An Africa Thunderstorm
David Rubadiri (1930–)
Post-modern/colonial/African Poet

Glossary
Sinister—evil/menacing
Din—loud noise
Jaggered—pointy
Pelting—rain falling fast + hard

Theme:

Form:
Two parts which divide the content into the general and the specific.

Wind builds up 4 times (4 inter-woven stanzas) like a main act in a plot.

The irregular no. of words on a line, with many single-word lines, captures the unpredictable progress of the wind and the accompanying clouds. This technique is also evident in the second part of the poem, where the frantic movement of the villagers as they ‘Dart about/in and out/Madly’ (lines 22-24) is physically demonstrated by the line divisions.

Sound Devices:
This poem utilises sound effectively. Much use is made of onomatopoeia as the wind is ‘whirling’ (lines 7 and 19) and it ‘whistles’ (lines 14 and 25). The noise in the village has the screams of children competing with the ‘din of whirling wind’ (line 19). As the storm gets closer, its imminent arrival is heralded by the onomatopoeia of the ‘Rumble, tremble, and crack’ (line 31) of the thunder, and the impact of lightning striking the earth.

1 From the west
2 Clouds come hurrying with the wind
3 Turning sharply
4 Here and there
5 Like a plague of locusts
6 Whirling
7 Tossing up things on its tail
8 Like a madman chasing nothing
9 Pregnant clouds
10 Ride stately on its back,
11 Gathering to perch on hills
12 Like sinister dark wings
13 The wind whistles by
14 And trees bend to let it pass.

15 In the village
16 Screams of delighted children,
17 Toss and turn
18 in the din of the whirling wind
19 Women,
20 Babies clinging on their backs
21 Dart about
22 Madly;
23 The wind whistles by
24 Whilst trees bend to let it pass.

25 Clothes wave like tattered flags
26 To expose dangling breasts
27 As jagged binding flashes
28 Rumble, tremble and crack
29 Amidst the smell of fired smoke
30 And the pelting march of the storm

Metaphor
Origin of storm identified from the west
Adjectival connotation
Juxtaposition
Simile—swarming in
Onomatopoeia
Juxtaposition
Personification
Onomatopoeia: Cacophony
Personification

Line 9 comparing the wind to a monster thrashing its tail about, emphasises the unpredictable nature of the storm, which adds to its danger.

The description of the clouds (lines 12-13) makes the clouds reminiscent of some bird of prey waiting for the opportune moment to strike.

The path of the storm has not been diminished by the trees. In fact, the trees give way to allow it to progress unhindered.

The 3rd stanza continues in its depiction of noise and movement as villagers anticipate the storm’s arrival. We notice how the children react with ‘Screams’ (line 17) of delight, possibly because of the thrill of potential danger. The women hurriedly attempt to prepare for the storm, although it seems that their efforts may be pointless as the ‘Clothes wave like tattered flags’ (line 27), completely at the mercy of the wind.

The poem ends with the storm breaking, but stops before it actually hits. The progress of the ‘pelting march of the storm’ (line 33) tells the reader that this storm cannot be stopped and will be a mighty one.