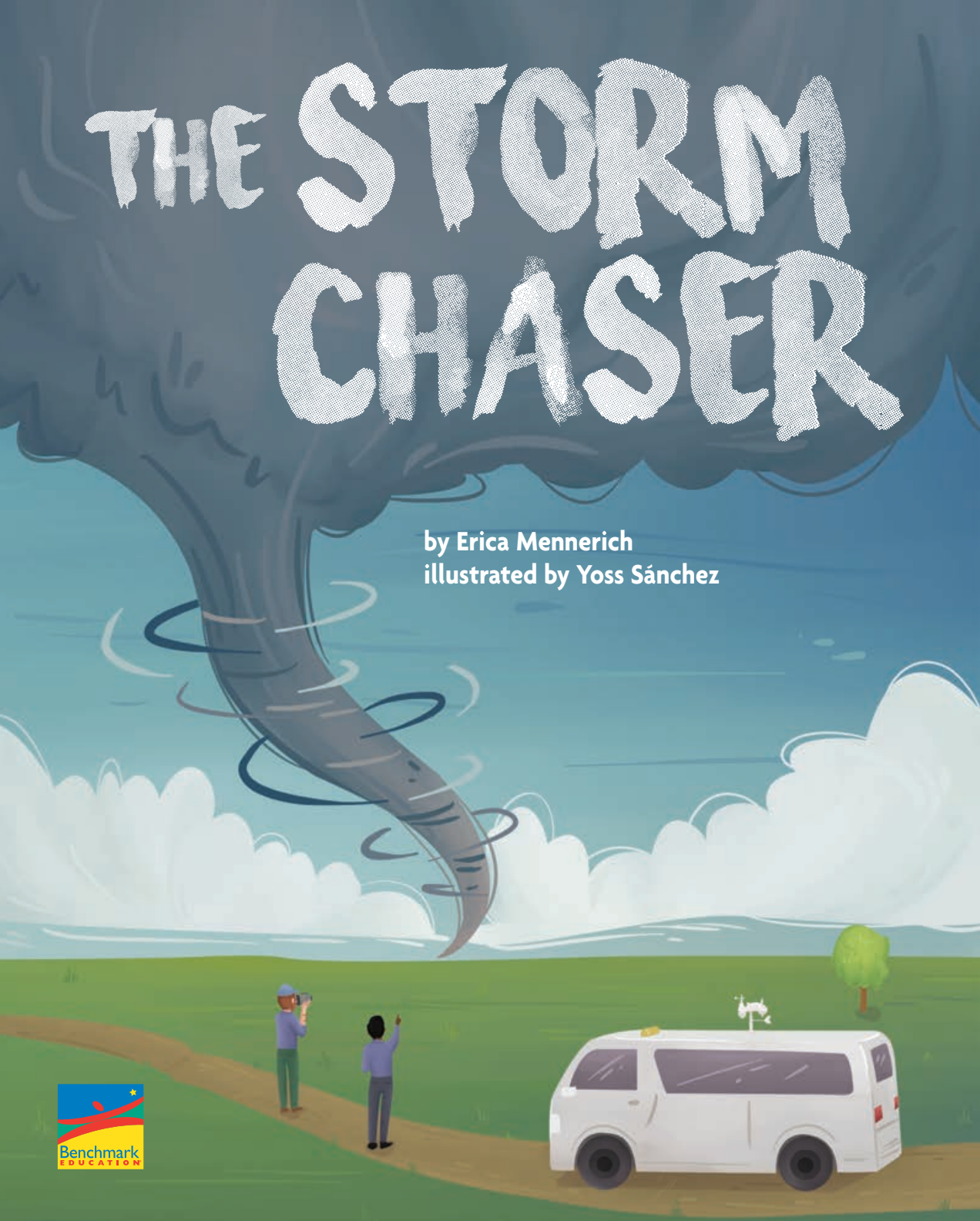


THE STORM CHASER

by Erica Mennerich
illustrated by Yoss Sánchez

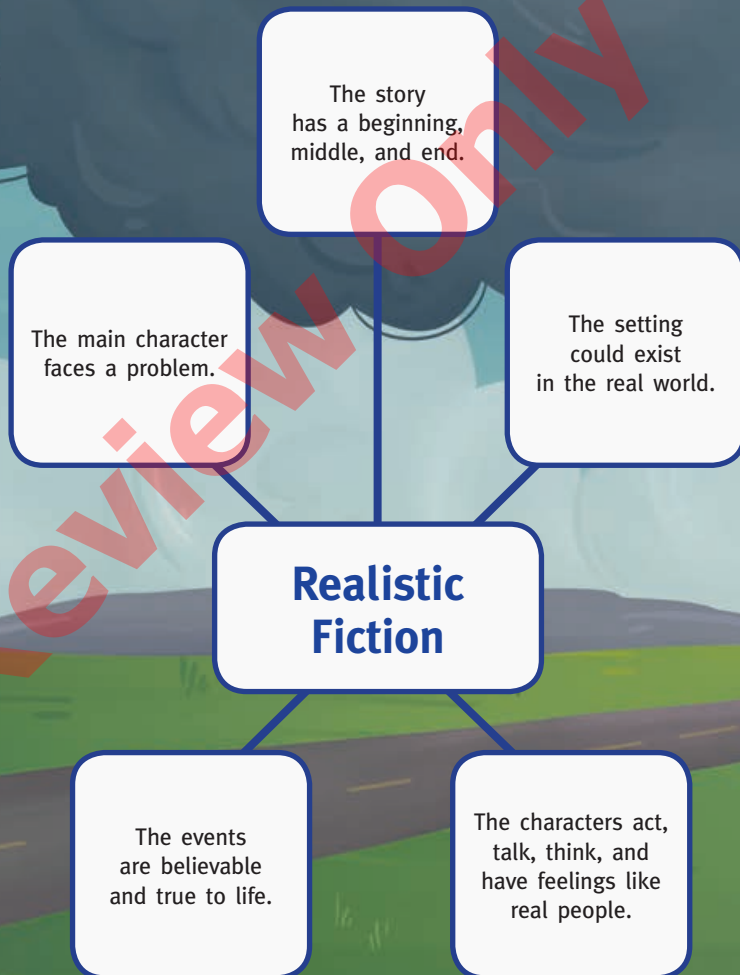


Level **M/28**

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Realistic Fiction

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The Hero Project

“Is Mr. Holt wearing a cape?” Sarah whispered to Tim as they walked into class.

“Everyone, take your seats and listen up!” said Mr. Holt. To get the class’s attention, Mr. Holt twirled. His red cape swirled around him. Everyone giggled.



“I’m wearing this cape because we are starting our Hero Project! Everyone will get the chance to plan a presentation about a hero in his or her life,” explained Mr. Holt.

Tim was excited by this new project. He had the perfect hero in mind.



After class, Tim and Sarah headed to lunchroom.

“So ... who’s your hero?” Sarah asked.

“My uncle Ed. He’s a storm chaser,” Tim said.

Sarah stopped. “Wait, he chases storms? Like tornadoes?”

“Yup! He films storms for a TV station,” Tim explained proudly.

“Wow! That is so cool,” replied Sarah. Tim couldn’t agree more.





That evening, Tim video-called his uncle to explain his project.

“I don’t consider myself a hero,” Uncle Ed said with a chuckle. “But I admit it takes a certain type of bravery to chase tornadoes.”

“Maybe you can come chase tornadoes in Connecticut,” replied Tim. “Although we don’t get many tornadoes here.”

“That’s why I live in Oklahoma, because we get all the action!” said Uncle Ed. “We’re just getting to tornado season now since it’s spring. We’ve had a few strong thunderstorms already, but none have gotten to the supercell stage that can cause a tornado. Speaking of tornadoes, how about I tell you about Gracie.”

“I’m all ears,” replied Tim.

Uncle Ed began his story ...

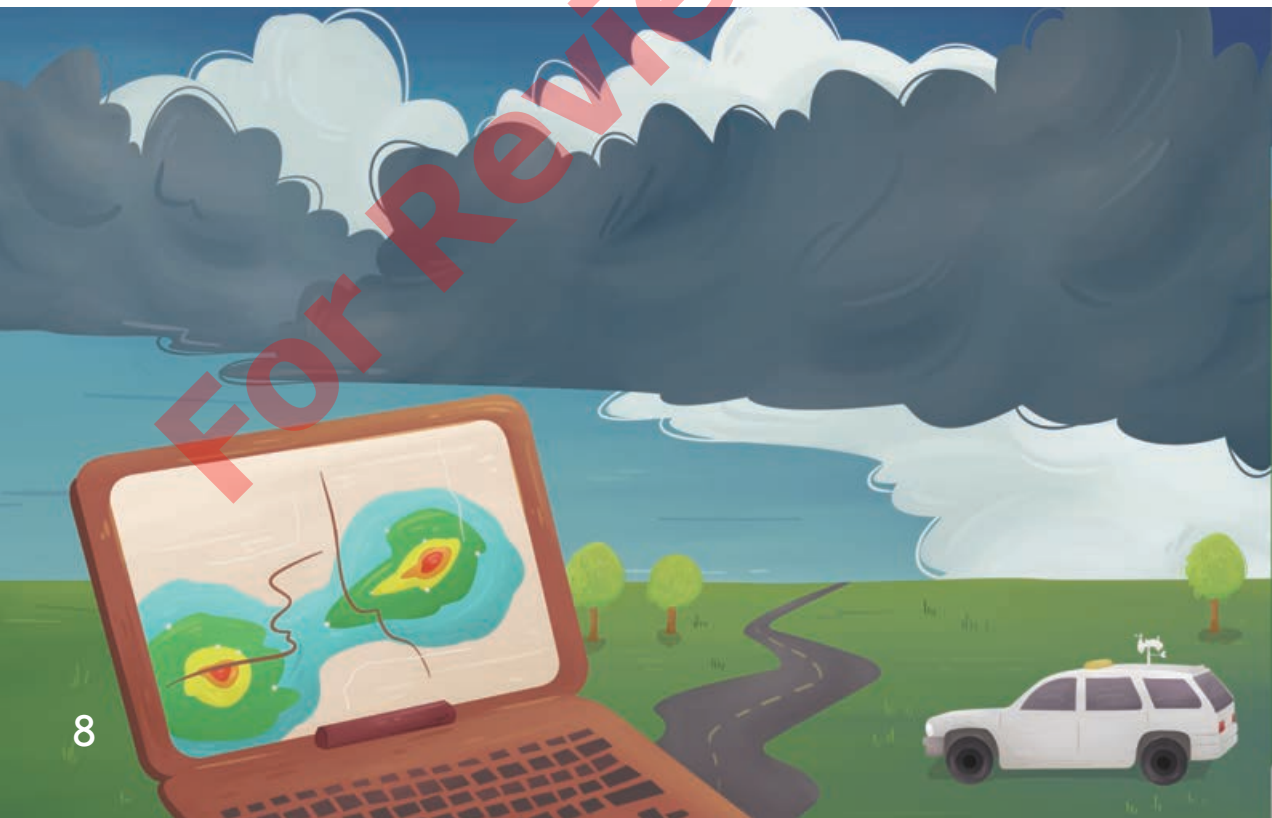


A Tornado Named Gracie

It was a muggy late afternoon in Oklahoma. My partner, Leo, and I were on assignment. We were tracking a thunderstorm in our trusty van. The news station wanted video of a twister. In Tornado Alley, twisters—that's another name for tornadoes—can form in minutes in these weather conditions.



We tracked the storm on the laptop radar. As predicted, warm winds from the south and cold winds from the north had met over the plains. As a result, a supercell had formed. This type of thunderstorm has all the ingredients for a tornado. It has high storm clouds and strong rotating winds that move upward.





Leo checked our equipment. He tested the weather station on top of the van. It measures temperature, air pressure, and wind speed. The video camera was ready, too.

“Everything looks good,” Leo said.

The sky got darker, and it started to rain. I saw some lightning in the distance.