

Walker Percy's Theory on the Redemptive Power of Hurricanes

The idea that hurricanes can be anything other than destructive might sound strange to many people. And the idea that they can be a source of redemption and healing probably sounds downright absurd.

But the novelist Walker Percy (1916-1990) believed just that.

To Percy, a writer and philosopher from Louisiana, modern man's great struggle was the absence of great struggle. He believed malaise is the scourge of postmodernity, and violent storms are a respite from the dreary humdrum of our monotonous existence.

"I knew a married couple once who were bored with life, disliked each other, hated their own lives, and were generally miserable – except during hurricanes," a character recalls in the novel [Lancelot](#). "Then they sat in their house at Pass Christian, put a bottle of whiskey between them, felt a surge of happiness, were able to speak frankly and cheerfully to each other, laugh and joke, drink, even make love."

There is something powerful about the passage, in part because it's so believable. Hurricanes don't just bring energy. They bring a powerful sense of danger, which reminds us that life is real. They sharpen us. As Walter Isaacson wrote in a *New York Times* [article in 2015](#)