After the Flood

Hurricane Katrina's environmental damage, human costs, and federal response

USH.C.9.1.C "Evaluate the environmental and human crisis created by Hurricane Katrina, including the response by FEMA."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline environmental damage, circle human consequences, and number the details about FEMA's response so you can evaluate how these parts of the crisis connected.

When the Water Stayed

1 On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. In New Orleans, storm surge pushed water against floodwalls and levees, and several failed. Water covered roughly 80 percent of the city. Floodwater mixed with sewage, fuel, and debris, leaving streets and homes contaminated. Salt water damaged plants, while spilled oil and chemicals threatened soil and waterways. Flooded buildings later developed mold, making some homes unsafe even after the water drained. The storm showed how an environmental disaster can continue long after the wind stops: damaged barriers, polluted water, and ruined housing all slowed recovery.

2 People faced the crisis unevenly. Many residents evacuated before landfall, but others lacked a car, money for travel, or a safe place to go. After the levees failed, some waited on rooftops or crowded into shelters with limited food, water, and medical care. Hospitals struggled when power and transport failed. More than 1,800 people died across the Gulf Coast, and hundreds of thousands were displaced. For families whose homes flooded, returning meant facing mold, lost jobs, and disrupted schools. These conditions made the storm more than a short emergency; they turned it into a prolonged human crisis.

3 The Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, was responsible for coordinating federal disaster aid, not for replacing every state or local responder. It supplied assistance and supported shelters, but its early response drew sharp criticism. Requests and deliveries moved slowly, communication among agencies broke down, and stranded residents waited days for help. The Coast Guard and other rescuers saved many people, yet those rescues did not erase delays in getting basic supplies to crowded shelters. FEMA's difficulties mattered because flood damage had cut roads and services just as people needed transportation, safe water, and medical help most.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the levee failures create an environmental crisis that lasted beyond the storm? Use two details from the passage.

2. Why did limited access to transportation make the human crisis worse for some residents?

3. Evaluate FEMA's early response. What did it do, and why did its shortcomings matter?

4. Why did the rescues described in the passage not end the human crisis? Connect your answer to the flood damage and the response.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

City leaders must choose what to fund first after a future flood: evacuation transportation or polluted-water cleanup. Write five or six sentences recommending one priority, using two passage details to explain its environmental and human effects; name a job for FEMA and a job for local officials, and explain why the other priority must still follow.

After the Flood

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline environmental damage, circle human consequences, and number the details about FEMA's response so you can evaluate how these parts of the crisis connected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the levee failures create an environmental crisis that lasted beyond the storm? Use two details from the passage.	**The failures flooded much of New Orleans. Contaminated water spread through streets and homes, and flooded buildings developed mold that remained after the water drained.**
2	Why did limited access to transportation make the human crisis worse for some residents?	**Some residents lacked cars or money to leave before landfall. After flooding, failed transport made it harder to reach safety and medical care.**
3	Evaluate FEMA's early response. What did it do, and why did its shortcomings matter?	**FEMA supplied assistance and supported shelters, but slow deliveries and poor communication delayed help for people who needed food, water, and medical care.**
4	Why did the rescues described in the passage not end the human crisis? Connect your answer to the flood damage and the response.	**Flooding had cut roads and services, and contaminated homes remained unsafe. Even as rescuers saved people, delays in delivering supplies left others waiting for basic help.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would fund evacuation transportation first because some residents lacked cars or money to leave. Moving people away from contaminated floodwater would reduce their exposure while crews plan a safe cleanup of sewage, fuel, and debris. FEMA should coordinate federal resources, while local officials identify pickup sites and residents who need rides. This plan addresses an urgent human need without pretending that pollution has disappeared. Cleanup must follow because mold and damaged waterways can keep neighborhoods unsafe after the immediate rescue ends.

Accept either priority in Part 3 if the response uses two accurate passage details, addresses environmental and human effects, assigns distinct roles to FEMA and local officials, and explains why the other priority remains necessary.