

Introduction

The *Wizard of Oz* is a story about a trip to a magical fairyland. But not everything in the story is make-believe. At the beginning of the story, there is a cyclone. The cyclone carries Dorothy's house to the land of Oz. A cyclone is a storm with very strong winds that move in a circle. Winds inside cyclones can reach 800 kilometres per hour. Another name for a cyclone is a tornado.

Tornadoes happen all over the world. They are especially strong in the midwestern United States, where Dorothy is from. People there build underground rooms to hide from tornadoes in. These rooms are called 'storm cellars' or 'safe rooms'.

Some people have been carried off by tornadoes. In 1912 two boys were picked up by a tornado. They were in a small boat on a lake. One boy was thrown from the boat and killed. The other boy held on to the sides of the boat. The tornado put him down safely. He was still in the boat, hundreds of metres from the lake. He did not remember what had happened.

Could a tornado really carry Dorothy's house to the land of Oz? What do you think?

About L. Frank Baum

L. Frank Baum was born in 1852 in New York, USA. As a boy, he loved reading stories. He especially liked fairy tales. When he grew up, he ran a theatre. Later, he had a shop. But he always loved telling stories. Children came to the shop to hear his stories. Then he began writing his stories down.

He wanted to write a fairy tale that was not too scary. When it was finished, he read it to his children. They asked him the name of the place in the story. He saw the letters 'O-Z' on a filing cabinet. So he told them it was the land of Oz.

He wrote seventeen more books about the Wizard of Oz. He died in 1919. The story has been made into films many times. The most famous was made in 1939. It is one of the best-loved children's films.

1

The Cyclone

The farm in Kansas

Dorothy lived in a little farmhouse in the middle of Kansas. She lived there with her Uncle Henry and Aunt Em. Uncle Henry was a farmer.

The farmhouse was small. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made just one room. In this room there was a place to wash things and a place to cook food. There was a cupboard for the dishes, and a table. There were three or four chairs, and two beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner. Dorothy had a little bed in another corner. The only other thing in the house was a small door in the floor. Under it was a large, dark hole in the ground. It was called a storm cellar. If there was a storm called a cyclone, that was where Dorothy, Aunt Em and Uncle Henry went.

Dorothy stood at the door of the farmhouse. She could see the garden where Aunt Em grew vegetables. She could also see some sheds, where Uncle Henry kept the cows and horses. After that there was nothing but Uncle Henry's fields and Kansas grass. There were no other families to visit, or children to play with.

But Dorothy had someone to play with. He was a little dog. His name was Toto. He had long black hair, small bright eyes, and a funny little cold wet nose. Toto played all day long and Dorothy played with him. Dorothy loved Toto very much.