

I Survived The Children's Blizzard, 1888



READ-ALoud

Assign roles to your family and friends for this read-aloud from *I Survived the Children's Blizzard, 1888*, in which John and his friends notice something strange in the sky....

CHARACTERS:

Narrator Miss Ruell John Rex Peter Myra Franny Sven Annie

Narrator: It's the first warm day in Prairie Creek after a week of dangerously cold temperatures. At school, John and the other students can barely sit still. Miss Ruell is teaching them about the Homestead Act of 1862.

Miss Ruell: Many of you are here because your parents accepted an opportunity for free land of their own. You're pioneers, building new and better lives for yourself. What qualities do pioneers need to be successful?
Rex?

Rex: Bravery. You won't make it here if you aren't brave.

Narrator: John looks at his classmates, a familiar worry is needling him. Is he brave? He has no idea. What if he's not? Miss Ruell catches John's eye. Then she closes her book and smiles.

Miss Ruell: You know what? I wouldn't mind a little fresh air. What about you?

Narrator: Excited, the students all speak at once.

Sven: Can we really go outside?

Annie: In the middle of a lesson?

Miss Ruell: I think we've all earned some time in the sunshine, and it is unusually warm today!

Peter: (*whispering*) Maybe Miss Ruell isn't so bad after all.

John: Maybe not.

Myra: Who wants to race?

Narrator: Myra is already halfway out the door. She smiles at John, and John's heart leaps in his chest, his face red. The others jump up and dash after her.

Franny: Johnny, wanna play hide-and-seek with us?

John: That's okay, you go, Franny. Don't hide too well, okay?

Franny: But I always find the best places to hide!

John: I know. I'm the one who always has to find you, remember?

Narrator: John keeps an eye on his sister, reminding himself that there's nothing to worry about, as he joins Peter, Sven, and Rex. They're on the "ice rink," a spot where the hard-packed snow is slick and slippery.

Rex: How many spins can you do?

Peter: My record is three.

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Sven: Mine's four.

Narrator: The boys are trying to out-spin each other when Myra appears. Sven nudges John with a smile.

Myra: John, let's see how fast you can run!

Narrator: Myra takes off, her flowered dress billowing behind her. John is about to chase after her when Rex suddenly points at the sky.

Rex: Wait. Do you see that?

John: It looks like a huge shadow.

Rex: It's coming this way—fast.

Peter: What is it?

Rex: I think it's a storm—a big one. But I've never seen anything like this monster...

Sven: It's freezing again! Do you feel that?

John: But how? It was so warm just a few—

Narrator: A low rumbling suddenly rises up, the ground shaking. Miss Ruell throws open the schoolhouse door and clangs the bell.

Miss Ruell: Children! Inside, now! *Hurry!*

Narrator: John gets swept up in the chaos of everyone running inside as the sky goes black. There's a terrifying roar, like a train speeding by.

Annie: What's that noise?

Miss Ruell: I need you all to help me. We've got to build a fire, quickly.

John: Come on, Franny, let's help Miss Ruell.

Narrator: There's no answer. John looks around. Franny isn't there.

John: Franny, where are you? Has anyone seen Franny?

Rex: She's not here?

Peter: The last time I saw her, she was playing

hide-and-seek.

Myra: What if she's still outside, John? In the blizzard?

Narrator: John panics—if he can't keep his little sister safe, what good is he? Without thinking, he flings open the door and runs outside. The wind howls as freezing-cold air rushes in.

Myra: John, no!

Miss Ruell: It isn't safe! Come back here!

Narrator: But John doesn't listen. He can't—Franny is out here, alone, in the storm.

John: *Franny!*

Narrator: The wind throws John to the ground and pins him there. Ice fills his eyes and mouth. He can't see, he can't breathe—he tries to call out, but the wind just carries his voice away...

Miss Ruell: Take my hand!

Narrator: Suddenly, Miss Ruell is there, a rope around her waist. She grabs John and pulls him back into the school, using the rope as a guide. He collapses on the floor, shaking.



Name: _____

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READ-ALoud (CONTINUED)

Myra: Quick, brush the snow off his face!

Annie: Let's wrap this blanket around him.

John: My sister, she's still outside—

Franny: I'm here. I'm right here.

Narrator: John looks up to see Franny, safe and sound. Relief washes over him.

Franny: I'm sorry, Johnny, I was inside the whole time, hiding in the coat closet!

Narrator: John manages to smile through his chattering teeth.

John: You always find the best places to hide.

Miss Ruell: Children, find something to block the snow from coming in under the door, please.

Narrator: As the students search the room, Miss Ruell turns to John.

Miss Ruell: Are you all right?

John: I'm sorry, ma'am.

Miss Ruell: For what?

John: For going out into the storm. You had to risk your life to save me.

Miss Ruell: And you had to risk your life to save your sister. What you did was brave.

John: Do you think so?

Miss Ruell: I do, John. You've got the heart of a true pioneer. Now concentrate on getting warm. I don't think this storm is done with us yet.

Narrator: As John closes his eyes to rest, he thinks about what Miss Ruell said. Slowly, he begins to feel warm again. ■