

Snow exposes deep longing experts say

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Big chill: UK weather warnings this morning follow the first snowfall of winter. Over 200 schools closed yesterday. Parts of Scotland with fall to -12 tonight, three degrees colder than Omsk, the third-largest city in Siberia.

Is wintry weather a blessing? Snow has fallen across the UK, for many the first of winter. For much of history, snow has been both a source of beauty and a curse.

What's happening?

Snow day! Do any two words cause such excitement? The joy of waking in the middle of the night and seeing the white flakes falling. Snowball fights, snowmen and hot chocolate indoors.

But snow can also stop trains and block roads. Drivers are 15% more likely to have an accident in winter than in summer.

Find out more

That is the **duality** of snow. It is at once **enchanting** and deadly.

Snow features very heavily in European **myths** and writing.

This is partly because much European culture was created by peoples like the **Goths**, **Saxons** and **Slavs**. They came from central Europe, where the snow fell deep every year.

Over time, they spread out across the whole of Europe, bringing with them icy myths. One of them was about Fimbulwinter, a three-year winter that marks the coming end of the

world.

The other reason is that in the past it was much colder in Europe. In 536 there was a **volcanic winter**. Temperatures dropped by as much as 2.5C across Europe. And from the 1400s to the 1800s Europe experienced the "Little Ice Age".

In CS Lewis's *Narnia* series, snow and ice are the elements of the White Witch: beautiful and attractive but also evil.

Is wintry weather a blessing?

Some say

Yes! Snow is a miracle of nature. It makes the world more beautiful — and the slowing down of normal life can sometimes be a welcome change.

Others think

No! Snow looks nice for a few hours. But the reality is often sludge, cancelled trains and dangerous driving. We are better off without it.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

"The first fall of snow is not only an event, it is a magical event. You go to bed in one kind of a world and wake up in another quite different, and if this is not enchantment then where is it to be found?"

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - How do you feel when it snows?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Is snow magical?

JB Priestley (1894 – 1984), English novelist

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What do you think?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You come across a lever which, if pulled, will cause a full week of snow. Do you pull it? What are the risks?

5. Express

What do others believe? - What is the best type of weather? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write a poem about the snow.

Glossary

Duality - When two different (often opposite) things are combined.

Enchanting - Charming and attractive.

Myths - Stories told that are not based on real facts or evidence. They are often told over many years.

Goths - A nomadic Germanic people who fought against the Roman Empire in the AD 300s and 400s.

Saxons - A Germanic people who spread through Gaul and Britain.

Slavs - People from eastern and central Europe who speak Slavic languages, for example Polish and Russian.

Volcanic winter - A reduction in global temperatures caused by volcanic ash blocking the Sun.

Ice age - A long period of time in which global temperatures are extremely cold.