

Snow!

Coping in snow drifts

Clearing the roads



Snow shoes

Snow drift



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

Snow drift

Snow drifts are great banks of falling snow that pile up in strong winds. These are blizzard conditions.



Blizzards can be frightening on low-lying areas, but they can be life-threatening on mountains. Think of what you need for living and you will soon see why. You need somewhere to shelter, food and warmth. You may need these for many days, which is why people caught out in blizzards can easily die.

In the past, people who lived in high mountain villages in the Alps, for example, would know that they could not get warmth and food for long enough, so they would close their whole villages and move down to the valleys. In the High Alps, the Rockies and so on, roads are still closed from November to May even today with modern snow-clearing equipment.

The world record amount of snow falling is held by Mount Baker in the USA. 2,800cm of snow (28m, about 100ft!) fell over one winter. And that was before drifting.

Blizzards are so difficult to cope with because of the amount of snow that falls and moves. You might think that a snow plough or snow blower could clear any kind of snow, but a blizzard can make it impossible to drive along simply because the driver will not be able to see where he is going.

Snow may seem light and fluffy, but it is actually ice. Ice is frozen water, and water is heavy. During a blizzard, snow weighing hundreds of tonnes may fall on a kilometre of road in an hour.



People caught in cars and trucks on mountain passes know that they may have to wait for days before the roads can be cleared. Usually snow ploughs can only be useful when the snow has stopped falling and drifting.

It is remarkably difficult to clear a road after snowdrifts have blocked it. The ploughs have no way of knowing if there are cars with people in them buried in the drifts. So they have to go slowly and carefully.

Nevertheless, it is a race against time, not only to save lives, but to get the snow away while it is still fluffy. As the days pass, the snow settles and hardens. It is then almost impossible to use snow blowers and people cannot use spades. The only thing that can be done is to wait for a thaw.



Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'blizzard'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'blizzard' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'blizzard'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'blizzard'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'blizzard' means.



Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: remarkably	amazingly

3

Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

1 Write a heading for your summary.

2 Now write the main idea in one sentence.
e.g. "This story tells us..."

3 Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,
can you rewrite your
summary to make it better?**

1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.
2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.
3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.
4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?

**There is
nothing wrong
with rewriting; even
the best authors
rewrite their
work.**

123
4

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.



It is a race against time to clear the snow before it hardens.

Drivers of snowploughs may find they have to wait until after a blizzard because they may not be able to see in a blizzard.

People caught in cars and trucks may have to wait for days.

At the end, all that can be done is to wait for a thaw.

Snowploughs can only move slowly because there may be cars buried in the drifts.

The world record for snowfall is nearly 100ft.

In areas that have long periods of snow, people close villages down and move to valleys for the winter.



Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.



Snowshoes

1 What is snow and high wind called?

2 What is the world record for snowfall?

3 Which month do many mountain roads become blocked for the winter?

4 Which month do high passes become clear again?

5 How much snow can fall on a kilometre of road in an hour?



Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.



1 Why is it dangerous to be caught in a blizzard?

2 Why don't people in high mountain villages just sit the winter out?

3 Why do snowplough drivers sometimes have to give up?

4 Why does snow become more difficult to clear after a few days?



Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

- 1 What would you take with you in a car if you thought you might get caught in drifting snow?
- 2 Would you think it was sensible to set out at all when a blizzard were forecast?
- 3 Why should snowplough drivers worry about anything buried in the drifts?
- 4 Do you think people should prepare for drifting snow or just hope it doesn't happen?
- 5 When would it be safe to play in a snowdrift, or would it never be safe?





Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.



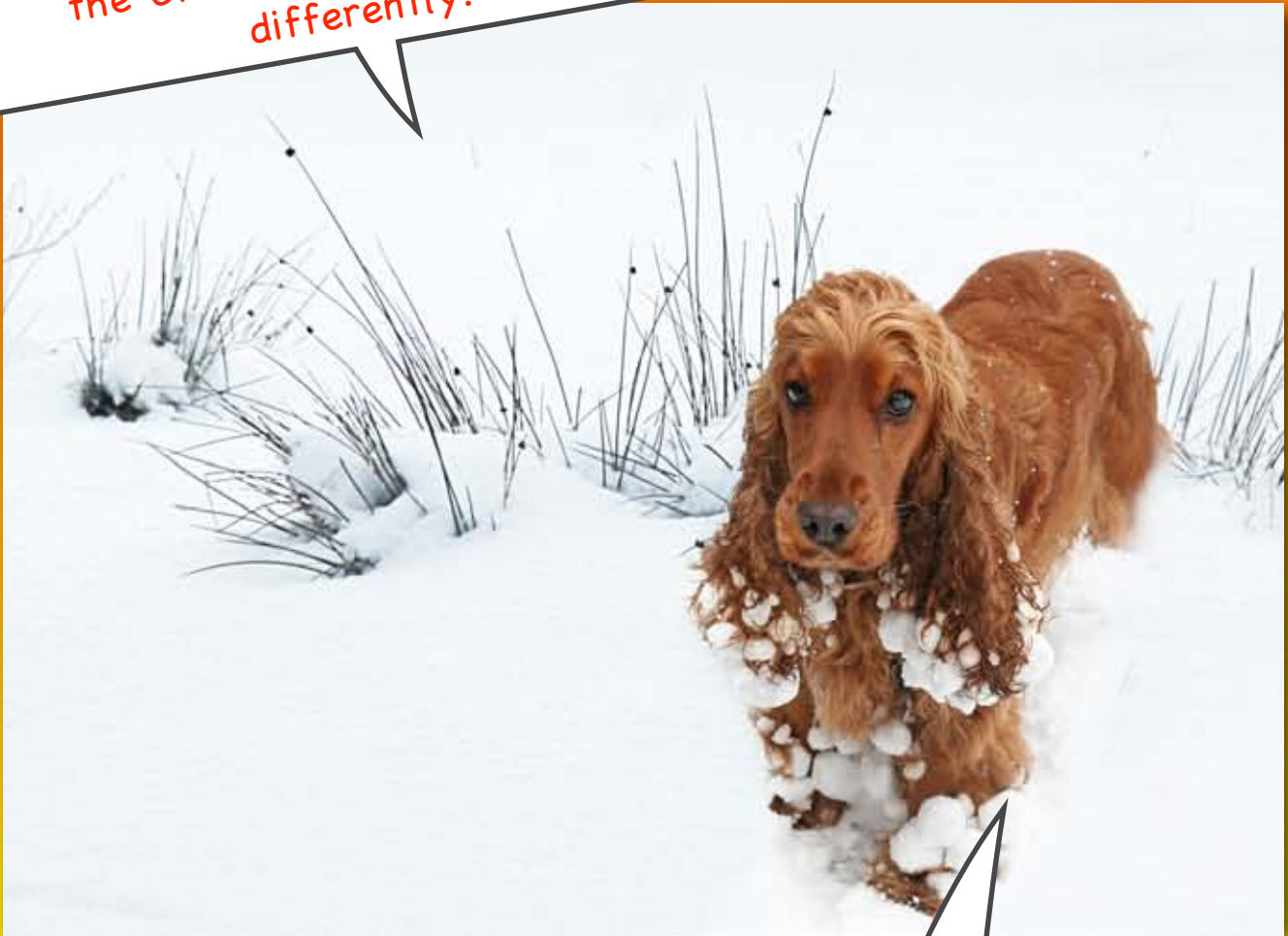
Discussion topic: Mountain snow signs

Suppose you were in charge of designing the warning signs for a mountain region. What would you make signs to show? What would they look like? Split into groups and see who can win the sign competition.



Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.



Lost?

Penny had been having fun jumping around in the deep snow drifts. She ran ahead and fell deep into a huge drift. It took some time for her to dig herself out, and when she did, she found she was quite alone... Now continue the story.

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