

## Night of the Blizzard - One Teacher's Story

by Mary Evans Andrews and Lydia Krueger

Narrator #1	Narrator #2	Narrator #3	Narrator #4
Narrator #5	Narrator #6	Leslie	Miss Keller
Harley	Alvin		

Narrator #1	This March day began like many others...cold, cloudy, and windy.
Narrator #2	I was the young teacher of a one-room school near Mercer, North Dakota.
Narrator #3	From our farm house to the school was just over a mile, a nice walk in good weather. But today, my father took my ten year old brother, Alvin, my little sister, Elizabeth, and me to school in the horse drawn sled.
Narrator #4	We were all bundled up against the cold, but before we reached the schoolhouse, pellets of wind-whipped snow began stinging our cheeks.
Narrator #5	Before noon a gale was blowing. The snow was like a thick curtain that nearly hid the little barn behind the school building.
Narrator #6	As the hours passed, the storm became a raging blizzard, and I told the children we might have to spend the night at school.
Narrator #1	Some begged to go home, especially two brothers, Leslie, age ten, and Harley, age eight, who had their own hors and small sleigh. But I forbad them to leave.
Narrator #2	When we finished our lessons, I played the pedal organ and we sand our favorite songs.
Narrator #3	We sand hymns too, and prayed for the storm to end, but it only grew wilder.
Narrator #4	I began reading stories the children requested, including Longfellow's story poem <u>Hiawatha</u> .

Narrator #5	By this time, it was plain that we could not leave the building. But Leslie and Harley insisted on going to the barn to fee their horse.
Narrator #6	We had a rule that anyone who had to go outside during the snowstorm must be securely roped around the waist.
Narrator #1	I tied a long rope to each boy, and holding hands, they set out for the barn.
Narrator #2	I watched the thick piles of rope uncoil. It too much was let out, it would mean they had missed the barn about fifty feet away.
Narrator #3	To my relief, the ropes stopped snaking out under the door. The boys were safe.
Narrator #4	After a while, an out-of-breath snowman burst into the room. It was Leslie, and he was alone.
Leslie	"Oh, Miss Keller, the wind knocked Harley down and I can't find him. You can't see your hand in front of you, the snow's so thick. I'll follow his rope from here."
Miss Keller	"No Leslie, don't go out again,"
Narrator #5	I ordered.
Miss Keller	"We'll get him in. Everybody help pull!"
Narrator #6	It took most of us pulling on the rope, but we dragged Harley to the door. I carried him inside.
Narrator #1	He was already unconscious and couldn't answer me. We pulled off his frozen outer clothing and rubbed his frostbitten hands and face.
Narrator #2	When he could talk, Harley mumbled his thanks repeatedly.
Harley	"I couldn't stay awake, Miss Keller,"
Narrator #3	his said, his teeth chattering.
Harley	"I thought I was a goner."
Narrator #4	After we had his circulation going strong, I sat hime next to the potbellied iron stove. The boys kept is glowing with lignite coal.

Narrator #5	We had plenty of that in the storage closet. Already it was growing dark, so I lit our one and only kerosene lamp and turned it as high as I dared.
Narrator #6	Everyone was hungry again.
Alvin	"What can we eat for supper?"
Narrator #1	Alvin asked.
Miss Keller	"Let's see what we have."
Narrator #2	I spread a clean paper on my desk.
Miss Keller	"All of you bring your lunch pails and dump them here. Empty every bit...even the crumbs."
Narrator #3	The children obeyed.
Narrator #4	There wasn't much...some chunks of homemade bread, half of a fat German sausage, a few half-eaten apples and carrots that Leslie forgot to take to his horse.
Narrator #5	I divided the leftovers equally, and we tried to melt some snow on top of the stove, but that took too long. Instead of waiting, most of the children ate snow.
Narrator #6	The meal was not very satisfying.
Narrator #1	Elizabeth, the youngest, began to cry for her mother. I rocked her on my lap and put on her warm outer clothing.
Miss Keller	"Bundle up for the night, boys and girls,"
Narrator #2	I told them.
Miss Keller	"Then lay your heads on your desks and try to sleep. Put on your overshoes, coats, caps, scarves, and mittens. I'll keep the fire going."
Narrator #3	I never closed my eyes that night as the children slept.
Narrator #4	Wind gusts slammed into our small wooden building, making it tremble.
Narrator #5	One storm window was wrenched off, and I prayed the other two wouldn't go.
Narrator #6	When morning finally came, the storm was still roaring like a freight train.

Narrator #1	Our food was gone and we were hungry, but we were safe and warm.
Narrator #2	Later we learned that winds dropped the temperature to forty degrees below zero that night.
Narrator #3	I kept reassuring the children that someone would come for us as soon as the storm let up.
Narrator #4	We began class with our usual opening song. Then I kept everyone busy with lessons.
Narrator #5	At last, toward noon, a tall man stomped up to the door. It was my oldest brother, Walter, who had fought his way through the storm to reach us.
Narrator #6	Mother had tied a pack of food on his back in a double blanket. It lifted it off and pried it open as fast as the warm indoor air could thaw the blankets.
Narrator #1	Inside was plenty of bread, sausage, slices of smoked roast goose, and jars of milk.
Narrator #2	The milk was frozen solid, but I soon had it thawing in a pan on the stove.
Narrator #3	Everyone of us hugged and thanked Walter. When he got out of his frozen coat, it stood alone in a corner!
Narrator #4	By mid-afternoon, the wind finally died down, making it possible for my father to get through to the school.
Narrator #5	His team of big, strong horses pulled our study sled across and around snowdrifts packed as solid as wet sand.
Narrator #6	The children piled on the sled, with Leslie and Harley following in their light sleigh. Walter and I floundered behind.
Narrator #1	Father saw everyone safely home. The children's parents said they hadn't really worried.
Narrator #2	They knew how much "Miss Lydia" loved those boys and girls, and she would keep them safe.
Narrator #3	But everyone was relieved that the long ordeal was over.
Narrator #4	That was the day I decided to leave the North.

Narrator #5	I taught school only until my future husband got his medical degree in Nebraska.
Narrator #6	A fraternity brother who lived in Florida had written him to open his doctor's office down there. So we moved south for good.

Note from the Nation Weather Bureau, Bismarck, North Dakota:

The storm of March 14<sup>0</sup>16, 1920, was one of the most severe blizzards recorded in this state. Wind velocity reached sixth miles per hour. Snowfall varied from ten to fifteen inches. Cattle and sheep were smothered by huge drifts. Many people froze to death trying to reach their homes, including four schoolboys from Ryder.

About the authors:

Mary Evans Andrews is a free-lance writer. She worked with former teacher Lydia Krueger ("Miss Lydia") on this story. They are from Jacksonville, Florida.

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**Night of the Blizzard - Comprehension**

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What is the setting of Night of the Blizzard? (Setting includes when and where a story takes place.)

Tell four or more ways this 1920 school is different than your school.

Tell three or more ways Miss Keller kept her students safe during the 1920 blizzard.

What are two or more lessons you can learn from this story?

