

Dangerous Weather

Companion Text: If You See the Moon, by Zia Wells

Subject Area & Grade Level: Social Studies, 5th Grade

Materials: Internet or library access

Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Reflect on their personal lives from a civic perspective
- Identify and describe government agencies involved in weather-related emergencies
- Evaluate the response of government to specific weather-related emergencies

Introduction

Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever experienced being in bad weather. Allow some time for students to share their experiences. Ask what or who helped them get through the experience, or recover afterward.

Procedure

Read the story once through without stopping. Ask students if they can identify which weather phenomenon is described in the book (a deluge). Sometimes, extended or swift rain can cause flooding in areas where the ground is too dry for the rain to soak in, or where rivers or lakes overflow. Ask students which areas of federal, state, and local government are responsible for communicating about, preventing, and aiding victims of bad weather. Pass out the attached list of some major government agencies or services and fill it in with students using the Internet or other resources. Then, have students list as many types of dangerous weather they can think of, and make a list together on the board. Your list could include: floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, hailstorms, lightning strikes, etc.

Discussion

Have students choose a specific example of a weather-related emergency about which they are familiar or interested in researching (i.e. Hurricane Katrina, California wildfires, tornados in Kansas), and one of the government agencies from their charts that had a role in that emergency. Then, have each student evaluate the response of the government agency to the emergency, and, as homework, prepare an oral report detailing their opinion. Have students present reports and answer their peers' questions on the situations they describe. Be sure their reports address the following questions:

- What was the weather-related emergency?
- Which government agencies was involved and what did it do?
- Did the agency function as it was intended?
- Were there any ways its response to the emergency could have been improved?



Government Agencies That Play a Role in Weather Emergencies

List the function of each federal agency or service below as it relates to weather emergencies. Then, add your local and state agencies and their functions to the list. Don't forget first responders (i.e., police departments, fire departments, and EMS), and state-specific agencies (i.e., California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection).

- National Weather Service
- FEMA
- National Guard
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- United States Coast Guard
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