

COLLABORATE & COMPARE

NOVEL

from **NINTH WARD**

by **Jewell Parker Rhodes**

pages 223–227



COMPARE ACROSS GENRES

Now that you've read "After the Hurricane," read an excerpt from *Ninth Ward* to see how this work of historical fiction tells another story of survival related to Hurricane Katrina. As you read, think about how the author uses setting and language to describe the narrator's experience. After you read, you will collaborate with a small group on a final project.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does it take to be a survivor?

POEM

from **AFTER THE HURRICANE**

by **Rita Williams-Garcia**

pages 209–217



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from *Ninth Ward*

QUICK START

What do you say to yourself when the going gets tough? What if you had to coach a friend or a sibling through a difficult time? Write three encouraging things you would say.

ANALYZE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

The **setting** of a work of literature is the time and place of the action. In historical fiction, the time period and culture play a significant role in both plot and characterization. This selection's setting is one area of New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As the text's fictional characters respond to the setting, the author reveals the characters' important qualities and values.

- Setting can influence characters' values, beliefs, and emotions.
- Setting can affect how characters act and interact with others.
- Characters develop as they respond to historical and cultural elements throughout the story. Their response may suggest the story's theme.

GENRE ELEMENTS: HISTORICAL FICTION

- is set in the past
- includes real places and real events of historical importance
- can be a short story or a novel
- has the basic features of realistic fiction, including plot, characters, conflict, setting, and theme

ANALYZE AUTHOR'S USE OF LANGUAGE

Mood is the feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader. Descriptive words, imagery, and figurative language all influence the mood of a work. *Ninth Ward* is a first-person narrative, so the mood created by the narrator's voice can reveal something about the main character. As you read, note how language helps create the mood of the text, and what the mood reveals about the text's characters and theme. Use a chart like the one below.

TEXT	MOOD	MY IDEAS ABOUT CHARACTER AND THEME
TaShon lifts his head and wipes his eyes. He looks far-off.	expectant	TaShon is someone who takes time to think before speaking.



GET READY

CRITICAL VOCABULARY

fortitude endure horizon angular focus

To see how many Critical Vocabulary words you already know, use them to complete the sentences.

1. Happy memories gave them _____ to survive the challenge.
2. The performer had to _____ his attention to walk on the tightrope.
3. Sharp, straight lines meet to create a/an _____ pattern.
4. The setting sun slipped beneath the _____.
5. He could not _____ walking against the icy cold wind.

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Pronouns A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of a noun or another pronoun. **Personal pronouns**, such as *I, me, he, she, we, us, you, and it*, refer to the person making a statement, the person(s) being addressed, or the person(s) or thing(s) the statement is about.

The helicopter doesn't seem to see us. It keeps flying.

The personal pronoun *us* refers to the narrator, Lanesha, and her neighbor TaShon. *It* refers to an object, the helicopter. As you read, notice the author's use of pronouns.

ANNOTATION MODEL

NOTICE & NOTE



As you read, note words the author uses to indicate setting. Notice the effect of the author's use of language on the mood and characterization, and how mood may indicate theme. You can also mark evidence that supports your own ideas. In the model, you can see one reader's notes about *Ninth Ward*.

- 1 No land. Only sky and dirty water.
- 2 TaShon has his head buried in Spot's fur. He's crying full-out—sobbing like the world has ended and Noah hasn't landed his ark.

Sounds bleak. I wonder where they are.

More details about water, and also sadness. Maybe they are stranded or surrounded by water.



BACKGROUND

Jewell Parker Rhodes (b. 1954) loved to read and write as a child. *Ninth Ward* is her first published book for young people. The Ninth Ward is one of seventeen wards, or administrative districts, in New Orleans. The largest and easternmost ward, the Ninth Ward is divided by a shipping channel and another waterway. When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, the Ninth Ward received the greatest damage. Many residents lost their lives and homes in the hurricane.




from
NINTH WARD

Novel by Jewell Parker Rhodes

PREPARE TO COMPARE

As you read, pay attention to the selection's mood and setting. Note how characters respond to events. Think about how these elements may help you recognize the selection's theme, or message.

- 1 No land. Only sky and dirty water.
- 2 TaShon has his head buried in Spot's fur. He's crying full-out—sobbing like the world has ended and Noah hasn't landed his ark.¹
- 3 I want to sit and cry, too. But it's almost dawn, and I think when there's light, someone will surely find us. I also think, still dark, I've got to make sure TaShon doesn't fall off the roof into the water.

¹ **Noah hasn't landed his ark:** in the biblical flood story, Noah builds an ark, or large boat, to save his family and animals of every kind from a flood.

Notice & Note

Use the side margins to notice and note signposts in the text.

ANALYZE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

Annotate: Mark words in paragraphs 1–3 that show the setting.

Identify: Which elements tell you about the place and time? Are there any elements that tell you about the cultural setting?



NOTICE & NOTE

fortitude

(fôr'tī-tōōd) *n.* To have *fortitude* is to show strength of mind and face difficulty with courage.

endure

(ēn-dōōr') *v.* To *endure* is to carry on despite difficulty or suffering.

ANALYZE AUTHOR'S USE OF LANGUAGE

Annotate: Mark the words in paragraph 8 that help establish the mood of this scene.

Analyze: How would you describe the mood here?

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Mark the pronouns in the first sentence of paragraph 12. Who are the pronouns referring to?

horizon

(hə-rī'zən) *n.* The *horizon* is the intersection of the earth and sky.

angular

(āng'gyə-lər) *adj.* Something that is *angular*, such as a peaked roof, has two sides that form an angle.

4 I feel tired, sad. Even though I expect to see her as a ghost, I know I'll still miss the flesh and blood Mama Ya-Ya.² The warm hands. Her making breakfast. And me resting my head upon her shoulder. I'll miss talking to her. Listening to her stories.

5 TaShon lifts his head and wipes his eyes. He looks far-off. For a minute, I think he's going to be his quiet old self, and pretend to disappear. Then, he says softly, "Fortitude."

6 "Strength to **endure**."

7 "That's right. We're going to show fortitude."

8 TaShon and I scoot closer, our arms and legs touching. I put my arms around him; he puts his arms around me. Neither of us moves. I know we are both thinking, murmuring in our minds, over and over again, "Fortitude. Fortitude. Fortitude."

9 Sunrise. As far as my eye can see, there is water.

10 The Mississippi is brown, filled with leaves, branches, and pieces of folks' lives. I see a plastic three-wheeler tangled in algae. I see a picture frame with a gap-toothed boy smiling in black and white. I see a red car, a Ford, floating.

11 Overhead, I hear a helicopter. It sounds like a lawn mower in the sky.

12 Me and TaShon start yelling, waving our hands. "Here, over here." The helicopter doesn't seem to see us. It keeps flying south. Its big bird wings circling and the roar of its engine getting softer.

13 TaShon is cursing now. I haven't the heart to say, "Watch your mouth." I'm positive the 'copter man saw us. How come he didn't stop? Lift us in the air with rope?

14 I start trembling and look around my neighborhood. The **horizon** is like none I've seen before. Just tips of houses. Tops or halves of trees. Lampposts hacked off by water. Rooftops—some flat, some **angular**—most, empty.

15 Far left, I see a man and woman sitting on a roof, their feet in the water. Two blocks east, I see what I think is an entire family. Five, six people, all different sizes, waving white sheets.³ I hear them screaming, calling for help.

16 Where are the others? At the Superdome? Safe in Baton Rouge?⁴

² **Mama Ya-Ya:** Lanessa's elderly caretaker who has died during the water's rise.

³ **waving white sheets:** in wartime, soldiers wave white flags to signal their willingness to surrender to the enemy.

⁴ **At the Superdome? Safe in Baton Rouge?:** the Superdome is the name of the stadium in New Orleans that sheltered Katrina refugees. Baton Rouge is Louisiana's capital, and the city to which thousands of New Orleans residents fled to escape Hurricane Katrina.



AHA MOMENT

Notice & Note: What does Lanesha realize about TaShon in paragraphs 16–19? Mark the words that show Lanesha is realizing something about TaShon's character.

Interpret: What does Lanesha mean when she compares TaShon to a butterfly?

focus

(fō'kəs) *v.* When you *focus* on something, you keep attention fixed on it.

ANALYZE AUTHOR'S USE OF LANGUAGE

Annotate: Mark the words in paragraph 23 that help show mood.

Infer: What does the mood suggest about the kind of person the narrator is?

- 17 TaShon says softly, "At least we made it out of the attic, didn't we, Lanesha?"
- 18 I look at TaShon. I should've known better. Should've known that there was more to see about TaShon than he ever let show. He's a butterfly, too.
- 19 "Yes, we did," I say. "We made it out."
- 20 No one is coming. All day and all night, we waited. Spot panted, slept. TaShon swatted at mosquitoes and his feet turned itchy red after he left them in the water to cool off. We are both sunburned. Funny, I didn't think black folks sunburned. But all day in the sun, no shade, has made me and TaShon red faced. My cheeks and shoulders hurt like someone touched them with a hot iron.
- 21 I keep **focused** on the horizon. Above it, I search for helicopters. Below it, I search for signs of my neighbors.
- 22 I used to think the Mississippi was beautiful. Not anymore. Up close, it is filled with garbage; clothes and furniture, ugly catfish and eels.
- 23 My lips are cracked. I'm hungry. Thirsty. Tired. I tell TaShon a hundred different Bible stories—all about hope. I tell him about Moses, David and Goliath, and Noah's ark.⁵ "Someone's coming," I insist. "People know we're here." But I feel Spot, if he could talk, would say, "That's a lie;" then blink his big brown eyes.
- 24 The moon is high. TaShon is feverish and asleep. His legs, up to his knees, are bright red. His face is peeling.
- 25 I haven't seen any ghosts either. Are they scared?
- 26 I murmur, "Mama Ya-Ya, help me. Momma, help me." But the night doesn't answer. Nothing shimmers. There's no message from another world.
- 27 Day two since the flood. Day three since the hurricane.
- 28 No one has come to our rescue. There's no TV. No radio. No news from anywhere. The family that has been hollering for help is quiet now.
- 29 I can't make the Mississippi disappear. I can't make food and water appear. But we're going to go stir-crazy, get more and more miserable.
- 30 I press my head to my hand. I feel dizzy.

⁵ **Moses, David and Goliath, and Noah's ark:** in a set of stories from the Bible, Moses is directed by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt; David is a boy who killed Goliath, a giant warrior; and Noah's ark is the large boat Noah built to save his family and animals from a flood.



NOTICE & NOTE

ANALYZE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

Annotate: Mark the details in paragraphs 34–40 that help describe the scene.

Predict: What do these details reveal about the challenges Lanesha and TaShon now face?

- 31 TaShon's itching, rubbing his left foot against his right leg. "Look. A rowboat."
- 32 I exhale. "Mr. Henri's! He liked catfish. He always gave some to Mama Ya-Ya."
- 33 TaShon's eyes are bright.
- 34 I move to the left—careful not to slip in the water, my feet angling on the roof. It's slippery. Water is in my tennis shoes. The shingles are slick with oil and gunk.
- 35 I can barely see the house next door. Most of it is covered with water. But a rowboat is floating, caught between our two houses and a bigger willow tree that kept it from floating down the street. It is maybe six, seven feet away. It's south, *perpendicular* to both our houses. "A sharp right angle." If it'd been parallel, it might've floated out—at least on the north side. But the angle kept it safe.
- 36 "Do you think we can reach it?" asks TaShon. "The boat?"
- 37 I squint. The boat's rope must be floating deep, loose inside the water.
- 38 My arms aren't long enough to push the boat free and I'm not sure I can doggy-paddle to it.
- 39 "The angle's all wrong."
- 40 Well, right and wrong, I think. Right, 'cause being perpendicular, it didn't get swept away in the storm. Wrong, 'cause being perpendicular, it needs to be unstuck.
- 41 I see TaShon's shoulders sagging. Giving up.
- 42 How can I rescue a rowboat?
- 43 EVERYTHING IS MATH. Think, Lanesha.
- 44 I look about. There are all kinds of pieces of wood, trees floating in the water. I see a long, thin trunk floating.
- 45 "TaShon. We've got to catch that tree." It looks like a young willow. Just a few years old.
- 46 I'm sure my hands can fit around its trunk. With effort, I can hold it like a stick.
- 47 I lie down on my stomach, shouting, "Come on, come on!" like a lunatic to the tree. It bobs left, then right. Then turns sideways.
- 48 "We've got to grab it, TaShon!"
- 49 TaShon lies beside me on his stomach, too. We flap our hands in the water, trying to make it draw near. Trying to create another current in the muddy tide.
- 50 "It's coming," hollers TaShon. "It's coming."
- 51 "Brace yourself." Though the tree is moving slow, it'll be heavy. "Don't fall! Don't fall in."



- 52 I stretch my arms wide, clawing at the water, trying to move the trunk closer. I strain, feeling the pull in my shoulders. Water is lapping, almost to my chin.
- 53 I clutch bark. A piece cracks away in my hand.
- 54 "Get it, get it," TaShon screams. His arms are too short. The trunk is floating by.
- 55 I inch my body further, my hips and legs still touching the roof. Inhaling, I plunge forward. My arms are around the tree.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

- 1 Which sentence from the text suggests that Lanesha and TaShon want to be rescued?
 - A *The horizon is like none I've seen before.*
 - B *I see a red car, a Ford, floating.*
 - C *I think when there's light, someone will surely find us.*
 - D *"Yes, we did," I say. "We made it out."*
- 2 In paragraph 2, the narrator says, "Noah hasn't landed his ark" to —
 - F introduce another character in the story
 - G show that the story is set in the time of the Bible
 - H show that TaShon enjoys Bible stories
 - J show that the land has been covered by floodwater
- 3 Which idea is supported by information at the conclusion of the selection?
 - A Lanesha has faith that Spot will help them escape.
 - B Lanesha is determined to save them.
 - C Lanesha no longer enjoys telling Bible stories.
 - D Lanesha is very certain that they will be rescued.



RESPOND

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Support your responses with evidence from the text. NOTEBOOK

- Analyze** Reread paragraphs 1–3 and note details about setting and character traits. How is the historical setting related to the characters?
- Draw Conclusions** Review the author’s use of language in paragraph 8. How do mood and characterization suggest the text’s theme?
- Summarize** Review paragraphs 9–11. How does the text help you understand the novel’s cultural setting?
- Compare** Review paragraphs 3 and 13. How would you compare the narrator’s attitude in the two passages? Explain how Lanesha’s character has changed over time.
- Notice & Note** Review paragraphs 36–48. What does Lanesha realize about their situation? Explain how Lanesha uses this realization to help TaShon overcome his sense of hopelessness.

RESEARCH TIP

Use the search words “image of _____” to find photographs of an event. Type “map of _____” to help you understand the geography of an area. Try the search words “history of Ninth Ward” to find websites about the Ninth Ward. Evaluate your search results by looking for information about the organization that runs the site.

RESEARCH

The city of New Orleans is divided into areas called “wards.” The Ninth Ward suffered badly from Hurricane Katrina. Investigate the history of the Ninth Ward, from the time before Hurricane Katrina to the present. Use a chart like the one shown to record relevant information from reliable sources.

NINTH WARD

FACT

SOURCE

FACT	SOURCE

Connect Is there information online about the history of your own city or neighborhood? Many areas have local historical societies that also maintain websites. Go online to find information about your community’s history.



RESPOND

WORD BANK

fortitude

endure

horizon

angular

focus



Go to the **Vocabulary Studio** for more on context clues.

CRITICAL VOCABULARY

Practice and Apply Explain which vocabulary word is most closely related to another word you know.

1. Which vocabulary word goes with *sunset*? Why?
2. Which vocabulary word goes with *strength*? Why?
3. Which vocabulary word goes with *lasting*? Why?
4. Which vocabulary word goes with *concentrate*? Why?
5. Which vocabulary word goes with *pointed*? Why?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: Context Clues

Context clues are the words and phrases surrounding a word that provide hints about its meaning. Sometimes, you may find a context clue in the same sentence as an unfamiliar word. The whole sentence can also be a good clue. In *Ninth Ward*, the meaning of *horizon* is suggested by its context.

I keep focused on the horizon. Above it, I search for helicopters. Below it, I search for signs of my neighbors.

If you didn't know what *horizon* means, the words "above it" and "below it" are clues. Reread the whole paragraph for another context clue: above the horizon she looks for helicopters (in the sky); below it, she looks for people (on the ground or in the water). Together these hints can help you guess that *horizon* is "the place where the earth and sky meet." Confirm your guess by checking a print or online dictionary.

Practice and Apply Find context clues for each of the following words and guess the word's meaning. Then, check your definition.

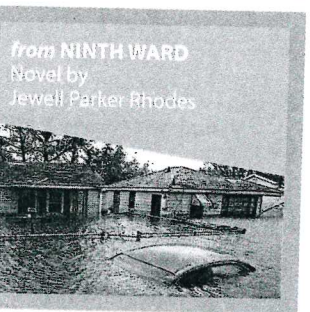
WORD	CONTEXT CLUES	GUESSED DEFINITION	DEFINITION
fortitude (paragraph 5)			
endure (paragraph 6)			
angular (paragraph 14)			



Collaborate & Compare



from **AFTER THE HURRICANE**
Poem by Rita Williams-Garcia



from **NINTH WARD**
Novel by Jewell Parker Rhodes

COMPARE TEXTS

“After the Hurricane” and *Ninth Ward* use different **genres**, or types of writing, to explore the effects of Hurricane Katrina on residents of New Orleans. Even though the works are about a similar topic, they may express different themes. **Theme** is a message about life or human nature. Comparing texts from different genres—like poetry and historical fiction—can give you a deeper understanding of the topic.

Often, writers do not state themes directly. Instead, readers must **infer** themes based on information from the text and their own knowledge. This information may include key statements, significant events, and memorable images or symbols.

With your group, complete the chart by citing text evidence from the selections.

	“AFTER THE HURRICANE”	NINTH WARD
Key Statements		
Significant Events		
Memorable Images		

ANALYZE THE TEXTS

Discuss these questions in your group.

- 1. Identify** How are the speaker in “After the Hurricane” and the narrator in *Ninth Ward* similar?
- 2. Compare** How are the circumstances faced by the poem’s speaker and the novel’s narrator different? How are their responses to their circumstances different?
- 3. Infer** Think about the image of helicopters in both selections. What ideas does this image suggest in each selection?
- 4. Draw Conclusions** What have you learned from these selections about what it takes to be a survivor?

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