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Hurricane

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desks scraping, chair legs thumping, feet trampling. Only Ethan and Sam remain, crosswords in hand.

“Okay, what’s sixteen-down?” Sam says.

“What’s the clue?” I say, though I already know it.

Ethan, using the nub of a pencil as a guide, scrolls down the page. “Catalogue divider.”

“Is it INSERT?” Sam says.

“Too many letters,” says Ethan. “It’s gotta be five.”

“Don’t think mail order. Think list,” I say, “think *punctuation!*”

They look at me. Puzzled.

“I’ll give you a hint. This’ll be the lesson when I give back the next set of essays.”

“COMMA!”

Oh, Ethan! I say without saying it.

Gary J. Whitehead teaches English at Tenafly High School. His third book of poetry, *A Glossary of Chickens*, was recently published by Princeton University Press. New work is forthcoming in *The New Yorker*.

This poem is dedicated to all those who have suffered indignity and destruction at the hands of the unruly forces of nature.

Hurricane

Distant rumblings of fair warnings
Official discoursed attempts
Distilling nature’s fickle pattern
Malevolent mayhem predicted and warned
Harsh scoldings for malingerers and malcontents
Prescient fear
Agonized anticipation
Entrance without invitation
Ruinous rumbling
Validated sequence
Unforgiving anger
Horrific howls
Floods and tears
Innocence scoffed
Merciful pleas ignored
Media signals incessantly beamed
Illumination snuffed
Hope shattered
Devastation insidiously purveyed
Redemption churlishly rebuked

- *Joe Pizzo*

A veteran teacher of 38 years at the Black River Middle School in Chester, **Joe Pizzo** serves as an adjunct professor at both Centenary College and Union County College. A staff announcer at WRNJ, Joe’s book *New Jersey ASK 7 Language Arts Literacy Test* recently went into its second printing with revisions. He was also named last month as a Teacher Who Makes Magic by WMGQ, and he initiated a visit at BRMS of 23 school principals from Shanghai.