We have called tornadoes: twisters and cyclones, whirlwinds and tempests. But another name gained popularity from a children's book and its movie adaptation: the *Kansas Cyclone*.

In meteorology, a **cyclone** is an area of closed, circular fluid motion rotating in the same direction as the Earth.

This is usually characterized by inward spiraling winds that rotate counter clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere of the Earth.

Tornado Approaching
(photo courtesy NOAA Historical Photo Collection)
Cyclones are also characterised by strong winds, yet in their centre is a clear, calm region called the 'eye'. When the cyclone continues its course, and the winds return from the other direction, they may seem to be more violent. The winds are not just rotating; there is also the effect of the warmer air continually rising and cold air rushing in. That is why the winds are so strong, and seem to move in all directions.

Courtesy of Emergency Management Australia, 2008