



Special Assignment

By Lois Lewis

NARRATOR 1:

It's Monday afternoon. Ms. Java, the computer teacher at Megabyte School, is at the computer room door greeting her next class.

NARRATOR 2:

As the students enter the room, they whisper and point at the stack of envelopes on their teacher's desk. Ms. Java settles down the class.

MS. JAVA:

I know everyone is curious about the envelopes on my desk.

NARRATOR 1:

Some students nod their heads. Others say "yes."

MS. JAVA:

Well, these envelopes will help you get started on our next project: We're going to create a class Web site.

SEVERAL STUDENTS:

Yeah! Cool!

MS. JAVA:

Each of you will develop one page of content for the site. These envelopes contain your assigned topics. When I call your name, please come to my desk to get your envelope.

NARRATOR 2:

After handing out the envelopes, Ms. Java gives the class more information about the project.

MS. JAVA:

You must research your topic thoroughly. Your pages are due one week from today. Are there any questions?

NARRATOR 1:

Zoe Brown raises her hand.

ZOE:

Ms. Java, can we trade topics?

MS. JAVA:

No. You must create your page on your assigned subject.

NARRATOR 2:

Zoe slumps in her seat as Ms. Java continues to answer questions and explain the project. After school, Zoe's classmates Nina and Brad catch up with her as they get on the bus to go home.

NINA:

Hey Zoe, why did you ask Ms. Java about changing topics?

ZOE:

She gave me the most boring topic for my content page.

BRAD:

What is it?

ZOE:

Weather safety!

NINA:

You're right. That *is* a pretty boring subject.

ZOE:

What topics did you two get?

BRAD:

I got musical instruments.

NINA:

I got famous athletes.

ZOE:

You guys are lucky. You got interesting topics. What's interesting about weather safety?

NARRATOR 1:

That night, Zoe starts to research weather safety on her computer.

NARRATOR 2:

Zoe browses many Web sites about weather. She stops when she sees a site named *Interactive Weather Safety*.

ZOE: (thinking to herself)

Hmm . . . This one looks interesting. It says "Click here for an interactive tour."

NARRATOR 1:

Zoe clicks the link. Suddenly, she's spinning through a dark tunnel. Oomph! She lands on a hard surface near a huge cloud.

ZOE:

Ouch! Where am I? And who...what...are you?

CUMULUS:

Sorry about the landing. Welcome to our interactive weather Web site. I'm Cumulus the Cloud, your guide for today.

ZOE:

Interactive . . . weather . . . Web site?

CUMULUS:

Yes. Here, visitors get realistic learning experiences about weather conditions and the importance of weather safety.

ZOE:

What's the big deal about weather safety?

CUMULUS:

I think you'll be surprised by what you will learn. Please come along.

NARRATOR 2:

Curious, Zoe follows Cumulus. Soon the winds pick up.

ZOE:

Why is it so windy?

CUMULUS:

For our first stop, I'd like to introduce Tornado.

TORNADO:

Hello! I'm Tornado. My winds spin fast, sometimes more than 200 miles per hour! I can carry anything in my path -- houses, cars, trees -- for miles. When I approach, take cover immediately.

ZOE:

Wow! I didn't know that.

NARRATOR 1:

Zoe and Cumulus walk on as the winds continue to blow and rain begins to fall.

CUMULUS:

This is Hurricane, which has strong winds *and* rain.

HURRICANE:

Hi! My winds range from 74 miles per hour to more than 155 miles per hour. I can tear roofs from buildings, blow down trees, and completely destroy homes. My heavy rains can cause floods.

ZOE:

How can people protect themselves from you?

HURRICANE:

I usually take several days to form and give plenty of warning. You should follow the instructions of your local safety experts. You also should have a hurricane emergency kit containing water, canned and dry food, batteries, and first aid supplies.

NARRATOR 2:

Suddenly, Zoe sees a bright flash.

ZOE:

Yikes! That's lightning!

CUMULUS:

Right! Don't get close; lightning is electric!

LIGHTNING:

That's correct. Just one of my flashes can provide one *billion* volts of electricity! If you see me, you should take cover immediately.

NARRATOR 1:

Cumulus shows Zoe other weather conditions, such as snowstorms and the hot summer sun. He offers safety information for each kind of weather. Zoe is surprised by what she learns.

ZOE:

Cumulus, thank you for such a cool tour! I had no idea weather safety was so interesting.

CUMULUS:

You're welcome, Zoe. I'm glad our site helped with your research. Now, press this button to go back to your home computer.

NARRATOR 2:

Zoe waves goodbye to Cumulus and presses the button. In a few seconds, she's home again.

ZOE: (thinking to herself)

That was neat! Now I know exactly what I'm going to do for my content page.

NARRATOR 1:

During the week, Zoe works hard on her page. The next Monday, she presents her completed project to the class.

ZOE:

My topic was weather safety. I created a page with information about various weather conditions and tips for staying safe in that weather.

BRAD:

Zoe, what are the dotted lines for?

ZOE:

I designed my page to be used as a poster or a booklet. After you print it, you can hang it on a wall or fold it into a booklet.

MS. JAVA:

Excellent job, Zoe!

NARRATOR 2:

Throughout the week, Ms. Java works with the students on the technical parts of building their Web site. When it's done, they show their site to other classes in the school.

MS. JAVA:

I have good news! The teachers and students say they enjoy using our site!

STUDENTS:

Yeah!

MS. JAVA:

One of their favorite sections was Zoe's weather safety page.

ZOE:

My page? They liked it?

MS. JAVA:

Yes! They said your page provided fascinating information that might save lives.

ZOE: (to herself)

I guess weather safety isn't such a boring topic after all...

