Isaac’s Storm
by Erik Larson
Introductory Notes
English I Pre-AP
Do you hear anything about Galveston?

(Willis L. Moore, Chief of U.S. Bureau, in a telegram dated September 9, 1900)
Outline

I. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900
II. Isaac Cline
III. Reading a Nonfiction Novel
IV. Setting a Purpose for Reading and Annotating
I. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900
I. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900

Galveston before the storm
I. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900

The Facts

Date: September 8, 1900
Time: 5:00 PM – 11:00 PM
(period of hurricane-force winds)
Strength: Category 4 (145 mph winds)
Storm Surge: >15 feet
Death Toll: 6,000–12,000 (official toll: 8,000)
Deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history
I. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900
I. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900

Galveston after the storm
II. Isaac Cline

- Chief meteorologist at the Weather Bureau in Galveston from 1891 – 1901
- First meteorologist to provide reliable forecasts of freezing weather
- One of the first meteorologists to provide flood warnings on the Colorado and Brazos Rivers
II. Isaac Cline

- Published *Tropical Cyclones* in 1927 after years of research
- Debate exists as to his role in the Galveston hurricane – whether he was responsible for so many lives being lost or for so many lives being saved
III. Reading a Nonfiction Novel

This is a different task than reading a fiction novel, and you must read this differently than you would fiction!
III. Reading a Nonfiction Novel

1. This is not a story; it really happened.
2. These are not characters; they are real people.
3. The writer of a nonfiction novel does NOT have complete control over a story – s/he is limited by what actually occurred.
4. A writer of a nonfiction novel must “fill in the gaps.”
III. Reading a Nonfiction Novel

5. Nonfiction novels have features that fiction novels do not, and these are important and meant to be used!
   - Maps
   - End Notes
   - Footnotes
   - Index

6. A writer of nonfiction must establish his/her credibility in authoring the text.
IV. Setting a Purpose for Reading and Annotating

1. **Structure of novel** – How does Larson structure the novel? Why does he put things in the order that he does? Why are things divided as they are?

2. **Credibility/Ethos** – How does Larson establish his credibility as a source on the topics he presents?

3. **Suspense** – What does Larson reveal, when, and why?
IV. Setting a Purpose for Reading and Annotating

4. Patterns of Language & Rhetorical Devices – How does Larson use language to achieve his purpose? What patterns emerge? Where does he deviate from the patterns, and why?

5. Speculation – Where has Larson “filled in the gaps”? Why in those places? How does doing so relate to his purpose?
IV. Setting a Purpose for Reading and Annotating

6. **Sympathies** – Where do Larson’s sympathies lie? How can you tell? How does the language reveal it?

7. **Purpose** – What IS Larson’s purpose, anyway? How does he achieve it? (Hint: It’s NOT “to inform.”)

8. **Thesis** – What is Larson’s central argument? What evidence does he use to support it?