



ECO-DISASTERS

POISONED AIR

**BHOPAL,
INDIA**



by Meish Goldish

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POISONED AIR

BHOPAL, INDIA



by Meish Goldish

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Night of Horror

December 2, 1984, was a chilly night in Bhopal, India. Most of the city's **residents** were asleep when, suddenly, they awoke gasping for breath. Aziza Sultan remembers: "About 12:30 a.m, I woke to the sound of my baby coughing badly. The room was filled with a white cloud. I heard people shouting, 'Run! Run!' Then I started coughing. It seemed as if I was breathing in fire. My eyes were burning."



Bhopal is a city in central India. In 1984, its population was about 900,000 people. Today, Bhopal's population is around 2 million.



Across the city, hundreds of thousands of people were experiencing the same terror. In a **panic**, parents grabbed their children and rushed into the streets. They ran, not knowing what was happening. All around them, people and animals were collapsing and dying. What was causing this unbelievable horror?

A neighborhood in Bhopal

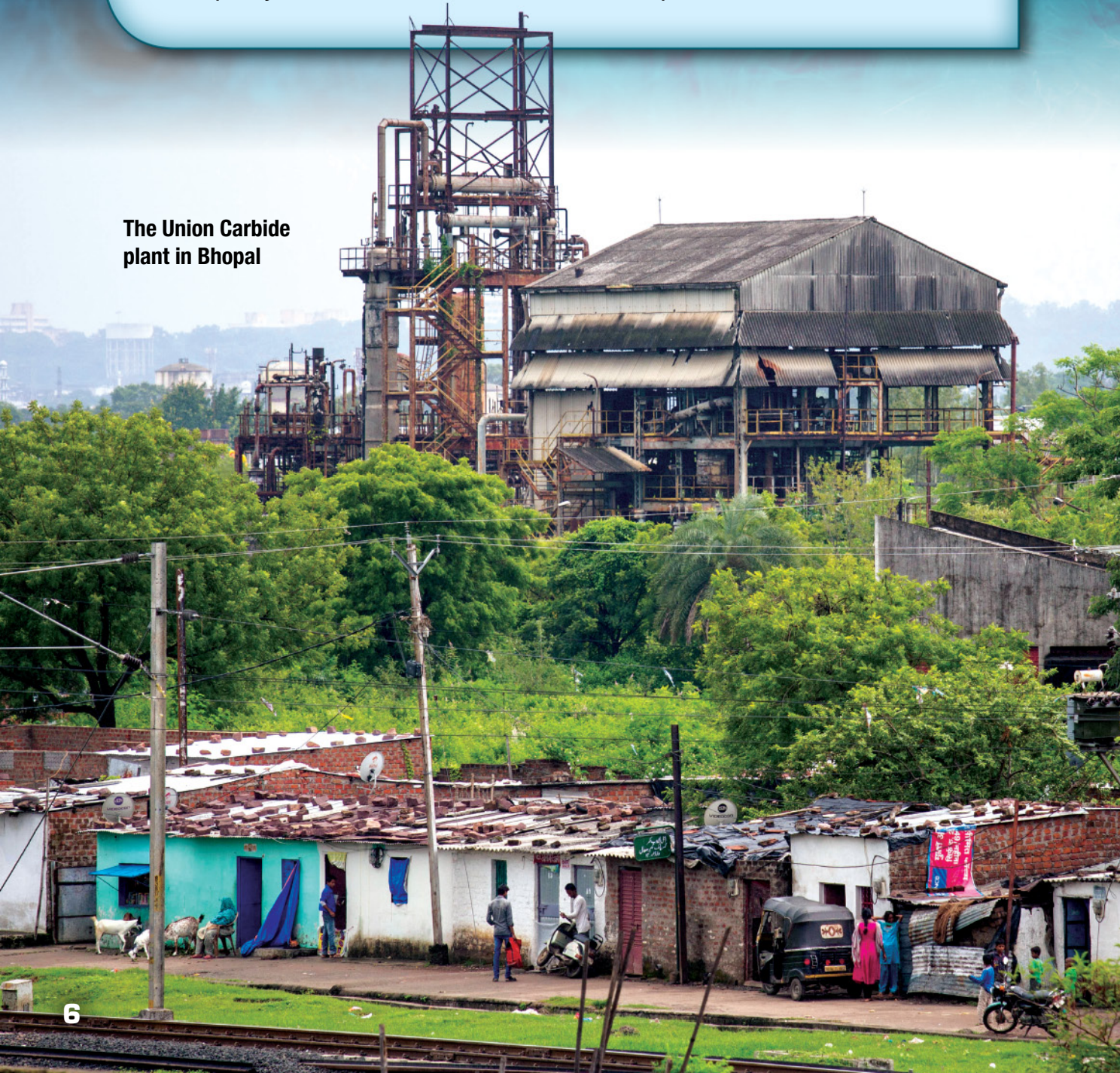


A woman with her dead cattle

A Cloud of Poison

Aziza Sultan and other Bhopal residents later learned that the white cloud they had seen in their homes and in the streets was a deadly gas called methyl isocyanate, or MIC. It came from a nearby **chemical** factory run by an American company called the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC).

The Union Carbide plant in Bhopal



That December night, a terrible disaster occurred at the factory. Plumes of poisonous MIC gas leaked into the air. About 600,000 residents of Bhopal breathed in the poison. Within three days of the disaster, 8,000 to 10,000 **victims** died. Their bodies littered the streets. Hundreds of thousands more became seriously ill.



MIC is heavier than air, so when the gas floats freely, it stays close to the ground.

Thousands of victims who breathed the poisonous gas died in the streets.