

'THE SNOWFLAKE' BY BENJI DAVIES ACTIVITY PACK

For students aged 5+

PERFECT FOR: A gentle, hopeful, wintry story about a snowflake's journey through the sky one Christmas night.

The story is perfect for exploring the themes of wishing and dreaming, the importance of home, and how everyone can shine.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE: Making snowflakes and exploring patterns, drama and role-play, writing in role, exploring the water cycle, dance and movement, performing poetry.



The Snowflake

Benji Davies



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For students aged 5+

1. Spend some time looking at the **front cover**. What can you see? Do you notice anything interesting about the snowflake? When do you think the story is set? What is the child holding? What might each character be thinking and feeling? Now, **read the blurb**. Do you notice anything interesting? What do you predict will happen in this story?
2. Do you celebrate Christmas? What usually happens on Christmas day in your house? Do you have any **family traditions** or special things you do together around Christmas?
3. As a group, create a **spider diagram** of words, pictures, ideas and themes linked to 'snow'. You could think about its **appearance**, **texture** and **how it moves**.
4. As a class, **read and enjoy the story**. Now talk about what you liked about it and what you didn't like about it. Do you have a favourite illustration? Why is it your favourite? Is there anything you found puzzling or confusing? Does the story remind you of any other stories, films, songs or poems you know? Why?
5. Read through the story in a group of three and think about what **actions** and **sound-effects** you could add to it. One of you should play the narrator, one the snowflake, and one Noelle. Are there any clues in the story about who should say each part out loud? Rehearse the story and then perform it, with actions and sounds, to the rest of the class. You might even wish to act out the story with puppets!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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6. Look at the first double page spread, where the snowflake is made. **How does she feel at the beginning?** How do her feelings change as she falls? Can you read out some of her words, thinking about how you can use your expression to show her feelings?
7. Spend some time looking at and reading the double page spread which begins, 'The snowflake fell over tree-dotted hills...'. **How do your eyes travel around the page?** What do you notice first? What do you notice last? Why do you think this is? How do you think the snowflake feels? How do you know? What sort of colours are used by Benji Davies? Why might this be?
8. Look at, 'Noelle saw that window too.' Why do you think Pappie says they might be able to have a tree like that next year? Why not this year? **What might this tell us about Noelle's family?**
9. Look at, 'When Noelle arrived home...' Can you describe the inside of Noelle's house? **How does Benji Davies make the inside of Noelle's house seem warm and inviting?** What colours does he use? Have you seen any of these colours used before in the book?
10. Look at 'high above the house, the sky was swirling...' What do you notice about **how the words are set out on the page?** Why do you think this might be? How should you read these words? Can you think of any other verbs to describe how the snowflake is moving?

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11. Read 'When Noelle woke the next morning...' Why do you think the world has 'grown white'? As a reader, **we are positioned behind Noelle as she looks out the window** – why might this be? How does this engage you and make you want to read on?

12. Spend some time reading and exploring '**Grandma Bird**', which is also written by Benji Davies. How is this story similar to 'The Snowflake'? How is it different? Think carefully about Noelle's relationship with her Pappie and Noi's relationship with Grandma. Use a Venn Diagram to compare the two stories.

13. **What do you think Noelle and the snowflake learn by the end of the story?** How have they changed and developed over the course of the story? Choose one word to describe them at the beginning of the book and one word to describe them at the end of the book. Explain your word choices to a partner.

14. Would you recommend this story to anyone? Do you know someone who might enjoy it? Why? **What time of year do you think people might like to read this story?** Why?

15. **What else can you find out about Benji Davies?** You might like to read some more of his books like 'Grandad's Island', 'The Storm Whale' and 'Tad'. Can you notice any similar themes, characters or storylines?



The Snowflake



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 1

For students aged 5+

BEFORE READING: SNOWFLAKE WISHES

What do people normally do on snowy days? What do they wear? **Can you remember a time in your life that it has snowed?** What did you do? Where did you go? Did you enjoy the day?

Have you ever seen a snowflake up close before? What do they look like? Spend some time looking at images of snowflakes and discussing the patterns and shapes you can see.

Teachers / parents: Model how to create paper snowflakes by folding paper and cutting shapes. Show students how to make a range of shapes, including squares, triangles, circles and diamonds. Discuss and identify the **symmetry** involved in their creation.

Give your students some time to create their own unique snowflakes, by folding and cutting. Can they identify the different shapes in their snowflakes? After finishing, you could **create a class display** where the children write their wishes and dreams on or around their snowflakes. Discussion around this could be prompted by **exploring Noelle's wishes** and **what the snowflake dreams of**.

Alternatively, you could discuss the idea of **snowflakes all being unique, different and special**. Ask students what makes them special and encourage them to record their ideas for the class display.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 2

For students aged 5+

BEFORE READING: SNOWY POEMS

Spend some time as a class reading and enjoying a range of **winter-themed poems**.

You could explore these poems, which are all available online:

- Quieter than Snow by Berlie Doherty
- First Snow by John Mole
- Snow by Robert Hull
- Winter by Judith Nicholls
- Lady Winter's Rap by Grace Nichols

After listening to a range of poems, you could **record your thoughts and feelings in a Book Talk grid** (Aidan Chambers):

WHAT DO WE LIKE ABOUT THE POEM?	WHAT DO WE DISLIKE ABOUT THE POEM?
IS ANYTHING IN THE POEM CONFUSING?	DOES THE POEM REMIND US OF ANYTHING ELSE?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 2 (CONTINUED)

For students aged 5+

BEFORE READING: SNOWY POEMS

Now, in groups, **choose a poem to perform**. Think about who will say each part and if there are parts of the poem you could all say together.

Will you **whisper** parts?

Will some parts be read **loudly**?

What about **pace**: should some phrases be read quickly and some slowly?

You may also wish to add **actions**, **sound effects** and **musical instruments** to your poem to enhance your performance.

Finally, you could **write your own poem** about how the snowflake moves in the style of 'Winter' by Judith Nicholls. You could give your students the following sentence prompts, based on the poem, to help them structure their own:

The snowflake crept... The snowflake prowled... The snowflake danced...

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 3

For students aged 5+

DURING READING: A SNOWFLAKE DANCE

Whilst reading, encourage your students to **collect any words or phrases used to describe the snowflake**. You could also collect words and phrases which refer to the **setting** and **atmosphere**.

For a challenge, you could encourage students to sort these words into **adjectives and verbs**. You could also ask them to **add their own ideas to this word bank**. For example:

ADJECTIVES	VERBS
COLD	TWIRLED
CRISP	SKIPPED
BEAUTIFUL	SWIRLED
GLOWING	RACED



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 3 (CONTINUED)

For students aged 5+

DURING READING: A SNOWFLAKE DANCE

Now, encourage students to close their eyes while you play some wintry music. You could play:

- The Four Seasons by Vivaldi
- 'Walking in the Air' by Howard Blake
- The Snow is Dancing by Debussy
- The Nutcracker by Tchaikovsky

Ask students in small groups to practice and rehearse a **snowflake dance**, thinking about the music they've heard and the words they've collected. How can they show the snowflakes **twisting** and **turning** through the air? Can they **move lightly** and **with control**?

Can they use a variety of **levels** in their performance and perhaps **mirror** each other's movements?

Finally, sit the class in a circle and give each group time to perform their enchanting, magical snowflake dance. Encourage the children watching to **give feedback** after each performance.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 4

For students aged 5+

DURING READING: WINTER ART

Spend some time looking at how different artists have portrayed **winter**. You could explore:

- Winter Landscape by Paul Gauguin
- Icy Landscape by Jenny Meehan
- New Snow in the Avenue by Edvard Munch
- Skaters in the Bois de Boulogne by Pierre-Auguste Renoir
- In the Wild North by Ivan Shishkin
- Landscape with Snow by Vincent van Gogh
- Winter Landscape by Wassily Kandinsky

Use a **Venn diagram** to compare and contrast two of the paintings, thinking about how they are similar and different. You could consider the use of **colour**, **texture**, and how both paintings make you **feel**.

Now, spend some time mixing some different coloured paints to **create some wintry colours**. Can your students mix a range of cool blues and other icy, frosty colours? Look at some names of paint samples and discuss their meaning and what images they create in your mind. Can you write new names for the different colours you've mixed? For example: Snowflake White, Snowman Orange, Ice Blue, Frosty Green. You could also discuss warm and cold colours and see if students can identify different warm and cold colours in the story.

Finally, allow students time to **plan and sketch their own wintry scene**, based on the book and the paintings they have explored. They might wish to create something more abstract or a life-like scene with people enjoying the snow!



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 5

For students aged 5+

AFTER READING: THE LIFECYCLE OF A SNOWFLAKE

At the end of the story, the snowflake shines brightly in the sun. **What happens to snow in the sun?** Do you think the snowflake will ever return again?

At the beginning of the story it says, 'high in the sky, one winter's night, a snowflake was made.' But **how are snowflakes made** and where do they go when the sun shines?

Show your students a simplified image of the **water cycle**, which includes the processes of **evaporation, condensation and precipitation**. Spend some time explaining these processes and linking them to children's developing understanding of **solids, liquids and gases**.

You could also share '**The Snowman and the Sun**' by Susan Taghdis and Ali Mafakheri, published by Tiny Owl, to help further develop the children's understanding of the water cycle.

Can students **re-tell in three stages** (evaporation, condensation, precipitation) how a snowflake is formed?

Use their new understanding to introduce the idea of **writing a diary** or **recount** describing the life of the snowflake. You may also wish to encourage some children to **refer to the senses** and what the snowflake might be able to see, hear, taste, touch and smell.

