

The Children's Blizzard

Two brothers, a monstrous storm, and an epic story of survival

About the Story

Lexile: 1040L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to analyze how the time and place in which a blizzard occurred contributed to its danger

Key Skills:

literary devices, author's craft, summarizing, key ideas, inference, figurative language, text structure, text features, author's purpose, analyzing setting

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be selfless?
- Why should past disasters be remembered?
- What role does weather play in our lives?

Standards:

This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- The article (English and Spanish)
- Vocabulary

Differentiated articles:

- Lower-Lexile version (printable)
- Spanish version (printable)

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- Vocabulary
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Analyzing Setting: The Children's Blizzard
- **Core Skills Workout:** Central Ideas & Details*, Summarizing*, Text Features
- Quiz*
- Nonfiction Elements*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Consider an essential question.

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Write this question on the board: *What role does weather play in our lives?* Give students three minutes to jot down their answers to this question on their own paper. Then spend two minutes discussing their ideas.

Preview vocabulary.

(8 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. Review as a class. Highlighted words: *bearings, brewing, encrusted, ferry, jubilation, mobilized*

2 Reading and Discussing

Read and discuss the article.

(45 minutes, activity sheets online)

- Have a volunteer read aloud the As You Read box on page 5.
- Play the audio at Scope Online while students follow along in their printed magazines.
- Have students work in groups to discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ **Consider the last line of the introduction:**

“‘There’s something in the air,’ he told her with a worried glance toward the heavens.”

What literary device is the author using by including this line? What purpose does it serve? (literary devices, author’s craft) *The author is using foreshadowing. This line suggests that the surprisingly warm weather on the prairie was actually a sign that something dangerous was coming. The author likely uses foreshadowing to draw the reader into the story and make the reader want to keep reading to find out what happens.*

▶ **According to information in the section “An Arctic Blast,” what made the blizzard of 1888 so powerful?** (summarizing) *The blizzard was particularly powerful because it developed from a combination of three different weather systems, including one especially dangerous low-pressure system. Together, these three systems created a very violent storm.*

▶ **On page 6, Lauren Tarshis writes that at the time of the blizzard, “The science of weather forecasting was in its infancy, and there was no technology that could accurately predict a storm’s strength or path.” Why is this information important to the story?** (key ideas) *This information is important because it explains why the people on the prairie in 1888 did not have any advance warning of the blizzard. If they had been warned about the storm, parents would likely never have sent their children to school.*

▶ **Why do you think Walter jumped out of the sled to retrieve his perfume bottle?** (inference) *You can infer that Walter likely jumped out of the sled to get his perfume bottle because the bottle was important to him. On page 6, Tarshis writes that the bottle was Walter’s “prized possession” and that nobody else had such a treasure. Walter likely did not realize how fast the sleds would disappear from view and that he was putting himself in grave danger.*

▶ **On page 7, Tarshis writes, “Meanwhile, snow and ice swarmed around his body like attacking bees.” What figurative language is the author using here? What does it help you understand about the storm?** (figurative language) *Tarshis uses a simile to compare the way the snow and ice were moving during the blizzard to the way swarming bees attack.*

This comparison helps you understand how intense the storm was, as well as how painful it must have been for Walter to be outside and unprotected during such a bad storm.

► **What is the purpose of the section “Houses Made of Dirt”? (text structure)** *The purpose of this section is to help readers understand what life was like on the prairie at the time of the blizzard.*

► **What does the sidebar “Tough Life” add to the article? Why do you think it was included? (text features, author’s purpose)** *The sidebar “Tough Life” adds more information about what being a homesteader in the late 1800s was like. The sidebar was likely included to help readers better understand the lives of those described in the article—why they came to the prairie, what they ate, what their homes and schools were like, etc.*

► **On page 9, Tarhis writes, “Although Will saw the sleds pulling away, he remained focused on his search.” What does this detail tell you about Will? (inference)** *From this detail, you can infer that Will was brave and that he loved his brother a lot. He did not stop searching for Walter, even when that meant putting his own life at risk.*

- Reconvene to discuss the following question.

Critical-Thinking Question

► **What can be gained from learning about the Children’s Blizzard of 1888 and other survival stories from history? Explain.** *Answers will vary. Students may say that learning about the blizzard and other natural disasters can remind us of the power and strength of nature. Stories of past disasters can also help us understand what life was like for people in the past. Stories of children, like Walter, who survived a disaster can remind us of the resilience and strength of the human spirit. Stories of survival can also strengthen our faith in human goodness by showing us people like Minnie Freeman and Will Allen who risked their lives to save others.*

3 Skill Building

Featured Skill: Analyzing Setting

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students work in groups to complete the activity sheet **Analyzing Setting: The Children’s Blizzard**. This activity will prepare students to respond to the writing prompt on page 9. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, describe three reasons the Children’s Blizzard of 1888 was so dangerous. Support your answer with evidence from the article.

For Advanced Readers

If a blizzard of the same force as the Children’s Blizzard of 1888 occurred today, would it be as dangerous as the Children’s Blizzard of 1888? Explain your answer, drawing on information in the article.

For Creative Writers

Choose one of the people mentioned in the article, such as Walter Allen, Will Allen, or Minnie Freeman. Create a dramatized version of his or her experience during the Children’s Blizzard of 1888 in the form of a movie script, video, drawing, or play.

For Graphic Novelists

Reimagine the story of the Children’s Blizzard of 1888 in the form of a short graphic novel. You may choose to draw in black and white or color.