

FSA

Grade 7
Reading Comprehension

In this real-life story, a young Inuit¹ girl enjoys a unique winter activity.

The Very Last First

by Jan Andrews

Eva Padlyat lives in a village on Ungava Bay in the north of Quebec in Canada. She's Inuit, and for as long as she can remember, she's known how to walk on the bottom of the sea. It's something the people of her village often do, in winter, when they want mussels to eat. Today, though, something special is going to happen. Today, for the very first time in her life, Eva will walk on the bottom of the sea alone.

The street Eva and her mother are on takes them past the school and down to the seashore. They meet a few friends on the way and stop for a quick greeting, then go on to cross the snow-covered beach and step out on the thick sea ice. They've come at just the right time. The tide has pulled back from the land, and there won't be any water near the shore, so they can go under the ice and wander about on the sea bed quite safely.

"Good-bye," Eva's mother says. "Be careful, and good luck."

Eva grins. "Good luck, yourself," she replies.

- 5 Eva plods on over bumps and ridges where the cold has caught and frozen the waves once chased by the wind. She looks toward the open sea beyond the bay and sees only ice and more ice, on and on. Finally, she stops in what seems to be a good place, where the ice is raised and swollen. She shovels away a patch of snow and then works the sharp end of her chisel under a heaved-up crack in the ice to make a hole. It's hard, because the freeze-up came months ago, and the ice is very thick.

When the hole is about two feet² square, Eva lowers herself into the darkness and stands in the under-ice cavern—proud and excited and alone. She lights a candle and watches the yellow light soften the blackness, glistening on the ice shining over her head and on the wet, black stones and pools and seaweed at her feet.

Then, for a moment, she's afraid. It's too dark to see far, and she knows it can be dangerous down here. The under-ice world stretches far across the bay to where the sea tide is already beginning to lap back. She'll have to be careful. If she forgets how long she's been down, the tide could catch her. If she goes too far, she could lose her way back. Eva shivers, then laughs to herself.

"I'd better get to work," she says.

Eva carefully wedges her candle between two stones and starts collecting mussels. She has chosen her spot well, and her candle shows up strings of blue black mussel shells among the stones wherever she turns. Before long, her pan is full.



¹*Inuit*: a member of a group of similar Aboriginal communities who traditionally live in and around the Arctic region

²*two feet*: 60 cm

- 10 Eva goes back to the ice hole, sets her pan down, and listens for the sound of the waves. The tide is still quite a way out. There's plenty of time to do what she has always wanted, time to enjoy being by herself down here in the dark, mysterious, undersea winter world.

Eva sings a tune, quietly at first, then loudly, so the echoes of her singing bounce off the ice at her. She shouts to herself and is glad. She dances a little dance. She pokes in rock pools, and makes strange shadows with her candle. She lifts up seaweed in long, flat ribbon strands, then lets them down with a flop.

At last Eva hears a voice. Her mother is calling through the ice hole. "Are you all right down there? Have you nearly done?"

Eva takes her candle, goes back to the hole, and picks up her mussel pan. "Of course I'm all right. I'm coming up now."

She climbs out into the fresh air and feels the cold wind on her face again.

- 15 "You've done well," her mother says. "You must have chosen a better place than I did."

They load up the sleds again, and Eva takes her mother's hand. Together they walk over the ice, across the beach, through the village. Already, twilight has fallen. Daylight lasts only a very few hours this far north in January.

Eva glances back over her shoulder at the mussel shells and thinks of popping them in boiling water, watching them open, tasting the salty fish in her mouth.

"That's my last very first time," she says sadly. "My very last very first time for walking alone under the sea."

"The Very Last First," by Jan Andrews. *Cricket*.
Volume 6, Number 6. Carus Publishing Company, Cricket Magazine Group.
(Originally published by Open Court Publishing Company.) February 1979. pp. 12–15.

Read this passage to find out how Wilson Alwyn Bentley's life was shaped by his interest in snowflakes.

Snowflake Bentley

by Ruth Wallace-Brodeur

Wilson Alwyn Bentley lived all his life, from 1865 to 1931, on a farm in Jericho, Vermont, where an average of 120 inches¹ of snow falls each winter. Wilson liked snow so much that he spent his whole life studying it, and because of this, everyone in Jericho called him Snowflake Bentley.

His mother managed to buy him an inexpensive microscope, through which he looked closely at flowers, rocks...and snowflakes. The beautiful patterns of the flakes intrigued him. He studied them carefully and discovered an ice crystal at the heart of each flake. He tried to draw what he saw, but after 300 drawings he was still dissatisfied, because the snow crystals melted before he could copy all their details on paper.

When he was seventeen, he asked his father for a photomicrograph camera that would take pictures of magnified flakes.

It requires a great deal of skill and speed to take good pictures of snowflakes. The delicate crystals melt away at the slightest breath or the slightest contact with body heat. And even if they don't melt, minor evaporation quickly changes their patterns.

- 5 Snowflake Bentley developed a technique that worked well. First he caught some flakes by holding a black wooden tray out in the falling snow. Then he brought the tray into his workroom, which was kept at the same temperature as the outside air. Holding his breath and wearing heavy mittens to keep the heat of his hands away from the snow crystals, he quickly examined his catch with a magnifying glass. If a flake looked

promising, Bentley touched it gently at its centre with a wooden stick and moved it onto an ice-cold glass microscope slide, stroking it with a feather to flatten it and position it properly. If the crystal still looked good, Snowflake put the glass slide in front of the camera, turned it to face the best light, and took the picture.

Because snow crystals are transparent, they did not show up very well in the finished photograph. So, to make the picture clearer, Snowflake very carefully used a sharp knife to outline each flake on the negative, cutting away all the background film. This increased the beauty of the picture without changing the pattern of the crystals. The whole process required painstaking care, but Snowflake figured it didn't take as much patience for him as it would for others because it gave him such pleasure.

Storm after storm, winter after winter, Bentley caught and photographed crystals. Because most snowflakes are either broken or clumped together, finding a single, undamaged flake was not as easy as it may seem. Some storms were better than others. A "good" storm was one with calm air in which the flakes did not stick together much or get blown about and broken. The winters also varied. In a good season Snowflake might find as many as 300 suitable crystals; in a poor one, maybe only 50 or less. During an especially good storm on 14 February 1928, Snowflake took a record one hundred photographs!

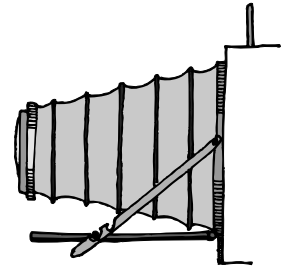
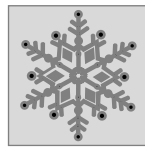
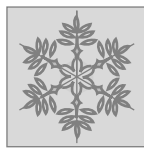
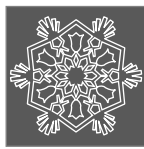
In the thousands of snowflakes he examined, Snowflake Bentley never found any two exactly alike. Even though all of the crystals were based on a hexagonal, or six-sided, pattern, the details of their structure varied endlessly.

¹120 inches: 3 metres

After Snowflake wrote an article for *Harper's* magazine in 1898, his fame spread, and there was a sudden demand for his photographs. Tiffany's, the great jewelry store in New York, bought 200 to use as patterns for jewelry designs. Artists, metal workers, silk manufacturers, and craft shops also began using his photos to help plan their designs. Most universities in the country bought collections of his slides.

Meteorologists and scientists all over the world studied Snowflake's pictures and read his articles.

- 10 Before he died, Snowflake put together a book containing 2500 of his pictures of snow crystals, frost feathers, and spider webs jeweled with dew. With this book, the man who loved snow left a lasting record of some of the beauty he saw in those tiny, perfect crystals with their intricate designs.



“Snowflake Bentley,” by Ruth Wallace-Brodeur. *Cricket*. Volume 6, Number 6. Carus Publishing Company, Cricket Magazine Group. (Originally published by Open Court Publishing Company.) February 1979. pp. 17–20.

2009 Foundation Skills Assessment
Grade 7
Reading Comprehension Sample Responses

The Very Last First and Snowflake Bentley

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

(4 marks)

SAMPLE RESPONSES

The following sample responses are listed to support the use of the Grade 7 Reading Scoring Rubric. The suggestions are not complete, and they should not be used as a checklist.

Specific text information/support may include, but is not restricted to the following:

Students may say:

- She prefers to be alone (could be good *or* bad).
- She has a sense of wonder.
- She enjoys elements of winter and would thus empathize with his passion.
- She is very observant and would perceive the same small details.
- She would appreciate the beauty in what he does.
- She would admire the pains he took.
- She would see the many uses of his work.
- She might develop a new appreciation of the snow around her.

Students might also have negative answers:

- She might not be impressed because his work is not practical and her work puts food on the table.
- She may find his social isolation somewhat disturbing.
- She prefers to be alone (could be good *or* bad).

Note: Other answers may be possible.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 1

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

Eva would be so unisonished,
she would try it, and beat the
old record. Ma by she can
look for the book of 2500
of pictures of snow, and she
will see she can do it.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 2

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think eva would think its okay but would stay doing what she loves walking on the oceans floor. But might give it a chance to see if she liked it.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 3

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think that, since Eva lived in the Arctic Circle, where there is lots of snow, she'd like what 'Snowflake' Bentley did. I'm not sure if she's interested in different snow flakes, but I think she'd like it, all the same.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 4

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think that Eva ~~would~~ ^{would} have liked Snowflake Bentley's work. I think she would have liked it because she lives where there is lots of snow ~~and~~ His work is very hard and fascinating. I think she would have also liked it because they both like winter according to the story. That is why I think ~~the~~ Eva would have liked Snowflake Bentley's work.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 5

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think Eva would react to the work and art of snowflake Bentley in amazement because Eva lives in Inuit where there is lots of snow. After taking her very last time walking under the sea, she would have to take interest in something new. She would probably be in amazement when she sees how someone can take a picture of a snowflake without it melting or deforming.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 6

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think that Eva would like to hear about the story about the Snowflake Bentley story because she live in the snow. Maybe she never thought that some one would really like the snow so much that they would do what Bentley did.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 7

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

In my mind Eva would like and enjoy his work and art because she lives where there is lots of snow, and I think Eva would like it because she likes to enjoy time by herself. Another thing is that they both would enjoy the ^{peace} and quite by themselves. What they both do requires skills and hard work that ~~pass~~ off in the end.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 8

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think Eva ^{first} will like it because she always wanted to enjoy mysterious things. ^{as} Second, she will be curious about it. She never seen that before. Third, she will be surprised about the snowflake because it is cool and she never noticed snow have that kind of shapes. To sum up, I think Eva will really enjoy the snowflakes.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 9

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think Eva would react by ~~loving~~ loving to see it because she likes the snow. She would enjoy it and think its interesting because they are both adven terous and willing. She likes being alone, she enjoys it and Snowflake Bentley does his own thing alone. ~~So~~ She is ~~like~~ like him and so they would probably both like the little, magnificent crystals.

Score

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 10

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think that Eva would be very fascinating and amazed of the work and art of Snowflake Bentley and the reason is because when Eva was walking under the sea, she saw the ice and mussels and was fascinated by those. Also, Snowflake Bentley had drawn the designs of crystals and snow feathers very specifically and Eva was very sad that it is the very last and very first time that she was going under the sea alone and she saw lot of ice and Eva would recall what she had seen under the sea when she see the snowflakes and the beautiful patterns and one hundred photographs Bentley had taken. Eva could also have clue what snowflakes are like and could wish to do the drawings and examine different things that are under the sea. This is how Eva would react.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 11

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think Eva would be interested in Snowflake Bentley's work because she seems to be curious. The reason I believe she is curious is because when she was at the bottom of the sea, she wanted to explore its mysterious waters, examine the rock pools, and play with the seaweed. I think she might study the photographs and maybe even try to do it herself.

Grade 7 Reading – Exemplar # 12

1. How do you think Eva would react to the work and art of Snowflake Bentley?

Explain your answer using specific examples from **both** passages.

I think Eva would react fascinated at first because you can tell from the passage she enjoys nature and winter. Also I think Eva would get bored the passage gives you the impression that she loves the thrill of experiencing something new, so once it became old to her it would be boring. Also, in the passage "Snowflake Bentley" it says "the whole process took painstaking care but Snowflake figured it didn't take as much patience for him as it would for others because it gave him such pleasure." I think Eva wouldn't/couldn't be as passionate about it.

Score

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