms and they are often referred to as extreme or severe weather events. When hurricanes happen, they cover a large area that can be as large as 300 miles (450 or more Km). The winds of a hurricane are very strong and fast and have speeds of up to 200 miles per hour (300 Km). Hurricanes always begin over warm oceans starting as a small storm, gaining more power by the time they reach the shorelines of land. At the shorelines, waves from the hurricanes can cause devastating damage and the flooding can continue as they move inland. A storm is classified as a hurricane once the winds reach 74 MPH (119 Km). Hurricanes create damaging winds, torrential rainfall, floods, and they can even set off tornadoes. Hurricanes are classified by wind speed, the higher the wind speed, the higher the classification will be. Hurricanes are classified as being category 1 to category 5 with 5 being the most severe type of hurricane and having the fastest wind speeds. Meteorologists can often predict when hurricanes are coming with their special instruments that allow them to see the spinning 'vortex' over the ocean. When you listen to the weather reports, you will hear that there is a hurricane watch or a hurricane warning. (*Watch and warning are used in many weather events.*) A 'watch' means the weather event is possible and a 'warning' means the weather event is likely. It is important to know what to do and how to prepare for severe weather events. Listen carefully to the forecasts, and know where to take shelter.

## Questions:

- ❶ In your own words, define hurricane.
- ❷ Why are hurricanes called severe or extreme weather events?
- ❸ Where do all hurricanes start?
- ❹ How are hurricanes classified?
- ❺ What is the difference between weather events when forecasters predict a 'warning' versus a 'watch'?