Tornado Alert

Tornadoes are powerful storms that happen in the United States every year. Some tornadoes can cause great damage.

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.

Tornadoes are powerful storms.
On a tornado day the air is hot and still. Clouds build up rapidly. They get thick and dark. In the distance there is thunder and lightning, rain and hail.
Here and there parts of the clouds seem to reach toward the ground. Should these parts grow larger and become funnel shaped, watch out. The funnels could become tornadoes.
The funnel of a tornado is usually dark gray or black. It may also be yellowish or red.
The colors come from red and yellow dirt picked up by the tornado as it moves along the ground.
Tornadoes can strike most anywhere, but usually they happen where there is a lot of flat land. Most tornadoes occur in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. Florida also has a lot of tornadoes.
Tornadoes can touch down over seas and lakes. When that happens, they are called waterspouts.
Most tornadoes occur during April, May, and June. That's when cold air meets warm air near the Earth's surface. The cold air pushes under the warm air. The warm air is lighter than the cold air and rises rapidly.
As the warm air moves upward, it spins around, or twists. That's why tornadoes are sometimes called twisters. Some people call them cyclones. The wind speed around the funnel of the tornado may reach 300 miles an hour. No other wind on Earth blows that fast.
As the hot air rises, it also spreads out. It makes a funnel of air, with the small part of the funnel touching the ground and the large part in the dark clouds. Air all around the tornado moves in toward the funnel. At the same time, storm winds push the twisting funnel, moving it along the Earth.
During tornado season in the United States, there may be 40 or 50 tornadoes in one week. Sometimes there are many more. Most are small. Usually a tornado blows itself out in less than an hour. Some last only a few seconds.

Small tornadoes don’t travel far, and they cause little damage. Big tornadoes destroy everything in their paths. They may travel two hundred miles and last several hours.

During a tornado there is thunder and lightning, rain and hail. And there is lots of noise. It can sound as loud as a freight train or a jet engine. The word *tornado* comes from a Latin word that means thunder. Some of the noise does come from thunder, but most of it comes from the roaring wind. There is lots of noise, and lots and lots of wind.

Tornadoes are very powerful, and some cause a lot of damage. Tornadoes can pick up branches and boards, stones and bricks, cars, and sometimes even people.

They can rip off roofs and leave a trail of wrecked houses. A tornado’s path may be only 20 or 30 feet wide. Or it might be 1000 feet or more—maybe even a mile.

In 1931 a tornado in Minnesota lifted a train off its tracks. The train and its passengers were carried through the air and dropped 80 feet from the tracks. There were 170 people on board. Though many people were hurt, only one person was killed. But in 1974, a series of tornadoes in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and ten other states killed 315 people in twenty-four hours.
Read the questions, and write your answers on the lines. You may look back at the selection to help you with your answers.

1. What is the weather like on a tornado day?

2. Why are tornadoes also called twisters?

3. What is a waterspout?
4. What causes most of the noise during a tornado?

5. Give two reasons why big tornadoes are more dangerous than small ones.
Read the questions, and fill in the circle next to your answer. You may look back at the selection to help you with your answers.

6. What gives some tornadoes a yellowish or red color?
   - a. paint from trains and houses
   - b. water in the clouds
   - c. dirt the tornado has picked up
   - d. pollution in the air where the tornado forms

7. Where do tornadoes strike most often?
   - a. where there is a lot of flat land
   - b. in very mountainous regions
   - c. where there are a lot of trees
   - d. near big cities

8. How fast can winds blow in a tornado?
   - a. 250 miles an hour
   - b. 300 miles an hour
   - c. 74 miles an hour
   - d. 50 miles an hour

9. When is tornado season in the United States?
   - a. August, September, and October
   - b. January, February, and March
   - c. June, July, and August
   - d. April, May, and June

10. A tornado usually blows itself out in how long?
    - a. a minute
    - b. less than an hour
    - c. a day
    - d. a week
Self-Assessment

★ How much did you like the selection? Mark an X in one of the spaces on the line.

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<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion</td>
<td>No response or completely inaccurate.</td>
<td>Partially correct. May say hot or still or rainy.</td>
<td>Substantially complete and correct. States two of the following: the air is hot and still; thick, dark clouds form; there is thunder, lightning, rain, and hail.</td>
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2. Why are tornadoes also called twisters?

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<td>Substantially complete and correct. States that the air in a tornado spins around, or twists.</td>
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3. What is a waterspout?

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<td>Partially correct. May say a storm that touches water.</td>
<td>Substantially complete and correct. States that a waterspout is a tornado that touches down over or on water.</td>
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Go On
4. What causes most of the noise during a tornado?

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5. Give two reasons why big tornadoes are more dangerous than small ones.

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<td>Partially correct. May say they are powerful or list one reason.</td>
<td>Substantially complete and correct. States two of the following: big tornadoes travel farther, last longer, and can destroy everything in their path.</td>
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