

# Salvador Gómez-Colón

## Hurricane Maria

Fifteen-year-old Salvador Gómez-Colón looked out the window of his apartment. All he saw was destruction. Hurricane Maria had hit the island of Puerto Rico. It **devastated** much of the island. Some homes were destroyed completely. Others were heavily damaged. Many people lost everything they owned. Power was out everywhere. There was no electricity. Water supplies were cut off.

"I felt like I had woken up to a nightmare. Outside my flooded apartment, I saw fallen branches and streetlamps, shattered windows, and homes without roofs. The parks where I played growing up and the streets I **frequented** for most of my life had disappeared."<sup>1</sup>

### Luckier Than Most

Salvador and his family were lucky. Their apartment was still standing. They had some food and water, though they had to **ration** it. They also had a **generator** that made some electricity. The generator allowed them to charge their cell phones. It also gave them enough power to have one light on at night.

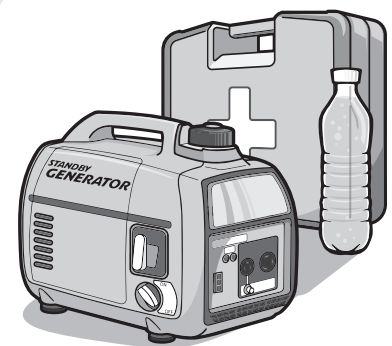
Salvador stared out the window and saw nothing but darkness. He couldn't stop thinking about all the people out there in the dark. He worried that someone would trip and fall. Emergency services would not be able to get to them because the roads were blocked.

In the daytime, Salvador saw many families who had made temporary roofs out of tarps or broken pieces of their houses. He saw kids sitting in the hot sun, rushing to finish their homework. They had no light to work after dark. He also saw that many people were still wearing the same clothes they had on when the hurricane struck. They had no way to do laundry. Salvador wanted to find a way to help.

➔ **ration**—use in small amounts; use for a short amount of time

### Natural Disasters

Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornados, and wildfires are all natural disasters. They can cause a lot of damage. We can't stop natural disasters from happening, but we can be prepared. It is a good idea to have an emergency kit with supplies. After a disaster, you might need water, food, first-aid supplies, flashlights, and other important items. It is important to have a plan to evacuate if you need to. You also need a plan for where to meet if you get separated.



1. Gómez-Colón, Salvador. "We Need Empathy in Times of Crisis. But That Doesn't Just Mean Feeling for Others." TIME.com. May 21, 2020.

## Salvador Gómez-Colón (cont.)

### Luckier Than Most (cont.)

"I couldn't bear the thought of thousands of people losing their belongings, homes, and family members. Rather than rest on the privilege of having a roof over my head and a family to turn to, I **vowed** to create a positive impact. Rather than merely speak up, I wanted to take action, concrete action."<sup>2</sup>

### Concrete Action

Salvador used his phone to text a friend of his mother's in New York. He knew she helped provide solar-powered lamps to people in need in Africa. Salvador asked her to help him do the same for Puerto Rico. She set up an online **crowdfunding** campaign for Salvador called Light and Hope for Puerto Rico. People were able to donate money on the Light and Hope website to give solar lamps and hand-powered washing machines to people in Puerto Rico. Salvador also contacted companies that make solar lights. Some of them donated lights. They also sold some lights to him at a discount.

### Results

Salvador's efforts worked! When he started receiving supplies, his family, friends, and other volunteers helped him **distribute** them. The solar lamps helped people cook and do homework. It was safer for kids and disabled people to move around at night. People could also use the solar power to charge their cell phones. The hand-crank washing machines helped people have clean clothes to wear. These things gave people hope and made their lives better.

Over several months, Salvador raised nearly \$200,000. He distributed solar lamps and hand-crank washing machines to 3,500 families. Since then, he has started other projects. He helped people after Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas. He helped after earthquakes caused more damage in Puerto Rico. Salvador shows that young people can combine empathy and action to make a difference.



"In our moments of crisis, **empathy** doesn't mean merely feeling for others. It requires turning our emotions into positive actions, with the common purpose of supporting each other."<sup>3</sup>

2. Gómez Colón, Salvador. "My world, reimagined: When youth have a seat at the table." *Voices of Youth*, June 5, 2020.

3. Salvador Gómez-Colón for *TIME* magazine, accessed April 25, 2021.

# Unit 8

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Key Ideas and Details

**Directions:** Answer the questions below about Salvador Gómez-Colón. Use complete sentences.

1. If you were going to create a new title for this text, what would it be, and why?

---

---

2. What kinds of problems did people in Puerto Rico face after the hurricane?

---

---

---

3. How did Salvador get help for people?

---

---

---

---

4. What is a *natural disaster*? What examples are given in the text?

---

---

---

---

---

---



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Craft and Structure

**Directions:** Answer the questions below. Use complete sentences.

1. What is *crowdfunding*? Use context clues to help you understand it.

---

---

---

---

---

2. What is the idea that ties all the parts of this text together?

---

---

---

---

---

3. In the first quote, Salvador gives a first-person account of what he saw after the hurricane. Why do you think the author included this quote in addition to writing about the damage?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# Unit 8

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Integration of Knowledge and Meaning

**Directions:** Answer the questions below. Use complete sentences.

1. The author writes, "Salvador and his family were lucky." What details in the text support this statement?

---

---

---

---

---

2. How can solar-powered lamps be helpful to people after a natural disaster? How do you know?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What other supplies might be helpful to people after a natural disaster? How might they help?

---

---

---

---

---



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Group Discussion



**Brainstorming:** What is *empathy*? How do we understand the feelings of others? Talk about a time when you empathized with someone. How did you know what they were feeling? Did you do anything about it? Why, or why not?





### Taking Action

Salvador knows that empathy—the ability to share the feelings of others—is important. But he believes that empathy alone is not enough. We can use empathy as a starting point for action.

**Directions:** Choose a problem that your community faces. Either interview someone who faces this problem or list what you think the responses would be. Use the Empathy Map below to record evidence about how they feel. Then, use this information to clarify the problem and make a plan of action.

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Who has this problem? \_\_\_\_\_

 <b>What did they say?</b>	 <b>What did they do?</b>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Empathy Map</div>	
 <b>What did they think?</b>	 <b>What did they feel?</b>

What did you learn about how people are experiencing the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about what people need? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to help? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_