Discussion Questions
Isaac’s Storm by Erik Larson

Source: Burleson, TX Library and Madison Public Library

1. Given the tools and knowledge the U.S. Weather Service had in 1900, could the Galveston disaster have been prevented? Larsen himself, in an interview with Powell’s bookstore, says the book is ‘so much about attitude.’ What does he mean?

2. Why were Isaac Cline’s warnings so hesitant, as the barometer continued to drop and the storm raced toward the City of Galveston?

3. Imagine if the hurricane had not hit Galveston. Would it have remained the ‘New York of the Gulf Coast’ as it was in 1900?

4. Consider Hurricane Katrina. Are we better prepared for storms and their impact today? Does awareness of potential disaster translate into a different response now as compared to then?

5. According to the book, several methods were used to dispose of the 10,000 bodies after the storm. How would it have been handled had that many died in Hurricane Katrina?

6. How did this book’s descriptions of the devastation hit you emotionally?

7. Does this book have a hero? How does it affect the story for you as a reader?

8. Some wish the book had accompanying pictures. Can you visualize the situation and the damage?

9. A reviewer in the New Statesman said the book had ‘just enough science.’ Do you agree?