

Historical
Fiction

The Schoolhouse BLIZZARD

by Mary Atkinson
illustrated by Eric Reese



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PAIRED
READ

The Lion and the Boar

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Make Predictions

Skill: Theme

Vocabulary Strategy

Idioms

Vocabulary

argue, astonished,
complained, conditions,
forbid, forecast, relief,
stranded

Word count: 1,126



Education

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Genre

Historical Fiction



Essential Question

How can weather affect us?



The Schoolhouse
BLIZZARD

by **Mary Atkinson**
illustrated by **Eric Reese**

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READ**

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Chapter 1

WITHOUT WARNING

“It’s almost too warm for my coat,” Lily said happily.

“Keep it on,” Pa replied. “There’s no shelter on the wide-open prairie, and the conditions can change at the drop of a hat.”

Lily sighed, grabbed her lunch pail, and headed out the door with her twin brother, Harry.



As she walked the mile to school, Lily wished she were back in New York City. People there didn't worry so much about the weather forecast. In Nebraska, you worried about tornadoes, storms, and worst of all, blizzards.

Lily hated blizzards. She was frightened of the howling wind that threatened to tear apart their small wooden home. She hated the darkness, the cold, and being stuck inside for days on end.

During blizzards, Pa and Ma tried to make the time pass pleasantly. They gathered the family around the stove to tell stories, pop corn, and sing songs.

Pa often said, "The key to surviving is to stay calm and make sensible decisions." Lily wondered if she would ever be able to stay calm without him there to protect her.

The twins attended a one-room schoolhouse. As the eldest boy, Harry collected coal from the shed and lit the stove every morning. Soon afterward, their teacher would arrive.

Miss Adams was 19 years old. Her family lived near the school.

“What a lovely day,” she said that morning as she greeted the school’s other students.



The day started like any other. Some students wrote on their slates and studied their books, while others recited aloud what they had learned.

Then, at about 11 o'clock, the wind blew up. After an hour, the room was getting very dark. Miss Adams rushed to the window.

“Oh, no, a blizzard!” she cried. “It’s too dangerous for you to go home. I forbid you to leave. Stay here while I fetch food and blankets from my place.”

Miss Adams grabbed her coat and hurried away. But, before she could return, the blizzard was upon them with a great roaring sound.



Chapter 2

FIRE AND ICE

Lily ran to the window. Within seconds, the Adams' house disappeared into whirling whiteness. She knew Miss Adams wouldn't be able to return while the blizzard raged. Lily fought back panic.

"What would Pa do?" she asked Harry.

"He'd say, 'Stay calm and make sensible decisions.' Right now, we need to decide how to keep warm. There's only enough coal for this morning."

Lily took a deep breath. "Everyone put on your coats and gloves, while we think," she said.

"We could burn the desks," Peter suggested.

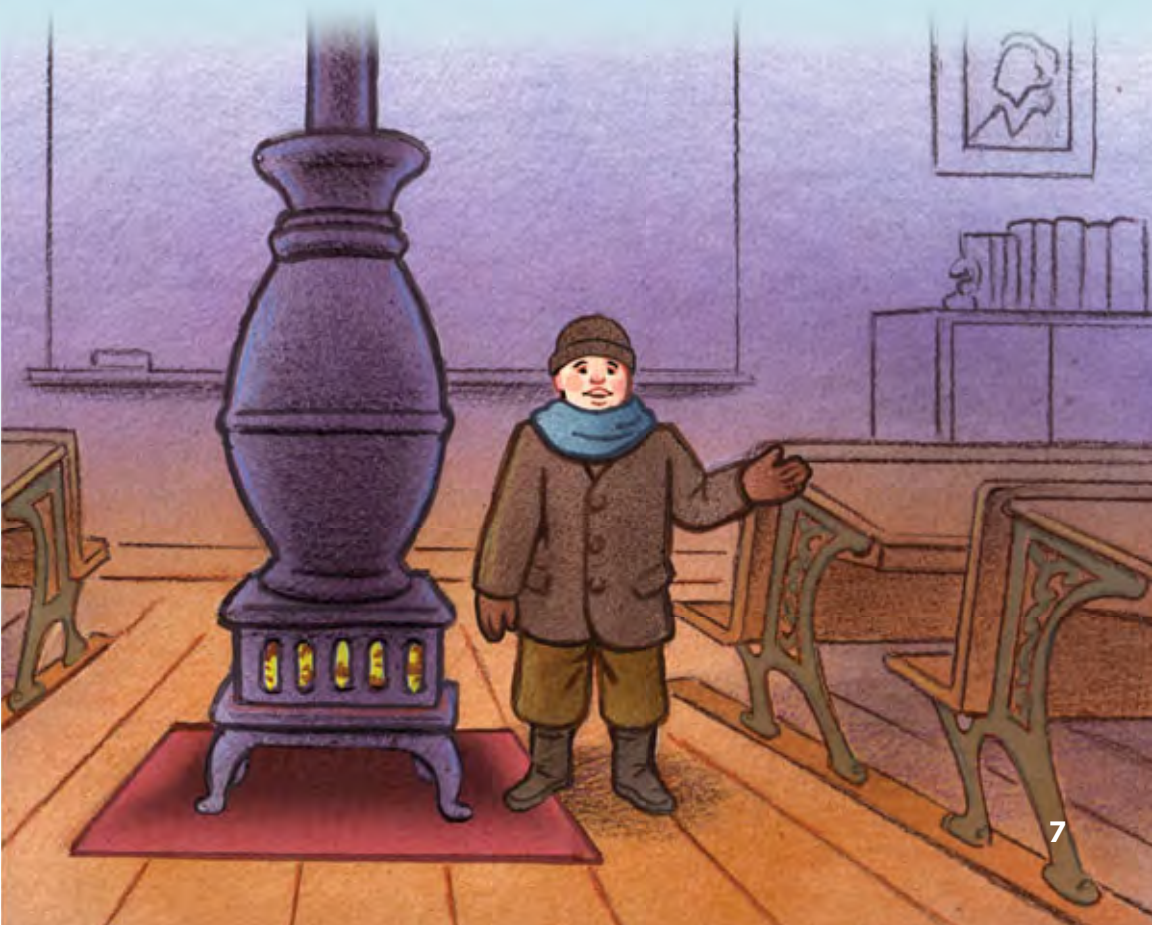
"They're too big for the stove," Harry said, "and we haven't got an ax. I'll just have to fetch more coal from the shed."

Lily knew that in a blizzard, a person couldn't see their hand in front of their face.

"If you go out, you'll never find your way back," she said. "It's not sensible."

Then she had an idea. She got out the jumping rope they used during recess.

"This will stop you getting lost," she told Harry. "Just follow the rope to find your way back."



She tied one end to Harry's belt. Then, braving the bitter wind, she tied the other end to the stair rail.

Harry grabbed the coal bucket and stumbled into the blizzard. The others waited inside, unable to see or hear him.

It seemed like hours later, but was only minutes, when Harry reappeared. He'd filled the bucket and all his pockets with coal.

"I can't feel my feet," Harry complained. The word "frostbite" flashed into Lily's mind.



She pulled Harry inside. Then she filled her lunch pail with snow and warmed it on the stove. Harry howled in pain as his feet thawed in the warm water, but their color soon returned.

Harry didn't have frostbite, but Lily's relief was short-lived. As she lit the lamp, she noticed there was very little oil left. If the blizzard lasted for days, they'd have no light.



Chapter 3

STORIES AND LETTERS

Lily sat huddled by the stove. She was frightened and wished she were safely home with Ma and Pa.

Then, looking up, she saw Alice watching her and fighting back tears. Lily realized she needed to be strong for the younger ones.

“Let’s gather together by the stove,” she said. “We’ll be warm as toast, and we can tell stories.”



Harry started telling the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. Everyone was enjoying it until Peter cried out, “The wind sounds like a howling wolf coming to eat us.” Alice burst into tears, and Amy looked scared.

“Don’t be silly. It’s just an ordinary wind,” Lily said, sounding surer than she felt. “Here, I’ll tell you another story.”

Lily made up a fairytale about a princess in a hot country far away. By the time she finished, the others seemed calmer, but then Amy complained that she was hungry. Lily suggested they eat half their lunch now and save the rest.

“What if we run out of food?” Peter asked. “Will we die?”

“We’re not going to die,” Lily said. “We’re going to grow old and have lots of grandchildren.”

Then an idea came to her. She took some paper from Miss Adams’ desk. Everyone stared at her. Only the teacher was allowed to write on paper.



“Today is special,” Lily said. “It’s the day we survived a blizzard all by ourselves. We’ll write our future grandchildren, telling them what it was like stranded here alone.”

They practiced their letters on their slates. Then, they carefully copied them onto paper. For the younger ones, it was exciting. For Lily and Harry, it was a good way to pass time.

Dearest Grandchildren,

It is 1888, and Harry and I are trapped in our schoolhouse by a blizzard. Our teacher did not make it back in time, so we have to cope on our own. It is scary, but I am determined we will make it.

*With love,
Grandma Lily*

Chapter 4

SNOWED IN

Writing the letters took most of the afternoon, but the rest of the evening stretched ahead. They could have studied, but they were too worried to concentrate.

Instead, Harry made up more stories, not mentioning any wolves. Then the others took turns making up their own stories.

Finally, one by one, they fell asleep. Lily was awake the longest. She must have slept, however, because the next thing she knew, the room was silent and warm.

How could the room be warm? Lily looked at the windows. They were covered with snow.



Harry went to the door. “I can’t open it,” Harry called. “There’s too much snow.”

The snow was keeping out the wind, which warmed the room, but it also kept them trapped. The children were snowed in!

Just then, they heard a scraping noise. It got louder and louder. Then the door burst open, and Pa and Mr. Adams came in. Lily ran to her father.

“Here you are, safe and sound,” Pa said. “Miss Adams was worried, but I told her Lily and Harry would’ve done the right thing.”

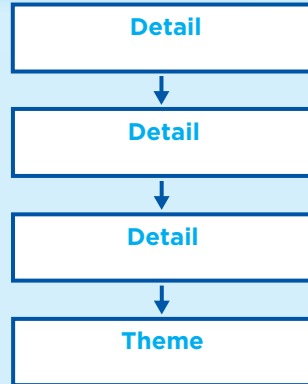
Lily was astonished. Then she realized she had done the right thing. She’d been able to keep calm and make sensible decisions after all.



Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize the story *The Schoolhouse Blizzard*. Use your chart to help you.



Text Evidence

1. How can you tell this story is historical fiction? Identify one feature that tells you this. **GENRE**
2. What is the theme of this story? Look on page 3 and page 14 for clues. **THEME**
3. What does the phrase *safe and sound* on page 14 mean? Use clues in the text to find out. **IDIOMS**
4. Write about the details the author uses to communicate the story's theme.

WRITE ABOUT READING

Compare Texts

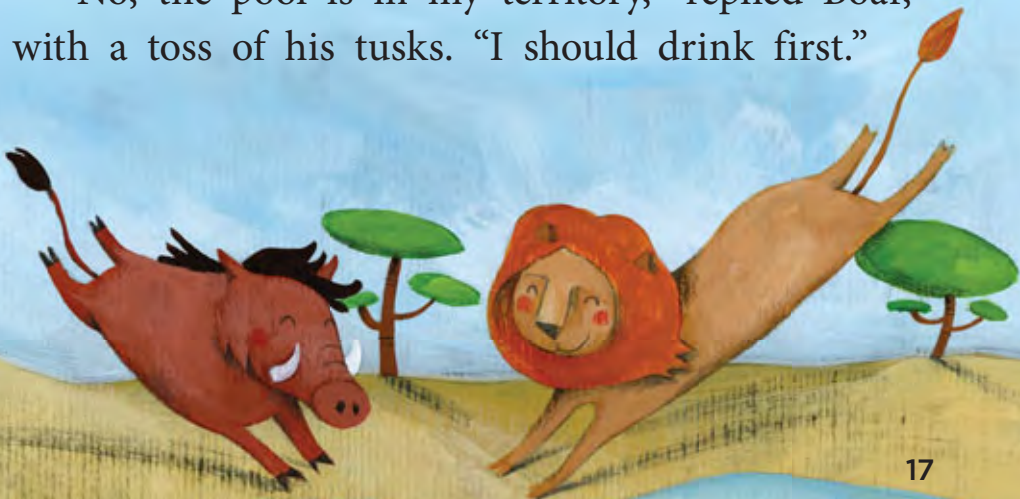
Read about how a drought affected the lion and the boar.

The Lion and the Boar

A terrible drought lay over the land. The animals were thirsty, and their thirst made them cross. One day, Lion remembered a hidden pool of sweet, fresh water. He hurried toward it, but Boar had also remembered it. He, too, rushed toward the pool. The two animals arrived at the same time.

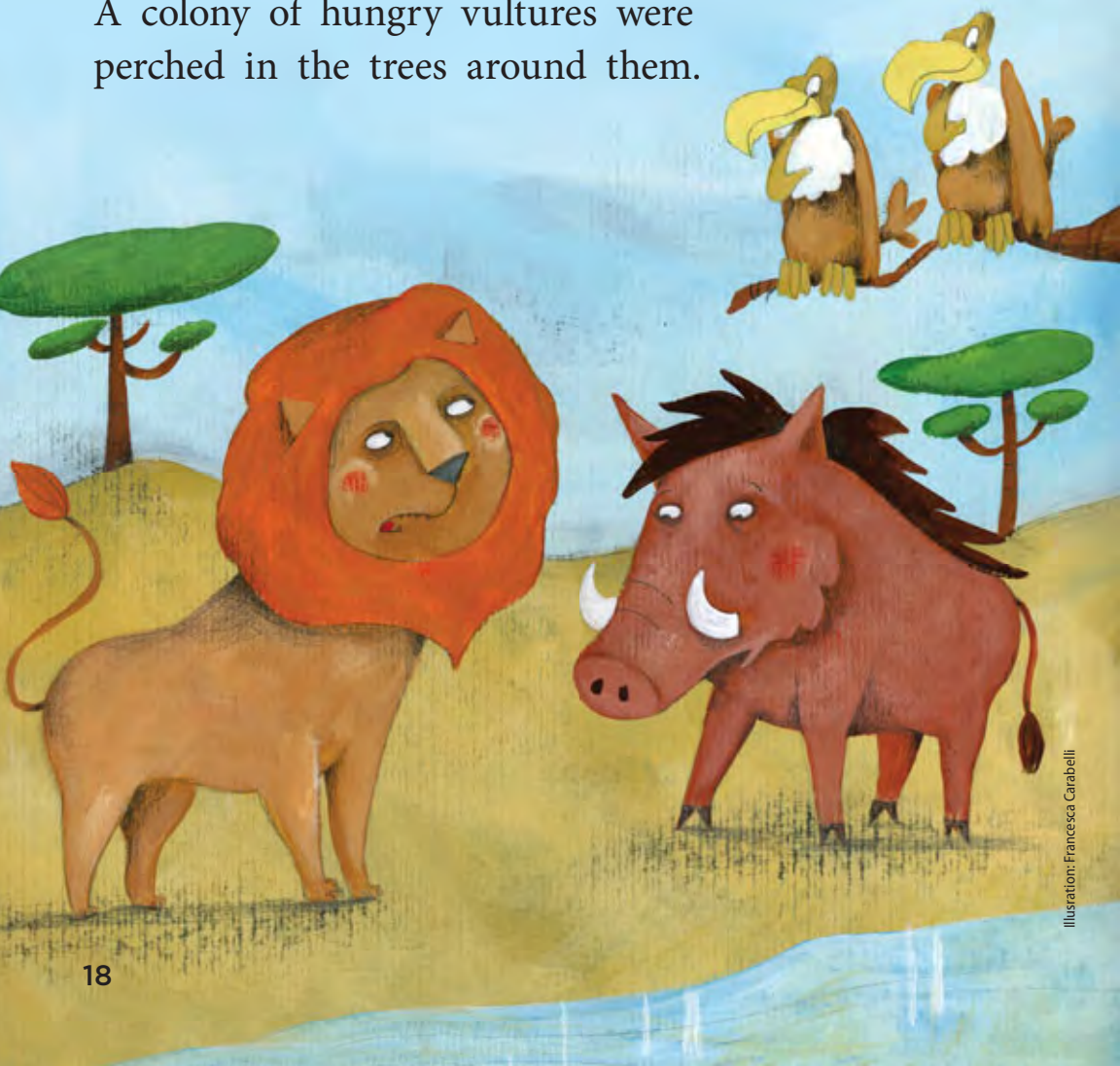
“I am the King of the Animals,” said Lion. “You must let me drink first.”

“No, the pool is in my territory,” replied Boar, with a toss of his tusks. “I should drink first.”



The animals continued to argue. Soon they were fighting fiercely. The two were well matched. Lion had size, agility, and razor-sharp claws on his side. Boar had long tusks, a sturdy body, and strong hooves on his side. Neither wanted to give in, but both were tired and thirsty. Eventually, they paused to regain their strength.

It was at that moment that Lion looked up. A colony of hungry vultures were perched in the trees around them.



“Look,” said Lion. “Those birds are waiting to dine upon the loser of this fight.”

Boar saw the birds. “This is crazy,” he said. “There is enough water here for both of us. Let’s share the pool and both live to see another day.”

“Good idea,” said Lion.

And so, side by side, the pair took long gulps of clean, fresh water. Then they went their separate ways as friends, not enemies. They had learned that two should cooperate if they are both in danger.



Make Connections

What part did the weather play in *The Lion and the Boar*? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

How can weather affect us? Use examples from *The Schoolhouse Blizzard* and *The Lion and the Boar* to support your response. **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Historical Fiction Historical fiction tells a story that is set in the past. The settings are realistic and drawn from history, and may contain people that lived in historical times. The main characters are usually made up.

Read and Find *The Schoolhouse Blizzard* tells a story that happened in Nebraska in the 1880s. The author researched the stories of people who were snowed in by blizzards and used facts from their stories in this story.

Your Turn

Research weather events that have happened in your town or state. Write a story set in the past, using the facts you have researched. Have your characters do things that people in that time might have done.

Thinkmark

Setting

Where did *The Schoolhouse Blizzard* take place?

What time did the story take place?

Sequence of Events

What happened in this story?

What happened *first*, *then*, *next*, and *finally*?

Plot

What was Lily's problem in the story?

What was the end result?

Make Connections

How is *The Schoolhouse Blizzard* like other historical fiction you have read?

Weather

GR P • Benchmark 38 • Lexile [t/k]

Grade 3 • Unit 6 Week 2

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