

# Lesson **1**

## Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

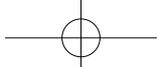
*Joseph P. Blank*



① **J**ohn Koshak, Jr., knew that Hurricane Camille would be bad. Radio and television warnings had sounded throughout that Sunday, last August 17, as Camille lashed northwestward across the Gulf of Mexico. It was certain to pummel Gulfport, Miss., where the Koshaks lived. Along the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi

5

1



and Alabama, nearly 150,000 people fled inland to safer ground. But, like thousands of others in the coastal communities, John was reluctant to abandon his home unless the family—his wife, Janis, and their seven children, aged 3 to 11—was clearly endangered. 10

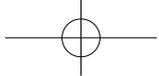
② Trying to reason out the best course of action, he talked with his father and mother, who had moved into the ten-room house with the Koshaks a month earlier from California. He also consulted Charles Hill, a longtime friend, who had driven from Las Vegas for a visit. 15

③ John, 37—whose business was right there in his home (he designed and developed educational toys and supplies, and all of Magna Products' correspondence, engineering drawings and art work were there on the first floor)—was familiar with the power of a hurricane. Four years earlier, Hurricane Betsy had demolished his former home a few miles west of Gulfport (Koshak had moved his family to a motel for the night). But that house had stood only a few feet above sea level. "We're elevated 23 feet," he told his father, "and we're a good 250 yards from the sea. The place has been here since 1915, and no hurricane has ever bothered it. We'll probably be as safe here as anyplace else." 20 25

④ The elder Koshak, a gruff, warmhearted expert machinist of 67, agreed. "We can batten down and ride it out," he said. "If we see signs of danger, we can get out before dark."

⑤ The men methodically prepared for the hurricane. Since water mains might be damaged, they filled bathtubs and pails. A power failure was likely, so they checked out batteries for the portable radio and flashlights, and fuel for the lantern. John's father moved a small generator into the downstairs hallway, wired several light bulbs to it and prepared a connection to the refrigerator. 30 35

⑥ Rain fell steadily that afternoon; gray clouds scudded in



## Lesson 1 Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

from the Gulf on the rising wind. The family had an early supper. A neighbor, whose husband was in Vietnam, asked if she and her two children could sit out the storm with the Koshaks. Another neighbor came by on his way inland—would the Koshaks mind taking care of his dog? 40

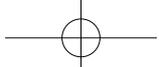
⑦ It grew dark before seven o'clock. Wind and rain now whipped the house. John sent his oldest son and daughter upstairs to bring down mattresses and pillows for the younger children. He wanted to keep the group together on one floor. "Stay away from the windows," he warned, concerned about glass flying from storm-shattered panes. As the wind mounted to a roar, the house began leaking—the rain seemingly driven right through the walls. With mops, towels, pots and buckets the Koshaks began a struggle against the rapidly spreading water. At 8:30, power failed, and Pop Koshak turned on the generator. 50

⑧ The roar of the hurricane now was overwhelming. The house shook, and the ceiling in the living room was falling piece by piece. The French doors in an upstairs room blew in with an explosive sound, and the group heard gun-like reports as other upstairs windows disintegrated. Water rose above their ankles. 55

⑨ Then the front door started to break away from its frame. John and Charlie put their shoulders against it, but a blast of water hit the house, flinging open the door and shoving them down the hall. The generator was doused, and the lights went out. Charlie licked his lips and shouted to John. "I think we're in real trouble. That water tasted salty." The sea had reached the house, and the water was rising by the minute! 60

⑩ "Everybody out the back door to the cars!" John yelled. "We'll pass the children along between us. Count them! Nine!" 65

⑪ The children went from adult to adult like buckets in a fire



brigade. But the cars wouldn't start; the electrical systems had been killed by water. The wind was too strong and the water too deep to flee on foot. "Back to the house!" John yelled. "Count the children! Count nine!" 70

⑫ As they scrambled back, John ordered, "Everybody on the stairs!" Frightened, breathless and wet, the group settled on the stairs, which were protected by two interior walls. The children put the cat, Spooky, and a box with her four kittens on the landing. She peered nervously at her litter. The neighbor's dog curled up and went to sleep. 75

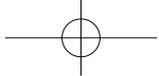
⑬ The wind sounded like the roar of a train passing a few yards away. The house shuddered and shifted on its foundations. Water inched its way up the steps as first-floor outside walls collapsed. No one spoke. Everyone knew there was no escape; they would live or die in the house. 80

⑭ Charlie Hill had more or less taken responsibility for the neighbor and her two children. The mother was on the verge of panic. She clutched his arm and kept repeating, "I can't swim, I can't swim." 85

⑮ "You won't have to," he told her, with outward calm. "It's bound to end soon."

⑯ Grandmother Koshak reached an arm around her husband's shoulder and put her mouth close to his ear. "Pop," she said, "I love you." He turned his head and answered, "I love you"—and his voice lacked its usual gruffness. 90

⑰ John watched the water lap at the steps, and felt a crushing guilt. He had underestimated the ferocity of Camille. He had assumed that what had never happened could not happen. He held his head between his hands, and silently prayed: "Get us through this mess, will You?" 95



## Lesson 1 Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

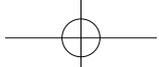
⑱ A moment later, the hurricane, in one mighty swipe, lifted the entire roof off the house and skimmed it 40 feet through the air. The bottom steps of the staircase broke apart. One wall began crumbling on the marooned group. 100

⑲ Dr. Robert H. Simpson, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Fla., graded Hurricane Camille as “the greatest recorded storm ever to hit a populated area in the Western Hemisphere.” In its concentrated breadth of some 70 miles it shot out winds of nearly 200 m.p.h. and raised tides as high as 30 feet. 105  
Along the Gulf Coast it devastated everything in its swath: 19,467 homes and 709 small businesses were demolished or severely damaged. It seized a 600,000-gallon Gulfport oil tank and dumped it  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles away. It tore three large cargo ships from their moorings and beached them. Telephone poles and 20-inch-thick pines cracked like guns as the winds snapped them. 110

⑳ To the west of Gulfport, the town of Pass Christian was virtually wiped out. Several vacationers at the luxurious Richelieu Apartments there held a hurricane party to watch the storm from their spectacular vantage point. Richelieu Apartments were smashed apart as if by a gigantic fist, and 26 people perished. 115

㉑ Seconds after the roof blew off the Koshak house, John yelled, “Up the stairs—into our bedroom! Count the kids.” The children huddled in the slashing rain within the circle of adults. Grandmother Koshak implored, “Children, let’s sing!” The children were too frightened to respond. She carried on alone for a few bars; then her voice trailed away. 120

㉒ Debris flew as the living-room fireplace and its chimney collapsed. With two walls in their bedroom sanctuary beginning to disintegrate, John ordered, “Into the television room!” This was the 125



room farthest from the direction of the storm.

⑳ For an instant, John put his arm around his wife. Janis understood. Shivering from the wind and rain and fear, clutching two children to her, she thought, Dear Lord, give me the strength to endure what I have to. She felt anger against the hurricane. We won't let it win. 130

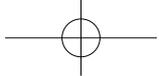
㉑ Pop Koshak raged silently, frustrated at not being able to do anything to fight Camille. Without reason, he dragged a cedar chest and a double mattress from a bedroom into the TV room. At that moment, the wind tore out one wall and extinguished the lantern. A second wall moved, wavered, Charlie Hill tried to support it, but it toppled on him, injuring his back. The house, shuddering and rocking, had moved 25 feet from its foundations. The world seemed to be breaking apart. 135

㉒ “Let's get that mattress up!” John shouted to his father. “Make it a lean-to against the wind. Get the kids under it. We can prop it up with our heads and shoulders!” 140

㉓ The larger children sprawled on the floor, with the smaller ones in a layer on top of them, and the adults bent over all nine. The floor tilted. The box containing the litter of kittens slid off a shelf and vanished in the wind. Spooky flew off the top of a sliding bookcase and also disappeared. The dog cowered with eyes closed. A third wall gave way. Water lapped across the slanting floor. John grabbed a door which was still hinged to one closet wall. “If the floor goes,” he yelled at his father, “let's get the kids on this.” 145 150

㉔ In that moment, the wind slightly diminished, and the water stopped rising. Then the water began receding. The main thrust of Camille had passed. The Koshaks and their friends had survived.

㉕ With the dawn, Gulfport people started coming back to their homes. They saw human bodies—more than 130 men, women and 155



## Lesson 1 Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

children died along the Mississippi coast—and parts of the beach and highway were strewn with dead dogs, cats, cattle. Strips of clothing festooned the standing trees, and blowdown power lines coiled like black spaghetti over the roads.

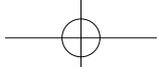
②9 None of the returnees moved quickly or spoke loudly; they stood shocked, trying to absorb the shattering scenes before their eyes. “What do we do?” they asked. “Where do we go?” 160

③0 By this time, organizations within the area and, in effect, the entire population of the United States had come to the aid of the devastated coast. Before dawn, the Mississippi National Guard and civil-defense units were moving in to handle traffic, guard property, set up communications centers, help clear the debris and take the homeless by truck and bus to refugee centers. By 10 a.m., the Salvation Army’s canteen trucks and Red Cross volunteers and staffers were going wherever possible to distribute hot drinks, food, clothing and bedding. 165 170

③1 From hundreds of towns and cities across the country came several million dollars in donations; household and medical supplies streamed in by plane, train, truck and car. The federal government shipped 4,400,000 pounds of food, moved in mobile homes, set up portable classrooms, opened offices to provide low-interest, long-term business loans. 175

③2 Camille, meanwhile, had raked its way northward across Mississippi, dropping more than 28 inches of rain into West Virginia and southern Virginia, causing rampaging floods, huge mountain slides and 111 additional deaths before breaking up over the Atlantic Ocean. 180

③3 Like many other Gulfport families, the Koshaks quickly began reorganizing their lives. John divided his family in the homes of two friends. The neighbor with her two children went to a refugee center. Charlie Hill found a room for rent. By Tuesday, Charlie’s back had 185



improved, and he pitched in with Seabees in the worst volunteer work of all—searching for bodies. Three days after the storm, he decided not to return to Las Vegas, but to “remain in Gulfport and help rebuild the community.”

③4 Near the end of the first week, a friend offered the Koshaks 190 his apartment, and the family was reunited. The children appeared to suffer no psychological damage from their experience; they were still awed by the incomprehensible power of the hurricane, but enjoyed describing what they had seen and heard on that frightful night. Janis had just one delayed reaction. A few nights after the 195 hurricane, she awoke suddenly at 2 a.m. She quietly got up and went outside. Looking up at the sky and, without knowing she was going to do it, she began to cry softly.

③5 Meanwhile, John, Pop and Charlie were picking through the wreckage of the home. It could have been depressing, but it wasn't: each 200 salvaged item represented a little victory over the wrath of the storm. The dog and cat suddenly appeared at the scene, alive and hungry.

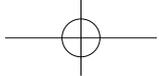
③6 But the blues did occasionally afflict all the adults. Once, in a low mood, John said to his parents, “I wanted you here so that we would all be together, so you could enjoy the children, and look 205 what happened.”

③7 His father, who had made up his mind to start a welding shop when living was normal again, said, “Let's not cry about what's gone. We'll just start all over.”

③8 “You're great,” John said. “And this town has a lot of great 210 people in it. It's going to be better here than it ever was before.”

③9 Later, Grandmother Koshak reflected: “We lost practically all our possessions, but the family came through it. When I think of that, I realize we lost nothing important.”

(from *Rhetoric and Literature* by P. Joseph Canavan)



## Lesson 1 Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

### Notes

1. Joseph P. Blank: The writer published “Face to Face with Hurricane Camille” in the *Reader’s Digest*, March 1970.
2. Hurricane Camille: In the United States hurricanes are named alphabetically and given the names of people like Hurricane Camille, Hurricane Betsy, and so on.
3. The Salvation Army: A Protestant religious body devoted to the conversion of, and social work among the poor, and characterized by use of military titles, uniforms, etc. It was founded in 1878 by “General” Booth in London; now worldwide in operation.
4. Red Cross: an international organization (in full *International Red Cross*), founded in 1864 with headquarters and branches in all countries signatory to the Geneva Convention, for the relief of suffering in time of war or disaster

## EXERCISES

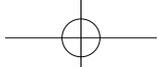
### I. Write a short note of about 100 words on Las Vegas.

Suggested Reference Books [SRB]

1. any standard gazetteer
2. *Encyclopedia Americana*
3. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

### II. Questions on content:

1. Why did John Koshak decide to stay and face the dangers of a devastating hurricane?
2. What does “Magna Products” stand for?



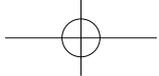
3. Why did Charlie think they were in real trouble when he found the water tasted salty?
4. Why did Grandmother Koshak, at this critical moment, tell her husband she loved him?
5. Why did John Koshak feel a crushing guilt?
6. Why did Grandmother Koshak ask the children to sing?
7. What did Janis understand when John put his arm around her?

### III. Questions on appreciation:

1. What is the organizational pattern of this piece of narration? How would you classify the first six paragraphs?
2. What does the writer focus chiefly on—developing character, action (plot), or idea (theme)?
3. Who is the protagonist or leading character in the story?
4. What opposing forces make up the conflict?
5. How does the writer build up and sustain the suspense in the story?
6. How does the writer give order and logical movement to the sequence of happenings?
7. At what point in the story does the action reach its highest point?
8. At what point would you have ended the story? Why?
9. Is the last paragraph important? Why?

### IV. Paraphrase:

1. We're elevated 23 feet. (para 3)
2. The place has been here since 1915, and no hurricane has ever bothered it. (para 3)
3. We can batten down and ride it out. (para 4)
4. The generator was doused, and the lights went out. (para 9)
5. Everybody out the back door to the cars! (para 10)



## Lesson 1 Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

6. The electrical systems had been killed by water. (para 11)
7. John watched the water lap at the steps, and felt a crushing guilt. (para 17)
8. Get us through this mess, will You? (para 17)
9. She carried on alone for a few bars; then her voice trailed away. (para 21)
10. Janis had just one delayed reaction. (para 34)

### V. Translate paragraphs 21-27 into Chinese.

### VI. Look up the dictionary and explain the meaning of the italicized words:

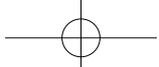
1. since the water *mains* might be damaged (para 5)
2. *sit out* the storm with the Koshaks (para 6)
3. another neighbor *came by* on his way inland (para 6)
4. the French doors in an upstairs room *blew in* (para 8)
5. the generator was *doused* (para 9)
6. the electrical systems had been *killed* by water (para 11)
7. it devastated everything in its *swath* (para 19)
8. she carried on alone for a few *bars* (para 21)
9. make it a *lean-to* against the wind (para 25)
10. and he pitched in with *Seabees* in the worst volunteer work of all (para 33)

### VII. Discriminate the following groups of synonyms:

1. demolish, destroy, raze, annihilate
2. disintegrate, decay, rot, spoil, mold, decompose

[SRB]

1. *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*
2. *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms*



3. *Reader's Digest, Use the Right Word*

VIII. Analyze the formation of the following words and list 5-10 examples of each:

1. television
2. northwestward
3. motel
4. bathtub
5. returnees

[SRB]

1. any standard dictionary
2. *Walker's Rhyming Dictionary*
3. any book on lexicology or word building

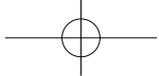
IX. In this narration, the writer makes effective use of verbs. List 10 verbs you consider used most effectively and give your reasons.

X. Mention two examples of each of the following: simile, metaphor, personification.

XI. Why does the writer use so many elliptical and short simple sentences? Illustrate your answer with a few examples.

XII. Analyze paragraph 1. Does it have a topic sentence, a central idea? How is the paragraph developed? What is the function of the last sentence?

XIII. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences. Avoid run-on sentences, sentence fragments, dangling modifiers, illogical or faulty parallelism and unnecessary shifts in point of view.

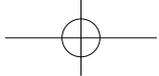


## Lesson 1 Face to Face with Hurricane Camille

1. The basketball game was canceled. Because half of the players were in bed with the flu.
2. These snakes are dangerous however, most snakes are quite harmless.
3. Looking out toward the horizon, she saw only the old cabin in which Mary had been born. A single cottonwood that had escaped the drought. The apparently boundless expanse of sunburned prairie.
4. With the knowledge that, although the documents have been stolen, they have not yet been seen by a foreign agent.
5. Last year, after graduating from high school, my father put me to work in his office.
6. To appreciate the poem, it must be read aloud.
7. I helped my mother wash clothes last Sunday, thus causing me to miss that film.
8. Driving across the state, many beautiful lakes were seen.
9. Unselfish people not only are happier but they are more successful.
10. I finally realized that my daydreaming was not making me beautiful, slender, or friends.
11. He is a man of wide experience and who is also very popular with the farmers.
12. I am interested in electronics, because it is a new field and which offers interesting opportunities to one who knows science.
13. We swept the room carefully, and the furniture and shelves were dusted.
14. If one's mouth is dry, eat a lump of sugar or chew gum.
15. You must make yourself interesting to the group that listens to you and are constantly trying to detect your mistakes.

### XIV. Topics for oral work:

1. What are the strong and weak points of the narration?
2. Whom do you admire most in this story? Why?



3. What have you learned about people and society in the United States?  
Does the story give a true and complete picture?

**XV. Write a short narration of around 300 words relating to your experience of an earthquake, a flood, a typhoon or a hailstorm.**