



Middle Level Learning

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Putting Conflict in the Curriculum

Tedd Levy

*One may conquer in battle
a thousand times a thousand men,
yet he is the best of conquerors
who conquers himself.*

—The Teaching of Buddha

After violence flared in a California school, Secretary of Education Rod Paige said that student alienation and rage is the biggest factor in school shootings and addressing that problem should be the country's priority. A few weeks later, in far away Afghanistan, Taliban vandals blasted away at the two giant standing Buddhas of Bamiyan, works of priceless ancient art carved in a cliff more than 1,400 years ago. A Taliban spokesman said "the Islamic government made its decision in a rage after a foreign delegation offered money to preserve the ancient works while a million Afghans faced starvation."¹

If ending young lives and destroying historic treasures is caused by rage, the reaction is clearly outrage. Do we social studies teachers have a responsibility here?

Rage—with its forceful, violent, and uncontrolled expression—is only one

aspect of the larger concept of conflict. Students need to know that rage is an inappropriate and dangerous human behavior. It is, regrettably, an attention-grabber. But students need to know, too, that conflict is a normal and important part of human social behavior. As an idea, we have often been reluctant to examine its potential for learning. For example, it is not singled out in any of the social studies standards guides. Yet, one cannot imagine human interactions without some conflict.

Conflict—a clash of opposing ideas, interests, or perceptions—can cause change for better or worse. It operates within and between individuals, groups and nations. It is, and has been, one of the major forces shaping lives throughout history and around the world. It is an everyday experience and a driving force for change.²

Sights and sounds of conflict surround us. In class, we often tend to gloss over it, treating the subject as a sort of necessary evil. Textbooks are even more cautious. Even where conflicts are dealt with, they are often treated as a bump on a road of progress, problems that are ultimately resolved in a spirit of cooperation. Or, when blood was shed, this was part of some sanitized heroic force, drained of human emotion.

Conflict is natural when people come

into contact and compete for jobs, land, respect, or recognition. This is conflict motivated by need, greed, or creed. And when the conflict is between nationalistic, religious, or ethnic groups, it is not surprising that its resolution may be complex and difficult.

Every culture has developed routines and traditions for handling conflicts. Many of our institutions, including legislative and judicial systems, can be seen as complex social arrangements for expressing and resolving conflicting interests and ideas. Less daunting forms of conflict resolution may include negotiation, mediation, or arbitration. Simply avoiding conflicts, or pretending that they don't exist, or trying to end them in violent ways are often non-productive responses in the long run.

In studying people, literature has something to offer social studies. The more students understand human behavior, the more likely they will be able to understand events at a more sophisticated level. In analyzing social events, students may benefit from by using elements of a literary model: plot, character, setting, and points of view.

Conflict is essential for understanding almost any social event, the plot. It allows character traits to emerge as individuals act or react to problems in a particular time and place. The story provides differing

points of view. The conflicts are within the mind of an individual (character and ethical issues); between people, groups, or nations (political, economic, social, and ethical issues); and between society and the natural world or the unknown (scientific and religious issues).

"Our history is replete with all manner of struggle endured by men and women and people from all races and economic strata."¹ Good social studies deals with human emotions, thoughts, and actions. Like good literature, there's a suspenseful plot, a compelling cast of characters, purposeful conflict—and in the end, some insight and understanding. We need conflict in our curriculum. ■

Notes

1. "Tribun: War for War's Sake," *New York Times* (March 18, 2001).
2. Gail Metz and Carol Miller Leber, *Conflict in Context: Understanding Local to Global Society* (Cambridge, MA: Education for Social Responsibility, 2001). This book contains 19 practical lesson plans on conflict and conflict resolution for middle and high school classrooms.
3. James A. Perazzo, *Divided We Stand: Teaching About Conflict in U.S. History* (Portsmouth,

NH: Heinemann, 2001). This book contains engaging ideas and activities for helping students make sense of the many conflicts in U.S. history.

About the Author

Tedd Levy, a former middle school teacher who is now an educational consultant, was president of NCSS in 1998-99. He lives in Norwalk, Connecticut.

Lookout Point is an open forum. For consideration, send your essay of 850 words or less to *Middle Level Learning*. Our current address is NCSS, 3501 Newark Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016. Letters to the editor are also welcome.

Letter to the Editor

Influential Defender

The Lookout Point of January/February 2001 featured Tedd Levy's query, "Who Influences Social Studies?" and his answer, a list of ten people and a brief description of their work and organizations. I would like to mention another influential player in the social studies arena.

Ira Glasser, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, and all the ACLU's state and local chapters, have supported academic freedom and defended unpopular speech for social studies teachers and their students. Since its inception in 1920, members of the ACLU have challenged McCarthyism; censorship of books, plays and school newspapers; state-sponsored prayer in schools; and discrimination against students and teachers based on their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or appearance.

Andrea S. Jabresco
Teacher, Oceanside High School
Oceanside, New York

Our democracy today needs service-learning in the schools. Service-learning instructs students in the tenets of democracy and also gives them the means, methods, and inspiration to affect it for the better. This book, which offers teaching suggestions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, features an incredibly diverse array of service-learning projects. Topics include AIDS awareness, community planning, shelters for the homeless, and marine environmental activism. An informative overview of the history of service-learning is also included, along with an outline of the challenges that the service-learning movement must address to thrive in the new millennium.


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Tracking a Hurricane: A Mapping Exercise in Real Time

Donna Kay Mau

Weather phenomena such as hurricanes receive a great deal of media coverage. Newspapers, TV weather reports, and the Internet all provide information about hurricane warnings, landfalls, and the aftermath. By following these media reports over consecutive days, middle school students can expand their interest in current events, increase their understanding of weather phenomena and technology, and be introduced to the important work of government agencies that predict the weather and prepare families and businesses for the consequences of severe storms. Students can also practice their mapping skills on paper and, if they have access to the Internet, follow a hurricane as it moves over the Earth by observing satellite images that are posted hourly on the website of the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

The activity described here uses the five themes of Geography: Location, Place, Region, Movement, and Human Interaction with the Environment.¹ It can be part of a larger unit of study about the weather or a five-minute "sparkler" at the beginning of class on several days during hurricane season.

Getting Started

The beginning of the school year is a time of hurricane watches, warnings, and sometimes landfalls. In September of 1999, I

was able to use newspapers and websites to lead my seventh grade students to track the path of Hurricane Floyd, which struck the West Indies and the eastern coast of the United States. In this activity, my seventh grade students:

- used relative and absolute location provided by weather and news weather reports and National Weather Service bulletins to trace the movement of a hurricane;
- studied how people apply technology to detect, track, and prepare for hurricanes;
- studied how people coordinate their behavior to accommodate this force of nature.

I introduced the topic of hurricanes by showing a short video clip of a local weather

report, which included a report on a developing hurricane. A class discussion followed on what students knew or had heard about hurricanes from the news, books, movies, or their own experience.

Basic Facts and Definitions

Then I presented some of the basic science of hurricanes, as well as information about related technology and public services.

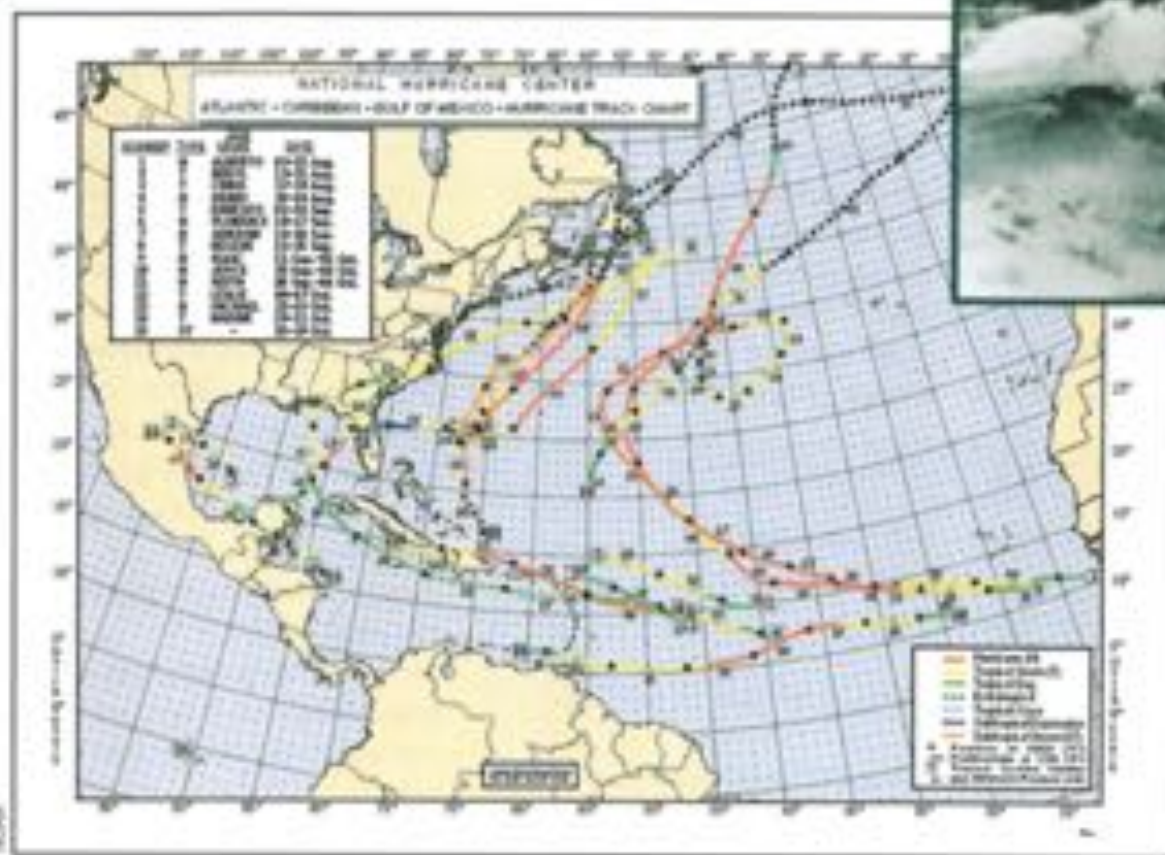
A hurricane is an inward-spiraling tropical storm with wind speeds of 75 miles per hour (mph) or more, intense lightning, and torrential rain. In late summer and early autumn, these low pressure areas form near the equator, over the water, in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, or in the eastern Pacific Ocean. (Hurricanes that form over the western Pacific Ocean are called typhoons.) As warm, moist air begins to rise rapidly off the surface of the ocean, cooler air moves in, and the rising air begins to spin counter-clockwise (in the Northern Hemisphere) because of the Earth's rotation. As the air pressure in the center of the storm drops, more air is drawn into the system.

Hurricanes are classified by the speed of the winds inside the storm. While the center of the hurricane, the eye, remains calm, winds outside may reach speeds of 155 mph or more. The storm as a whole moves over the Earth, much like a spinning top, usually at slower speeds like 5 or 10 mph. It often follows a random, zigzagged

A Good Read

Charles Nordhoff and James N. Hall,
The Hurricane (London: Arcturus, Ltd,
1988).

This 1955 children's literature classic, written by the authors of *Moby-Dick* on the *Island*, is still relevant and timely in its treatment of social issues like criminal justice and the effects of colonialism in Polynesia. A hurricane provides the energy that brings this romantic adventure story to a climax. It could be considered for use as the basis of a language arts/social studies interdisciplinary unit of study in the eighth grade.



Above: Huge waves from Hurricane Carol pound the beach in Old Lyme, Connecticut, 1954.

Left: A map of all hurricane tracks in the Atlantic in 2000. In class, students would track just one hurricane.

path that is largely unpredictable; again, like a spinning top.

Great damage is often caused by the high winds and strong waves. The sea level itself rises, an event which is called a *storm surge*, flooding coastal cities and sending water back up rivers and over the banks. For example, Hurricane Andrew caused about \$25 billion worth of damage in Florida and Louisiana in August 1992. It was the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history.¹

Modern technology has made the prediction and tracking of these storms much more accurate. Warning people of approaching storms can save lives and property. Meteorologists now use satellite imaging and radar to forecast hurricanes. The greatest challenge is predicting if a hur-

ricane traveling over the ocean will hit land, and if so, when landfall will occur, where, and how far the storm will travel before dying out. As weather technology improves, the predicting power of the National Weather Service (NWS) increases.

NWS issues hurricane watches to alert people that a hurricane might arrive in the region in 24 to 36 hours. NWS issues a hurricane warning to announce that a hurricane will probably make landfall within a specific area in 24 hours or less. Today, "one out of every five people in the United States is now at direct risk [of hurricane danger] every year."² During a hurricane watch, people should do what they can to protect buildings and ships in port to withstand the winds and water. When NWS issues a hurricane warning, people

evacuate an area of the coast where landfall is likely to occur.

Tropical storms are classified on the five-point Saffir-Simpson Scale, which is based on wind speed, damage produced, and storm surge. Category 3 and 4 storms will cause moderate damage to houses and boats. A category 5 storm, with winds over 155 mph, will cause catastrophic damage if it comes near the coast.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works with state and local governments to increase hurricane preparedness and to conduct an orderly evacuation, if necessary. Emergency management officials desire more lead time to evacuate people. On the other hand, forecasters at NWS state that, to increase the warning time, they would have to warn

more people over a larger area. It is hard to predict where and when landfall will occur, and making the call too early forces thousands of people to evacuate unnecessarily. Thus, issuing a hurricane warning can be a difficult job, and it is always a moment of high drama.

Once a hurricane hits land, it starts diminishing, because it is warm, hot ocean water that provides the energy of the storm. People returning from shelters to their neighborhoods may discover that their home has been destroyed. They may need basic things like shelter, food, clothing, fuel, and medical

care. The Red Cross, FEMA, local and state police, and sometimes the National Guard all work to provide services and keep order. State and federal governments may provide some emergency money and loans to help people rebuild some homes and businesses.

Tracking a Hurricane

My students followed the path of Hurricane Floyd by watching weather forecasts and making appropriate marks on a map, a smaller chart (available free on the web).⁹ At the beginning of each class, I showed a videotape of the previous evening's weather

report. Students used information in these reports to decide what to put on their maps. (Alternatively, a teacher could read a newspaper update or a report from the National Hurricane Center website.)

News weather reports often give the relative location of a hurricane (for example, "fifty miles south of Bermuda"), but National Weather Service bulletins provide absolute location (for example, "52° North latitude by 65° west longitude"). These bulletins are available on the web and, in coastal areas, phone and radio. On their weather charts, each day, students can mark down some basic information such as:

- the location of the hurricane today, using the hurricane symbol: a counter-clockwise spinning swirl;
- the date in this notation: month/date/year (for example, 8/15/95);
- the storm's progress since yesterday, using a dotted line to show the path;
- wind speed (mph) within the storm as well as its classification (on the Saffir-Simpson Scale);
- region covered by an evacuation order (shade with a colored marker);
- names of major cities within an evacuation zone;
- names of major rivers and deltas at risk of flooding from the storm surge;
- point of landfall and path of the storm over land as it dies out.

If students write small and neatly, then there might be room on the chart for all of these entries to be marked on each day as the storm progresses.

Conclusion

Once the hurricane has played itself out, the class can discuss how the storm progressed and how people reacted to it. Extension social studies activities (as suggested here and in accompanying short articles) could include learning about federal agencies that deal with hurricanes, reading about debates

Extension Activities

(Information to help in answering these questions can be found at the website of the National Hurricane Center, www.nhc.noaa.gov. See also the suggested print resources.)

1. Create a graph comparing the duration, intensity, or destruction of recent hurricanes.
2. Create a bar graph that shows the months in which the formation of hurricanes is most likely.
3. Create a graph showing the frequency of hurricane landfalls over the last century.
4. Where do hurricanes most often occur? Create a map showing the hurricane region. Divide the region into areas indicating, most, some, and few occurrences of hurricanes.
5. What are the economic and human costs of hurricanes? Document the destructive force of a recent hurricane (lives lost, homes, businesses, utilities, damaged or destroyed).
6. Describe how hurricanes are classified and named.
7. What precautions can and do people take to avoid the destruction of hurricanes? Evaluate each of these precautions as to how successful it is likely to be in preventing damage.
8. In many states, there are debates about how much development (building and construction) should be allowed close to the ocean. For example, owners may not be permitted to rebuild a beach house or hotel if it was destroyed in a hurricane, thus allowing the land to return to a natural state. Describe the relevant law in one coastal state and any ongoing debate there about coastal development.
9. Describe the work of one of the federal agencies involved in protection from hurricanes: the National Weather Service (with its National Hurricane Center), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or the U.S. Coast Guard.

over land use along the coast, discovering what preparations have been made locally to prepare for natural disasters, and researching some of great storms of the past. Social studies has a whole new spin when students get caught up in the energy of a hurricane. **R**

About the Author

Donna Kay Mau teaches seventh grade at Lincoln Hall Middle School in Lincolnwood, Illinois.



Palm trees bend as hurricane waves strike a sea wall.

Notes

1. *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1994).
2. See the 1995 report on Hurricane Andrew, with maps, charts, and satellite images, on the web at www.nhc.noaa.gov/1995.html. Latitude and longitude data taken from Table 1 of this report could be used to create a quick quiz of student's mapping ability. The resulting map should look like figure 1 of the report.
3. "Impress! Hurricane Forecasts Sought," Associated Press, June 13, 2000 (dailynews.yahoo.com).
4. Hurricane tracking charts (maps) of the Atlantic and Pacific, ready for use, are available free on the web at www.nhc.noaa.gov. Scroll to the bottom of the page to see the links to the maps. These maps show a Mercator projection of the Earth, so to pinpoint the location of a hurricane, students will need its absolute location (longitude and latitude) as provided in National Weather Service announcements. There is no scale of miles on these maps because distances are distorted in a Mercator projection. Thus, relative location, as given by many TV weather reports (like "100 miles south of Bermuda"), cannot be precisely mapped on these charts.

Print Resources for Teachers

- Mason, Anthea et al. *Exploring Earth's Weather*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993.
- Hatfield, Claudette B., Pat Kelly-Goupar, Gay Hob, Alvin Lindsey. *World Geography*. Deerfield, IL: Silver Burdett Ginn, 1995. See especially 147-48.

Print Resources for Students

- Batholomew, Sandra. *Zona and the Hurricane*. Storyhouse Dolls, 1995.
- Daey, Kathleen and Karen A. Bale. *Hurricane: Open Seas, 1844* (Survival, No. 9). New York: Mass Market Paperback, 1993.
- Garland, Sherry. *The Silent Storm*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993.
- Hirsch, Beverly. *Année's Storm*. Miami, FL: Cardinal Enterprises, 1996.
- Hood, Susan. *Hurricanes!* New York: Simon Spotlight/The Weather Channel, 1998.
- Lauber, Patricia. *Hurricanes: Earth's Mightiest Storms*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1996.
- Martin, Ann M. Karen's Hurricane. *Baby Sitters Club Special*, No. 113, 1999.
- Martin, Ann M. *Sea City: How We Came!* *Baby Sitters Club Special*, No. 10, 1996.
- Morris, Neil. *Hurricanes & Tornadoes*. Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Educational/Wonders of Our World Series, 1998.
- Talbot, Charlene Joy. *The Great Rat Island Adventure*. New York: Atheneum, 1997.

Websites for Students and Teachers

www.nhc.noaa.gov

National Hurricane Center (NHC) provides tropical storm bulletins and outlooks (some available in Spanish), discussions, news and information, and reports from earlier in the season.

Links are given for additional sites. NHC provides hurricane tracking charts for the east and west coast of the U.S. (scroll to the bottom of the home page). Tons of great photographs are here. Many kids-friendly pages. For a great collection of "FAQs" see "Frequently Asked Questions" at www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/tcfaq/tcfaq1ED.html

www.fema.gov/fuSE/hur_old.htm

Gives information about hurricanes that have been so devastating that their names have been retired. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website includes pages describing how to prepare for a hurricane.

www.uscg.mil/tricant/disaster/hurricanes.html

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has interesting pages about past and current storms as well as predictions for the future.

www.hurricanehunters.com

Provides a great deal of information, videos, Cyberflight into the Eye, the latest aircraft reports, how to interpret hurricane reports, photos, past season reports, "Ask a Hurricane Hunter," and even homework help. (Hurricane Hunters Association, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi).

www.cnn.com/WEATHER/storm.center/

Interactive site for teachers and students, allows students to select cities and find weather information around the world, and to track storms and patterns (Cable News Network).

www.accuweather.com

This weather authority provides great maps, daily weather forecasts, and weather headline entries. (AccuWeather, Inc.)

On the Cover: Hurricane Bonnie off the Atlantic coast on Tuesday, August 25, 1998. (NOAA/OMSH&C)

What's in a Name?

A Whirlwind Tour of the World!

Steven S. Lapham

Take a ride around the world, not in a weather balloon, but through the various names given to tropical storms with spinning winds. In the North Atlantic and Caribbean Sea, these storms are called hurricanes, after the Spanish *huracan*, meaning "big wind." In the Pacific Ocean, they are also called hurricanes if they occur east of the international dateline. West of the dateline they are called typhoons, from Chinese words for "great winds." In the Indian Ocean they are called cyclones, based on a Greek word meaning "coil," as in the coils of a cobra. These storms have also been given colorful folk names by coastal inhabitants everywhere. For example, many Australians call them willy-willies, probably a variant of "whirly-whirly."

In the 1800s, a hurricane might have been named for a town where it made landfall, but there was no official naming of these storms. According to one story, the first use of a proper name for a tropical storm was by an Australian forecaster in the early 1900s.¹ By naming storms after politicians he did not like, he could announce on the radio that so-and-so was "causing great devastation" or "wandering aimlessly about the Pacific."

Once atmospheric scientists had the technology to track tropical storms, they needed a way to identify each one quickly, and thus they agreed on some naming conventions. Just stating the location of a storm was not adequate, because several

storms might spin off from the same low-pressure zone at the same time. A catchy name was better.

Starting in 1953, the U.S. National Weather Service gave the first tropical storm of the season a woman's name starting with the letter A, the second storm was given a woman's name starting with B, and so on. Why were women's names used? According to one story, during World War II, a radio announcer gave a hurricane warning and then started singing lines from an old song, "Every little breeze seems to whisper 'Louise.'" The name "Louise" was used to identify that storm, and the convention was born.²

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 70s brought changes to our customs, laws, and language. For example, people began using the word "Ms." as a title for a woman (rather than Miss and Mrs.). Another language reform involved the naming of hurricanes: in 1979, men's names were added to the list of those to be used.

Hurricanes are now given names drawn from cultures in the region of the world where the storms arise. For example, Hurricane Iniki hit one of the Hawaiian Islands in 1992. *Iniki* (ee-NEE-kee) means "sharp and piercing." Storms in the eastern Pacific are often given Hispanic names.³

Beginning on January 1, 2000, tropical cyclones in the Northwest Pacific basin were named in a new way. The new names were contributed by all the nations and territories that are members of the World

Meteorological Organization's Typhoon Committee. These newly selected names have three major differences from the rest of the world's tropical storm rosters of names. First, the names by and large are not personal names. There are a few men's and women's names, but the majority are names of flowers, animals, birds, trees, or even foods, while some are descriptive adjectives, like *Iniki*. Second, the names themselves are not listed in alphabetical order, but arranged in order of the nations that suggested them, with those countries in alphabetical order. Third, the names are all Asian names.⁴

The names of tropical storms are usually repeated every six years, but if a storm is particularly destructive, its name may be taken off the list. There will never be another Hurricane Andrew (1992), Hugo (1989), or Camille (1969). Like stellar athletes who lose their team numbers retired, some storms are one of a kind. ☐

Notes

1. C. E. Dune and B. J. Miller, *Atlantic Hurricanes* (Gulf Breeze, LA: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1965).
2. Patricia Lamber, *Hurricanes: Earth's Mightiest Storms* (New York: Scholastic Press, 1996).
3. Abraham Benck, *Due to the Weather* (Newport, CA: Greenwood Press, 2000).
4. Christopher W. Landsea, *FAQ: Hurricanes, Typhoons, and Tropical Cyclones* (Miami, FL: NOAA/NMML, 2000) (<http://www.cgd.noaa.gov/hcd/tcfaq/tcfaq.html>). Readers who are curious about names may wonder if "Landsea" is a pseudonym. It's not. Dr. Landsea is a research meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory's Hurricane Research Division in Miami, Florida.

A MIGHTY STORM:

Galveston, Texas, 1900

Steven S. Lapham

On September 8, 1900, a hurricane struck the island of Galveston off the coast of Texas. More than 5,000 people were killed, mostly by drowning, and most of the port city of Galveston was destroyed.¹ The U.S. National Weather Service, which had been established in 1871, was unable to warn the residents of that city in time for a proper evacuation to the mainland.²

One eyewitness reported that the water rose four feet in four seconds. This was not a single wave; it was the storm surge—the sea level itself was rising that fast. The sea rose 20 feet at the height of the storm.

After this disaster, a protective sea-wall 17 feet high and 10 miles long was built, paralleled by a wide boulevard that is overlooked by hotels. (Smaller walls did not survive the hurricane of 1900.) This larger wall broke the force of a powerful hurricane in September 1961 and reduced flood damage. But the “Galveston Hurricane” of 1900 toppled that city as the busiest port of Texas, a status that it never recovered.

Many musicians have performed “Mighty Storm,” also called “Galveston Flood,” sometimes altering the words a bit, so now it exists in several different forms.³ An early recording of the song is in the folk music collection of the Library of Congress.



Damage caused by the hurricane and storm surge in Galveston, 1900.

It preserves the voice of Reverend “Sin Killer” Griffin and his congregation singing at the Darlington State Penitentiary in South Carolina on Easter Sunday, 1942. Rev. Griffin sang lead while his congregation clapped, shuffled their feet, and joined in on the chorus.

*I remember that September,
When storm winds swept the town;
The high tide from the ocean, Lord,
Put water all around.*

Chorus:

*Wasn't that a mighty storm?
Wasn't that a mighty storm in the morning?
Wasn't that a mighty storm?
That blew all the people away.*

*A sea-wall built in Galveston
To keep the waters down,
But high tide from the ocean, Lord,
Put water in the town.*

*The trumpets warned the people,
“You'd better leave this place!”
They never meant to leave their homes
Till death was in their faces.*

*The trains they all were loaded
With people leaving town;
The tracks gave way to ocean, Lord,
The trains they went on down.*

*The waters, like some river,
Came a-rushing to and fro;
I saw my father drowning, God,
And I watched my mother go!*

*Now death, your hands are icy;
Now you've got them on my knee.
You took away my mother,
Now you're coming after me!* ❧

Notes

1. Martha T. Jones, *Terror in the Gulf: A Hurricane in Galveston* (Dallas, TX: Bend Sinck-Lang, 1990). This is a book for youth about the disaster of 1900.
2. Erik Larson, *Inferno: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History* (New York: Vintage, 2003). This book for adult readers is an account of the inability of the nascent National Weather Service to provide adequate warning of the 1900 hurricane.
3. A recent CD recording of “Galveston Flood” is on *The Very Best of Tom Rush: No Regrets* (New York: Columbia/Legacy, 1999).

One Step at a Time:

A LANDMINE REMOVAL INITIATIVE

Mark Hyman

They cost as little as three dollars apiece, about the price of a student's lunch at the school cafeteria. They can appear in various shapes and sizes, some as seemingly innocuous as a hand-sized toy butterfly. Yet they have one purpose: to destroy whoever steps nearby. Antipersonnel landmines kill or maim approximately 26,000 people annually worldwide, about 85% of whom are innocent civilians and 40% of whom are children. They terrorize whole communities, devastating the productive capabilities rural families by depriving them of access to natural and agricultural resources. They stop children from attending schools or even playing.

At Tenafly Middle School in Tenafly, New Jersey, a small but determined group of students (with some help from teachers and other adults in the community) are making a concrete difference in the lives of one mine-affected community. They hope to assist in the removal of all landmines from around the Tenafly's adopted "sister town" of Podolac in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such an ambitious project did not spring to life in one day. I will outline the educational process that grew a "community of con-

science" that lay the ethical and foundation for a landmine removal initiative. I will also discuss the practical steps that are also necessary for success. I hope that this account might inspire other schools and communities to consider performing a similar service initiative.

Heroes of Conscience

In the spring of 1997, I conceived of the extra-curricular Heroes of Conscience Club as an opportunity to encourage a group of middle school students (grades 6 through 8) to explore issues of conscience and develop their ethical sensibility. I hoped to create a community of students who might share a common commitment to their personal journeys of moral definition and transformation. I prompted discussion by introducing students to the lives of historical and contemporary ethical role models, to moral dilemmas faced by persons both historical and fictitious, and to related social and political concerns such as nonviolence and human rights. Using a variety of educational strategies such as reading stories and articles, role-playing, viewing video excerpts, and holding small-group discussions, we explored such concepts as heroism, compassion, conscience, and sacrifice for the

common good. We looked at the dehumanizing aspects of war, the notion of unjust laws, and the actions of people during the Holocaust (resisters, rescuers, bystanders, collaborators, and perpetrators of violence).

Through our common moral inquiry we formed a close-knit bond that students began referring to as "our moral community." We succeeded in creating a safe haven for the unabashed exploration by middle school students into their moral lives. We succeeded in creating a culture of inquiry and trust in which children, using a common moral vocabulary, could discover, define, and give voice to their own moral awakening. I think that we succeeded in creating a "community of conscience."

A leadership role for these students emerged through the creation and distribution of several club newsletters that prepared the student body for upcoming events while educating them with regard to the theme of nonviolence.

Widening the Circle

An adult Heroes of Conscience Club, inspired by the student group and composed mainly of parents, provided invaluable guidance, support, and hands-on assistance in the planning, organization, and



Ternally Middle School students examine mock landmine.

implementation of future school-wide non-violence events. In addition, teachers from each grade level of Ternally Middle School volunteered to be part of a brainstorming and advisory council that met once a week to assist the student and adult groups.

The success of the Heroes of Conscience Club led to a school-wide event, the Community of Conscience Project, in the spring of 1998. The purpose of the project was to provide the Ternally Middle School and its local community with educational experiences based on the theme of nonviolence. The project elicited contributions from all segments of community: from students, teachers, parents, neighbors, and representatives of local organizations. It consisted of three school-wide educational experiences:

- "Heroes Day," featuring the nomination of local role models who were invited to share their personal commitments to nonviolence, compassion, and selfless service;
- A lecture by Arun Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, on the topic of nonviolence; and
- An address delivered by Dr. Richard Deans, a physician in Ternally, regarding the appeal for a Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence that has been made by Nobel Peace Prize laureates.¹

Our middle school had begun a serious, common inquiry into ethical principles and concepts. We were raising our awareness of and respect for values grounded in a humanitarian perspective.



Members of Ternally Middle School Landmine Awareness Club touch mock landmines.

Human Rights Day

The theme of human rights was adopted for the following year's Community of Conscience Project in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.² On February 24, 1999, over thirty people (advocates, experts, and representatives of organizations) delivered presentations throughout the school on a wide range of topics and

issues including genocide, wartime atrocities, civil resistance, civil rights, child labor, child soldiers, immigration, hunger, and homelessness.

A major topic was the global landmine crisis. Ken Rutherford, an American landmine survivor and co-founder of Landmine Survivors Network, delivered a powerful and inspirational keynote address. A landmines exhibit on loan from UNICEF provided a clear picture of the destructive power of these devices. Last, representatives from the United Nations Association provided workshops for the entire student body regarding their Adopt-A-Minefield program.

Ternally Middle School students participated in the creation of a powerful and impressive human rights mural as an artistic outgrowth of Human Rights Day.

While planning for Human Rights Day, I saw that the UNICEF landmines exhibit included graphic images of injured people, and was thus potentially emotionally disturbing. I was concerned about the way middle school students, teachers, and the principal might perceive it. Therefore, after a personal visit, I brought along five student volunteers from the Heroes of Conscience Club to get their assessment of the exhibit. Their highly favorable feedback encouraged me, but I took photographs of each of the display items and discussed them with my principal, Bob Weldon, and the faculty and parent members of our school advisory committee. The universal approval of this exhibit for display at Ternally Middle School alleviated my concerns about the exhibit's graphic content.

Considering Taking Action

I expected that our studies and the Human Rights Day activities might inspire middle school students to want to make a contribution of some sort to the solution of a real world problem. While a number of service initiatives were discussed by our commit-

tees of parents, teachers, and educators, the notion of adopting a minefield seemed a natural outgrowth of Human Rights Day. The humanitarian focus of this concept made it agreeable to everyone involved. Current political issues regarding landmines (such as the decision by the United States not to sign the Ottawa Convention's Mine Ban Treaty or the political standing of the nation in which our minefield would reside) were deemed peripheral to our project's life-saving mission. What remained were a series of practical, but critical considerations. We needed to

- ascertain the level of student support and enthusiasm for such a project;
- create and develop landmine awareness clubs for both students and adults;
- seek permission to conduct the project by the proper educational authorities;

- develop educational and fund-raising goals and plans; and finally
- look for a cooperating organization that could work with us to select a site and supervise the actual demining process.

Following Human Rights Day, the student body of Tenally Middle School responded with overwhelming approval to the idea of developing a landmine adoption project. This student backing provided the key factor — human willpower — needed to begin.

Getting Started

Practical considerations and the enormity of the task caused us to delay organizing until the beginning of the next academic year (September 1999). At that time I formed a Student Landmine Awareness Club from students who were interested in making a long-term commitment to the initiative.

(Although several dozen students expressed interest and attended a session of the club, ten students from grades six through eight committed to this project for the entire academic year of 1999-2000.) In developing my ideas for the club, I recognized a pedagogical need to

- place the landmine crisis within the larger context of human rights and armed conflict;
- help students identify personally with or feel empathy for victims from other nations and cultures whom they would never meet;
- provide comprehensive information regarding the facts and issues about landmines;
- inspire the students to believe in their "moral voices" and their ability to make a tangible difference in the lives of a mine-affected community; and
- inspire them to commit the requisite time and energy to achieve this ambitious goal.

In other words, I needed to demonstrate that this initiative represented a truly unique opportunity to express the humanitarian ideals of nonviolence, compassion, and selfless service espoused by our community of conscience project.

To achieve the first of these ambitious objectives, I showed the video *Landmines: Overcoming a Lethal Legacy*, documenting the destructive impact of landmines worldwide.⁵ After reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, students pointed out that all of the rights mentioned in that document are compromised or violated by the placement of landmines. We also discussed how rights are interdependent: an injury from a landmine inevitably leads to a series of rights denied, like links in a chain.

In addition to videos and class discussions, role playing was effective in promoting empathy for and identification with victims



A DEMINER'S BEST FRIEND

A keen sense of smell has made dogs, mostly German shepherds, vital partners in demining operations around the world. When a trained dog sniffs an explosive, it sits down, and its handlers flag the spot for later extrication. The dogs' work complements mechanical mine detectors, which are sensitive to hidden metal. "It's an exacting and dangerous job. Dogs have been injured or died in the line of duty." Read more about the K-9 Demining Corps at the website of the Marshall Legacy Institute, www.marshall-legacy.org.

Source

1. Mary McGraw, "Man's (Best) Best Friend," *Washington Post* (March 29, 2000): A5.



Julio Perez, Nicaraguan landmine survivor, meets Landmine Awareness Club member Jeni Lynn Chang (at left).

of landmines. Role playing took two forms: those requiring discussion, decision-making, and performance, and those providing artificial “experiences” in attempt to encourage students to feel or imagine some negative consequence related to the presence of landmines in one’s neighborhood. For example, students might be asked to walk through a simulated “minefield” and be carried to “safety” by classmates or to “lose” the use of a limb for an hour or an afternoon.

To ensure that students were aware of the wide variety of facts and issues connected to landmines, they were encouraged to search the Internet on topics such as

- the history, types and uses of landmines;
- the effects of landmines worldwide and within specific countries;
- the Ottawa Convention of 1997 (the mine ban treaty);
- mine clearance technologies and ongoing efforts;
- stories of landmine survivors and activists.

Such research was critical in preparing the students to assume a leadership position in the landmine initiative by providing them with vital knowledge as well as ideas for later writings and presentations. (See also the print resources listed at the end.)

A Support Network

An adult Landmine Awareness Club was organized to explore issues of human rights and armed conflict as well as to serve as an advisory council and action committee in support of the landmine adoption project. This adult club proved an invaluable source of ideas and action while concurrently providing a critical link to the broader parent and adult population of Tenally. (The student Heroes of Conscience Club continued concurrent with this project. Although encouraged to join the Landmine Awareness Club, these students focused more broadly on the themes discussed earlier.)

In a discussion with members of the Tenally Central Schools office, it was suggested that a separate legal entity be established for handling the financial aspects of the initiative. Funds raised by Landmine Awareness activities would be controlled by this group. With the assistance and leadership of Tenally High School junior Todd Fieldston and the legal support of his father, Dr. Ken Fieldston, we created Global Care Unlimited, Inc., a registered, non-profit, charitable organization. This structure provided the students and me with the freedom and flexibility to make independent decisions regarding the selection of the site to be demined and relations with cooperating organizations.

The students and I had established certain criteria for selecting both our cooperating organization and our prospective site for demining. Of primary importance was developing a tangible relationship with a village and a school overseas; we wished to correspond directly with the residents and children. Second, we needed an anecdotal account of the village and its landmine problem. Third, we needed to work with an organization with extensive experience in demining, an ecumenical philosophy, and an impeccable reputation. Last, we needed the demining to cost no more than about \$30,000.

The process of selection took months (until late winter of 2000) and culminated with the decision to work with Handicap International and the Bosnian demining organization—APM or “Action Against Mines” in Serbo-Croatian—which would perform the actual demining. Through these organizations, we selected the town of Podvrat in Bosnia-Herzegovina for our adopted site. The 3,000 residents and 800 schoolchildren attending the village school are confronted daily by an enormous minefield. Some of the mines are within 100 meters of the school, local shops, hospital,

and post office. For \$30,000, APM, in conjunction with Handicap International, has agreed to clear the emergency areas of the minefield. APM has also facilitated correspondence between Tenafly students and children and families from the village school, *Ale Huseidic Elementary School*. APM also provided a detailed anecdotal account of the village and its connection to the minefield. Through e-mail and phone correspondence, we have maintained a strong working relationship with our cooperating organizations. Indeed, some emergency demining of Podvrtal is already under way, and discussion has begun regarding a possible visit to the site by student and adult representatives from our project.

Raising Funds and Raising Awareness

The Landmine Awareness Club developed a presentation and delivered it to the entire Tenafly Middle School student body as well as to local social service clubs (like Rotary and Lions), houses of worship, and at the town's Memorial Day ceremony. The program has proven to be enormously successful as gauged by informal and written feed-

back and by dollars raised. The program includes reading excerpts from students' works and landmine survivor stories as well as distributing handouts (key articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child). It concludes with a description of our initiative in the town of Podvrtal. One evening's program also included speeches from an American landmine survivor and a Bosnian landmine removal activist.

Our fund-raising efforts have been guided by two principles. First, we wish educate our audience about the global landmine crisis. If successful at raising consciousness, we trust that people will want to support our fund-raising endeavor. Second, we seek to include and involve as many local organizations as possible in order to promote community-wide ownership of and support for our life-saving, humanitarian mission.

Reclaiming the Butterfly

We needed a powerful visual symbol for our work, so we used the butterfly. Butterfly-shaped landmines are created specifically to harm children, who often are attracted to such a colorful piece of plastic lying on the



ground. Our use of the butterfly shape is a protest, a "reclaiming" of a form that should always denote beauty and gentleness.

Any student who wished to help in the demining initiative was given a packet containing background information, a sheet of ten small butterfly shapes, and a larger symbolic butterfly "landmine." Students asked potential donors (neighbors and relatives) for at least \$3.00—the cost of a landmine—and for their signature on one of the small butterflies. Once a student has raised thirty dollars, he or she glued those signed butterflies onto the surface of the larger butterfly-shaped "landmine." In this way, students would be symbolically demining a neighborhood, one landmine at a time, transforming landmines into butterflies. Ultimately, their butterflies will be placed onto a dozen or so huge butterfly shapes for public display, representing the demining and reclamation of a neighborhood.

A Milestone on the Pathway

By the summer of 2000, the success of our fund-raising endeavors gave us reason to be optimistic. By October, the total raised was \$17,000. Then, at an event about landmine removal in the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York City, I met Donald Paterno, Director of the U.S. Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs in the U.S. Department of State. Mr. Paterno explained

MEDIA COVERAGE

Our project has received significant, ongoing press coverage in the Tenafly, New Jersey, newspaper, *The Suburbanite*. Two New Jersey papers of wide circulation, *The Star Ledger* and *The Record*, also reported on various milestones of the project.

A feature article in a major international demining periodical was written by Virginia Saultier, "Making Strides: Students Tackle the Landmine Awareness Problem," in the *Journal of Mine Action*, vol. 1, issue 4.3 (fall 2000): 86-88.

Finally, Judy Seaman is planning a one-hour documentary film, tentatively titled *The Power of Children*, about the demining activities at Tenafly Middle School as well as a planned student trip to the Balkan region. Call her at 201-853-0425 or visit the website www.kryfromooding.com for an update.

that we could receive matching funds from his office by linking up with the Slovenian International Trust Fund, a fund committed to financing demining in the Balkan region.⁴ On February 8, 2001, Global Care Unlimited, Inc., signed a memorandum of understanding with Jernej Gimperssek, Director of the Slovenian International Trust Fund, to channel \$15,000 of our funds to Podrič. Concurrently, Mr. Paterno signed a document promising a matching U.S. grant of \$15,000. Thus, we reached our goal of \$30,000.

Within a year and a half of the first meeting of the Landmine Awareness Club, and but ten months after our first fund raiser, the club had achieved its goals: educating communities throughout northern New Jersey; connecting with governments and organizations both nationally and internationally; and raising sufficient funds to have landmines removed from our sister city of Podrič. Finally, we had developed student leaders capable of inspiring and leading an international, humanitarian service initiative.⁵

The success of a project like this transcends any monetary yardstick. What is the measure of good citizenship? One cannot quantify the values of compassion, selfless service, or moral courage. One can, however, assert that a humanitarian service project like a demining campaign can transform lives, and in this case, an entire community. Presumably, children's lives will be saved in Podrič, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Certainly, a community of conscience has come to life in Tenafly, New Jersey, in the United States of America. ■

About the Author

Mark Hyman teaches language arts at Tenafly Middle School in Tenafly, New Jersey.⁶

Notes

1. "To See Is in the Heart," *Teaching Tolerance* No. 19 (Spring 2001). See also the UNESCO website, www.unesco.org/tpp/IA/index.htm.
2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 can be found on the web at www.amnestyusa.org/udhr.html.
3. *Landmines: Overcoming a Lethal Legacy* (video, Washington, DC: Church World Service, 1997). The last 30 seconds of this nine-minute video make a pitch for CBS. Order it by e-mail at cws.film.library@dc.csws.org or call 202-543-6136.
4. Information about the matching funds program can be obtained by calling John Stevens at 202-647-0676 or writing him at the Office of the Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining, Department of State, PRM/GHD, Room 1826, Washington, DC 20520.
5. I would like to thank the students of the Landmine Awareness Club, especially Abby Wisbey, Program Director and Assistant Coordinator of the Landmine Removal Initiative, and Brent Fieldston, Communications Director and Corporate Liaison for Global Care Unlimited. I would also like to thank all of the parents and community members who have supported and guided our activities, including our principal, William Bellizzi (as well as former principal, Bob Weidner).
6. The author can be reached at Global Care Unlimited, Inc., PO. Box 523, Tenafly, NJ, 07670, USA. Phone: 201-562-9935. E-mail: info@globalcareunlimited.org. Web: www.globalcareunlimited.org.

RESOURCES

Websites and Organizations

Students and teachers should regularly research and visit websites for new information in this fast-changing arena. (The following organizations are not listed below, but they maintain landmine awareness programs and also could be visited online: UNICEF, Red Cross, Handicap International, Physicians for Human Rights, Church World Service, Mines Advisory Group, and Safe-Lane of Canada.)

- Adopt-A-Minefield. www.landmines.org
This is a program of the United Nations Association of the USA aimed at educating people and demining selected minefields.
- Global Humanitarian Demining. www.state.gov/www/global/armts/prm/rdp/index.html
GHD is run by the U.S. Department of State and provides many documents

about ongoing, bilateral efforts to remove mines in 37 countries.

- International Campaign to Ban Landmines. www.icbl.org

This is the umbrella organization for the hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seeking a ban on landmines. ICBL won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

- Schools Demining Schools. www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/
This United Nations site contains "Teaching Units on Landmines" with lesson plans, handouts, fact sheets, interesting web links, and other excellent resources. At the website, look under "Curriculum" and click on "Schools Demining Schools."

- U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines. www.banminesusa.org
USCBL is the national wing of ICBL, listed above, and has many resources to recommend to teachers. Contact Eileen Campbell at 617-695-0041; e-mail, campbel@cbpusa.org. The Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is their coordinating organization.

- WarChild. www.warchild.org
"The Landmine Programme" is a good source for information on the topic. WarChild is a charitable organization based in London.

Periodicals

The best journal I know on landmines is the *Journal of Mine Action*, a free publication of the Mine Action Information Center at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, 22807. Phone: 540-568-2718. The center, which publishes three times annually, is a "clearinghouse for information on landmine-related topics. It is sponsored in part by the U.S. Department of Defense."

Young Man Survives Hurricane!

Steven S. Lapham

On August 31, 1772, a great hurricane struck the island of St. Croix, which is east of the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean Sea. A fifteen-year-old man lived to describe the storm. He wrote down his observations and thoughts in a letter, which he sent to the island's newspaper. From his description, it appears that the eye of the storm had passed directly overhead. This letter secured his reputation as a youth of good character and sharp mind. With the published story in hand, his pastor took up a collection to send the young man to the mainland for a college education. In New York, the youth was introduced to the radical notion of American independence.

The following is an excerpt from the published letter of September 6, 1772.

Honored Sir:

I take up my pen, just to give you an imperfect account of one of the most dreadful hurricanes that memory or any records whatever can trace, which happened here on the 31st [of the previous month] at night. It began about dusk, at north, and raged very violently till ten o'clock. Then ensued a sudden and unexpected interval which lasted about an hour. Meanwhile the wind was shifting round to the south west point, from whence it returned with redoubled fury and continued till nearly three in the morning.

Good God! what horror and

destruction — it's impossible for me to describe — or you to form any idea of it. It seemed as if a total dissolution of nature was taking place. The roaring of the sea and wind — fiery meteors flying about in the air — the prodigious glare of almost perpetual lightning — the crash of falling houses — and the ear-piercing shrieks of the distressed were sufficient to strike astonishment into angels.

A great part of the buildings throughout the island are leveled to the ground — almost all the rest very much shattered — several persons killed and numbers utterly ruined — whole families wandering about the streets, asking how where to find a place of shelter — the sick exposed to the decreasers of water and air — without a bed to lie upon — or a dry covering to their bodies — and our harbors entirely bare. In a word, misery, in its most hideous shapes, spread over the whole face of the country.

What is this? See note 1.



The island of St. Croix was a major source of sugar, which was grown and harvested by slaves on plantations owned by Dutch colonists. The youth was of English descent, but he was not rich. His father had left the family when he was nine and his mother died two years later. So he went to work as a clerk in a store, but dreamed about leaving the island for adventure.

Although the published letter was addressed to the youth's father, he probably sent it only to the newspaper. He had written other articles that had been published there. Addressing the letter to his father made him sound like a dutiful son—and personal loyalty was in fact a virtue of his.

Further on in the letter, the young man wondered if the hurricane was an expression of God's wrath. Man, he wrote, seemed like a mere "worm" before the cataclysm. Both rich and poor suffered from the devastation. In conclusion, he wrote, "Oh ye, who revel in affluence, see the afflictions of humanity and bestow your superiority to ease them."

The young man became a hero of the American Revolutionary War and the first secretary of the treasury of the United States. Who was he? ■

Answer: Alexander Hamilton. The name here appears in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, edited by Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cook (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), pages 54–58. Further information can be found in *Madre Kater's Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1966).

Note 1: The photo shows a 194 board piled by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. (National Weather Service)