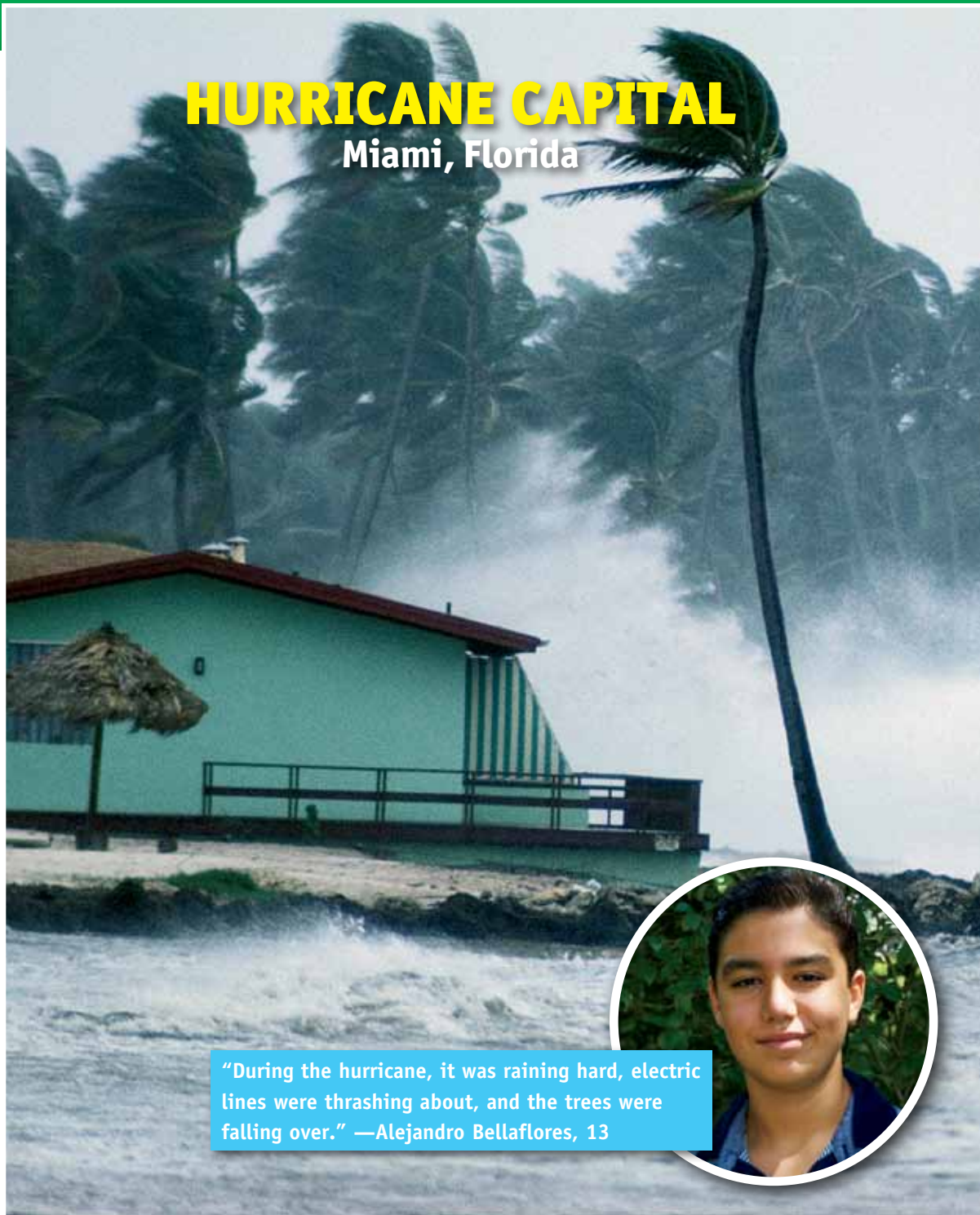


Where Would You

HURRICANE CAPITAL

Miami, Florida



"During the hurricane, it was raining hard, electric lines were thrashing about, and the trees were falling over." —Alejandro Bellaflores, 13

PAGE 16: OTIS IMBODEN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION; INSET: COURTESY OF BELLAFLORES FAMILY
PAGE 17: MARK DOWNEY/LUCID IMAGES/CORBIS; INSET: COURTESY OF SCHWARZ FAMILY

Rather Live?

PAIRED TEXTS
two stories that
share a common
theme

LAND OF A THOUSAND EARTHQUAKES

Southern California

We found two major disaster zones in the U.S., places where the ground is always shaking or where the storms are so violent they can rip trees straight out of the ground. What is it like to live in these places? And which one would you pick?

"There is going to be a
BIG earthquake soon."
—Lulu Schwarz, 12



TO FIND OUT MORE,
turn the page.





1: A hurricane dropped this boat on land; **2:** Intense wind and flooding decimated this street.

MIAMI, FLORIDA

Killer storms won't leave this city alone

It's been six years since Hurricane Wilma hit Miami, but Alejandro Bellaflor, 13, remembers the terror he felt as if it happened yesterday. For two days, wind and rain hammered his house, knocking out the power and the running water. It was so severe that had he stepped outside, the storm could have killed him.

Deadliest Disaster

Miami, Florida, is the hurricane capital of the United States. In the past 100 years, the city has been thrashed by 28 of them! A hurricane is a fierce spiraling storm that forms over warm water. When they hit land, hurricanes can be more deadly than any other type of natural disaster on the planet. They can tear limbs off trees, overturn cars, and suck houses right off their foundations. They dump heavy rains that can trigger floods and mudslides.

What's even more frightening than a hurricane's violent wind and rain? Storm surge: a wall of ocean water that lurches onto land, crushing anyone and anything in its path. In the worst hurricanes, this wall of water can be 20 feet tall and 100 miles wide.

Fortunately, hurricanes are predictable. At the National Hurricane Center in Miami, experts use satellites to forecast when and where hurricanes will form. Hurricane Andrew, one of the strongest on record, slammed into Florida in 1992. It destroyed tens

of thousands of homes and businesses with winds of 165 miles per hour. Thanks to good planning, nearly 700,000 people were evacuated. Forty people died, but thousands were spared.

Chaos and Destruction

Andrew struck before Alejandro was born, but Alejandro has lived through his share of ferocious storms. He has learned that even mild hurricanes can cause chaos. People board up the windows of homes and businesses. Store shelves are emptied as residents stock up on flashlights, water, food, and medicine. School is canceled, often for days. After Hurricane Wilma, Alejandro's neighborhood was completely blocked off by downed trees and deadly live electrical wires. It took weeks for life to return to normal.

But Alejandro's family has learned to cope with the stress. His mom channels her anxieties by going into hyper-laundry mode. Before a hurricane, she does load after load. The power might be out for weeks, but at least the family has clean clothes to wear!

Like most Miami residents, Alejandro says living there is worth the risk. He loves the vibrant energy of the city, which is famous for its great food and gorgeous beaches. For Alejandro, hurricanes even have an upside. "If your electricity is out, there is no TV or video games, so you actually have to be with your family and friends," he says. "It's a good bonding time." ●



1: A freeway wrecked by an earthquake; **2:** A violent quake devastated this neighborhood.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

What's shaking in the Golden State? Everything!

"Earthquakes are just part of life," says Lulu Schwarz, 12.

Lulu lives in Pasadena, California, a small city near Los Angeles. She has been through more earthquakes than she can remember. They've woken her up at night and rattled her classroom during the day. Once, a quake knocked her school bus across the road!

Earthquakes happen when two tectonic plates, or large pieces of the Earth's surface, suddenly slip past each other and send shockwaves through the ground. So far, Lulu has only experienced minor quakes, but like most Californians, she knows "the Big One"—a massive earthquake—could strike at any time. California is one of the most seismically active parts of the world. In fact, it has an average of 37,000 quakes every year. That's four an hour! Most are too tiny to do damage, but in 1906, a major quake and fire destroyed much of San Francisco. More recently, in 1989, a quake hit in the same area just before a World Series baseball game. It lasted an agonizing 15 seconds, killed 63 people, and left 12,000 others homeless.

That was terrifying, but scientists say California is overdue for an even bigger quake. The idea is scary. A quake like the one that struck Japan last spring could devastate California's most populous cities. Buildings would crumble. Bridges would collapse. Fires would break out from broken gas lines; the water supply

would fill with sewage. Thousands could die.

Exactly when will this happen?

No one can predict, but some scientists say it could happen in the next 10 years.

Shaken Up

So does this constant threat make Lulu want to move? Hardly. "I love California," she declares, pointing out the great weather and stunning landscapes.

Like most Californians, Lulu hopes the region has learned from past quakes. Today, many buildings and roads are designed to withstand even violent shaking. Some people, like Lulu's dad, bolt furniture to the walls. Schools have regular earthquake drills. And residents are urged to store extra food, water, and medical supplies; after a severe quake, they might be isolated for days or weeks.

As for the Big One? "You can't be constantly worried," Lulu says. "Besides, I'd be terrified to live somewhere with hurricanes. That would be so much worse!" ●

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Write down three ways Miami and California are similar and three ways they are different. Then write a paragraph answering the question, where would YOU rather live? Use details from both articles to support your opinion.

**GET THIS
ACTIVITY
ONLINE**