

## SESSION 1.3: CLOSE READ 2: Margaret Malloy Brown

## The Blizzard of 1888

### In All Its Fury

#### A History of the Blizzard of January 12, 1888

Now read a second text from the same source to get the general idea then read it again to discover:

- Who wrote the text?
- What is the author's perspective?
- When was it written?
- What would you consider fact and what would you consider opinion? Why?  
(You might highlight facts in one color and opinions in another color.)

I was teaching that winter in what was known as the Tawney school in Saunders county, about five miles southwest of Cedar Bluffs. I was boarding with the Phil Scott family. It was a lovely winter morning. A few inches of snow lay on the ground and there was not a breath of air stirring. The walk to school was very enjoyable with hoar frost thick on every shrub and tree. Even the weeds hid their identity in crystal garments and did their part to create a scene of fairy-like beauty. The world seemed a wonderful place in which to live at that time, and there was no warning of what the day was to bring forth.

The attendance at school was small – six pupils, representing four grades. Three of them belonged to the Tawney family. Before noon the sky became overcast and large, feathery flakes of snow began to fall. The snow was still falling when, about three o'clock, we were startled by a noise like that of a rapidly approaching train. This was followed immediately by the fury of the storm, accompanied by

a wind that shook the building and rattled windows. I went to the north window but there was nothing to see but the pelting snow against the pane; then to the door, but there was nothing there but a dense cloud of madly whirling snow. The room had grown dark and the children were frightened. I gave my attention to them and their fears. We were sitting around the fire, talking, when Phil Scott arrived with his sleigh and took us all aboard. We huddled close together, and were soon on our way. It seemed a never-ending trip but in reality it could not have been much more than half an hour. Sometimes we would catch a dim outline of the team, sometimes only their tails, then nothing at all of them and only a faint outline of one another. The storm came from the northwest, but it seemed to come from every direction. No matter which way we turned there was no relief from the blinding, pelting, stinging snow. It was Nature at her worst, seemingly bent on destruction.

We had not gone far when Mr. Scott realized that he was lost, familiar with the road though he was. After an indefinite time spent in wandering about we were overjoyed when we ran into a building which proved to be a farm house near the schoolhouse. We were back, almost, to where we started.

The children and I lost no time in getting out of the sleigh but Mr. Scott decided to try again and that time he reached his home safely. It was arranged that the rest of us should remain at the farmhouse and we all gathered around the stove,

**Close Read 2: continued**

grateful for heat and safety. Soon Mr. Tawney came in. He was an elder brother of the three Tawney children and later he became U.S. Senator of Minnesota. He was greatly relieved when he found us all safe and decided to remain there until the storm was over.

The early evening passed pleasantly enough but the night was tiresome for the children who dozed intermittently. We all longed for daylight as the storm raged on.

At dawn there was a sudden lull and peace descended upon the world. Mr. Tawney took his young charges home; the parents of the other children came soon afterward and, amid smiles and sobs of relief at finding them safe, bundled them into wraps and hustled them home to breakfast and to bed.

My experience in the storm seems insignificant as compared with that of my brothers and sisters and two companions who spent the night huddled in a snowdrift in an open field with only an upturned sleigh and a few blankets for protection.

Source: *In All Its Fury: A History of the Blizzard of January 12, 1888*, by Margaret Malloy Brown, 1947, pages 249-250