

From *The Sea-Mammy* retold by Philip Sherlock

A hard time it was, a hard time after the hurricane had raged across the land, whipping the sugarcane, blowing down the bananas, tearing branches from the trees, smashing through the forest to the sound of crashing trunks. The rain pounded down on the fields, scooping the young yams out of the brown earth. Hissing streams washed away the potatoes planted on the hill-side. Floods swept away the eddoes and coco plants in the valley. There was no food. The birds went hungry. Parrots shrieked for food, dogs tried to eat grass, leaves and roots, and Anansi grew weak.

One day in those hard times Blackbird flew by Anansi's home. Looking at her, Anansi saw that Blackbird was fat. Her feathers were glossy, her hoarse voice sounded strong and clear, and she flew easily, like a bird that was getting its meals regularly. "Blackbird has food," muttered Anansi. "I wonder how she gets it?"

Early next morning Anansi waited in front of his gate. As soon as he saw Blackbird he signalled to her to stop, and she said, "I see you, Anansi. I am in a hurry but as we are friends I will stop for a minute, but not for long. I have not had my breakfast yet."

"Breakfast," replied Anansi. "I have forgotten what breakfast looks like. As for lunch, the least said the better. As you will see, Blackbird, my clothes are falling off me."

"Certainly you look very thin," replied Blackbird. "But why did you signal to me to stop?"

"Blackbird, do you get enough to eat? Where do you find food in these hard times?"

"I have a feeding-tree," replied Blackbird. "It is on an island out in the river, far from here. The only other person that knows that island is the Sea-Mammy."

"Please, Blackbird, take me with you to the feeding-tree."

"But, Brother Anansi, you have no feathers, so how would you get there? You cannot fly."

"I am sure that I could fly if you would lend me some feathers, Blackbird. You see how thin I am. Once in the air, the breeze would carry me along."

Blackbird picked out two feathers from her breast, two from the tail, two from the wings, two from the stomach. She stuck all the feathers on Anansi, saying, "I will need these feathers, Anansi. When we get back please return them to me, for it took me a long time to grow them."

"Indeed I will, Blackbird, indeed I will. But let's get moving: I am terribly hungry." Anansi jumped into the air, and fell back to the ground.

"I don't think that you can fly," exclaimed Blackbird. "You had better let me have my feathers now."

"Wait a moment," said Anansi. "All I need is a good start. Just before falling I felt the wind lifting me into the air." He climbed on to the top of the garden gate, leapt off, and to Blackbird's surprise, circled round the garden once before settling back on the gate.

Name:

Date:

Read the text, then answer the questions.

1. In the first paragraph, the writer describes the time of the hurricane. Pick three words you think help to make the description so vivid. Explain why you have chosen each word.

Word	Explanation

2. In the first paragraph, the writer uses very long sentences. Why?

3. The hurricane was a very bad time. Chosse **three** bad things that happened to the land.

(1)

(2)

(3)

4. What effect did the hurricane have on the creatures of the valley?

5. Why was Anansi surprised that Blackbird's feathers were glossy?

6. Why is Blackbird surprised when Anansi flies at the end? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
