

## The Blizzard of 1888

The morning of January 12, 1888, dawned warm and sunny. In South Dakota, men worked in the fields in their shirtsleeves. Many children in Kansas and Nebraska went to school without heavy winter coats and mittens, and during morning recess, they played outside in the bright weather. However, later that afternoon, a northwest wind swept quickly across the plains, bringing with it an unexpected blizzard that paralyzed the region for nearly 18 hours.

The Blizzard of 1888 is perhaps the most famous ever to strike the Central Plains of the United States. Within 24 hours, the temperature in some places dropped from over 70 degrees to nearly 30 degrees below zero, a drop of 100 degrees. This famous blizzard has also been called the “School Children's Storm” because it trapped so many kids at their schools.

Although children at Pleasant Valley Rural School spent recess playing in the spring-like sun, when the storm hit at 2 p.m., their teacher, Miss Susie Harrison, realized that many students would not be able to make it home. Being judicious, she kept them at the school all night. The coal supply was adequate and easily accessible, so the older boys kept the fire stoked. The children took turns sleeping in the seats nearest the fire, and a boy from a nearby home brought a bucket of sandwiches from his mother. The children were in no danger but there was no way to let their parents know they were safe. It was an apprehensive night for their families.

At 4:00 a.m., the wind quit as abruptly as it had begun. Some parents immediately set out for the school. The trek took hours. Because of the cool-headed behavior of Miss Harrison, that particular Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> defied superstition and proved to be very lucky for two dozen school children.

## Unit 16

- The teacher did not panic in the face of this crisis. Describe some tactics you could use to remain calm in the face of danger.
  
- Would it be humane to confine you within a school for 24 hours? Explain.
  
- Discuss the commotion that would be caused in your neighborhood if a similar weather phenomenon was to strike.