



Creative STAR Learning Company

# A Winter Wonderland

(Having a Ball in the Snow)

Creative STAR Learning Company  
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# A WINTER WONDERLAND

Welcome to the first Creative STAR Learning Company topic pack. This was created specifically for Scottish primary schools as there is a lack of activities available for having fun and learning with and in the snow. In Canada and other snowy countries, there are many great ideas which have become second nature to teachers, schools and families.

Some quirks of the pack:

1) *It's not linked to "I can" statements or learning outcomes.*

This has been deliberate. Teachers can choose the learning intention of each activity to suit the needs of the class and focus of the term or other projects. Each activity has many learning possibilities and many are cross-curricular. If your school wishes to ensure a different experience of snow for children in each year or class, then divide up activities appropriately to avoid repetition year on year. Alternatively, undertake the activities in a three-yearly cycle.

2) *There's no suggested age range.*

Too right! Even within one class the abilities, skills and interests of children vary enormously. Teachers should use their professional judgement in determining the suitability of an activity for their class, groups or individuals. Set targets which will stretch all individuals and refer to the relevant curriculum guidelines for expectations over skill levels. However the best early years books with snow activities is definitely *The Little Book of Outside in All Weathers* by Sally Featherstone, Featherstone Education Ltd., ISBN 1-904187684.

3) *So what resources are needed?*

Check out each individual activity. The only things which really require pre-planning are:

- Having books and poems to hand. Books can be quickly purchased by following Juliet's Listmania links on the Creative Star Learning Company website, [www.creativestarning.co.uk](http://www.creativestarning.co.uk)
- Have photos and or posters ready of snowy pictures and weather. Also birds and animal tracks are useful too. Laminate and then they can be taken outside
- Gathering suitable containers for leaving outside to gather ice (all shapes and sizes)
- Ensuring there is food colouring, plenty of spray bottles and equipment such as spoons for working with ice sculptures
- Purchasing birdseed and nuts.

Finally, please e-mail Creative STAR Learning Company and tell us what you think of this pack. By giving us feedback we can improve our teaching resources for the benefit of everyone. Any bright ideas will be duly acknowledged.

## Getting Started

- 1) Plan ahead and consider activities before going out and indoor activities to link into and compliment the outdoor learning regardless of the age and stage of your children. Use the topic plan on the next page to consider all areas of the curriculum.
- 2) The idea is to have fun whilst learning. However the activities should not be regarded as “jollies”. Stick to your high expectations in terms of learning and ensure you deliver the lessons in a “formative” style.
- 3) Send letters home in advance stating that should there be snow, you intend to take the children outside and request that:
  - Children come wearing suitable warm protective clothes,
  - They have a spare change of socks and footwear for being indoors.
  - Possibly a complete change of clothes.
- 4) Consider when you will undertake outdoor snow activities. Just before or after break and lunch saves time putting on and taking off outdoor clothing. However you may wish to use time when you have additional adult help, especially if you have a big class of young children.
- 5) Undertake a risk assessment to enable you to undertake the activities safely. If you complete this electronically, then only minor adjustments need to be made each year as you review it. Many schools have a standard form which each class teacher can adjust according to the precise location, weather, snow conditions, activities and children in their class. Use your common sense and choose activities carefully. For example if you have icy, packed snow which is slippery, then playing “Snowball and spoon” may not be appropriate. Always consider the needs of individual children and include this in your risk assessment where necessary.
- 6) Keep the children moving to keep warm. If you have any static activity, then follow it or break it up with a physical task to stop the children getting cold. Do not stay out too long - observe how the children are managing.
- 7) Consider the flow of your activities. Begin with a fun, energetic activity, moving on to an active observational activity and ending with a quiet reflective activity tends to work well for most classes.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

<p><b>SOCIAL STUDIES</b>  <i>Finding out about Inuit culture</i>  <i>Research about snowy areas of the world</i></p>	<p><b>SCIENCE</b>          Snowball melts!    Snowflake survey          White hunters    Angels for birds</p>	<p><b>TECHNOLOGIES</b>          Snow forts    Ice cool designs          Snow sculptures</p>
<p><b>EXPRESSIVE ARTS</b>          Snow sculptures          Giant birdseed pictures          Frame it!          3D face sculptures          Headless snowman</p>	<p><b>HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b>          Planning winter activities outside          Snowball and spoon    Grab a bag          To the sky    Snowy obstacle course          Buckets of snow    Snowman shy</p>	<p><b>LANGUAGES</b>  <i>Snow poetry and poems</i>  <i>Writing linked to outdoor experiences</i>  <i>Stories about snow</i></p> <p><b>THINKING SKILLS</b> - <i>Inuit stories link nicely to work with De Bono's thinking hats as a follow up discussion</i></p>
<p><b>MATHEMATICS</b>          Snowball melts!          Bulls Eye</p>	<p><b>RME</b>  <i>"Northern Lights and the Soccer Trails" - an Inuit perspective on what happens after we die.</i>          Activities which appreciate the wonder of snow and nature: Frame it!, snowflake survey, winter secrets, our snowprints</p>	<p><b>OUTDOOR LEARNING</b> - All 20 activities in this project! Hooray!  <b>COMMUNITY LINKS</b> - Ask a member of the local ski club or mountain rescue team to visit  <b>ENTERPRISE</b> - Make and sell frozen ice lollies  <b>CREATIVITY</b> - Linked to technologies and expressive arts</p>
<p><b>PROBLEM SOLVING and PSE</b>          White hunters          Roll it up</p>	<p><b>CULTURAL ASPECTS</b>          Inuit games outside. <i>Learning about lifestyle of Inuit. Inuit stories and legends.</i></p>	<p><b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>  <i>Our snowprints,</i>  <i>Roll it up.</i></p>

Italics indicate indoor activities. Please note many activities are cross curricular and are mentioned in more than one box. The outdoor activities are described in this pack. The rest is up to you!

## Before you take the children outside

Have the children brainstorm as many winter activities as possible that they could do outdoors at school and at home. Discuss the equipment to be used and safety measures needed. The children can then undertake one of the suggested school activities.

Alternatively, read out a selection of activities from this pack and see which ones the children would most like to do.

## Maths Activities

### *Snowball Melts!*

Take your class on a winter walk around the playground. The only challenge is to make a snowball which can be carried safely. Back in the classroom, each child weighs and/or measures their snowballs and records this information. Next, place each snowball in its own dish in various areas of the classroom (e.g. under the radiator, by the window or on the teacher's desk) and have children monitor the time it takes for the snowballs to melt in each location and record how much water each produces.

Many books for younger children discuss melting snow and this activity can be simplified by simply observing and recording a snowball melting. Take photographs of a snowball every 30 mins throughout the day and display.

Make a heap of miniature snowballs which can be stored in egg boxes. Stick them in the freezer and bring them out in summer time...!

### *Bulls Eye*

Snowballs do not have to be thrown at people. It's possible to have a range of static targets. Using chalk, draw a target board on the side of a building or wall.

However if you have food colouring in spray bottles, children can spray targets onto the ground. First the area has to be stomped down flat. Then draw rings or squares or whatever target and number value you or your children wish with the coloured water. Sticks, flags or wooden spoons can be used to mark the value of each area rather than trying to spray this. Finally, the children will need to decide the rules. Will it be the best of three snowball shots or the first to 20 points, etc.?

## Science Activities

### *Angels for Birds*

Remember making snow angels? This activity takes the concept a little further. Working in pairs, one child makes a snow angel by lying on their back and moving their arms, legs and head. Their partner helps them up to avoid spoiling the angel. Then using a variety of different bird food, e.g. peanuts, sunflower seeds, birdseed, wholemeal bread, fill up the angel. (Younger children may find it easier with just one type of bird food). Use any natural materials nearby to add interest e.g. stones for eyes, branches for the wings. It also saves on food.

If this activity is undertaken near a window then it can be a great way to watch which birds visit the school grounds (NB remember there are no such birds as "seagulls" - there are herring gulls, greater black backed gulls, etc., but no seagulls. Sorry!)

### *White Hunters*

This is a game of hide and seek. Have a number of white objects or things covered in white cloth, e.g. a wooden spoon. Get some children to hide these objects in the snow within a defined area. Then time the rest of the class to find the objects. This can lead to great discussions about camouflage and also about the variety of colours in snow.

### *Snowflake Survey*

Equipment: A6 black or dark coloured card for each pair of children, magnifying glasses, pencil and scrap paper

The Inuit recognise many different types of snow and not surprisingly have names for these. Up to 9 months of the year can be spent in snowy conditions. This activity allows children to look very carefully at the different types of snow which might be observed. If snow is falling, the children can catch a few flakes on their card. Then using the hand lenses they can look closely at the structure and composition and think of describing words or phrases for their properties.

If the snow has settled, then send the children to examine the snow in different places. For example, the snow may have changed slightly in composition depending upon where it has fallen. Look at the snow on branches, right on the grass, on the surface of snow. Now, the best way to look at the snow is to catch it as it falls. So the children need to toss the snow gently in the air to catch it on their card. They should record their ideas on paper.

Back in the class, the descriptive words and phrases can be used to make up poems, or for scene setting writing.

### *Our Snow Prints*

Show the children bird and animal tracks photos and how this has left a clue about where they have been and what they have been doing. When you take the children outside, get them to step in each other's footprints so that the trampling on the new snow is minimal. You may need to demonstrate this activity first of all and encourage a calm, quiet tone. Once the children can follow in each other's footsteps, lead them on a magical journey to visit items of interest such as a bush full of red berries, a branch with snow settled on top, etc. You can leave coloured markers to show the children that there is something important to look at. You may also want to assign a digital camera to a child to take photos. Back inside the class you can discuss what you saw and relate it to the wide concepts of why we need to tread lightly on the planet and consider sayings such as "Take only photographs, leave only footprints".

## **Expressive Arts**

### *Headless Snowman*

This is so much fun! Make a snowman without a head. Then the children take it in turns to stand behind the snowman as if their head belongs to the snowman. You can have a range of props such as wigs, hats, scarves, sunglasses for the children to wear. Another child can take photos with a digital camera. What a souvenir for the learning journals!

### *Disappearing Pictures*

Equipment: Coloured pens, white paper

The children should draw a picture on their paper. If you do this outside, make it short and simple. Drawing on top of snow is a very different sensation to drawing on a table. Next, turn the paper face down onto the snow and rub it hard. The picture will disappear! Where does it go and why?

### *Frame It!*

Equipment: Picture frames made from card, digital cameras, if available.

This activity works very well after a session of making various snow sculptures. Ask children to consider that in nature there are many sculptures already created by the snow. Hand out the frames and ask children to look for their favourite natural sculpture and to frame it and think of a suitable title. (You may need to scaffold some answers here, initially). The natural sculptures can be as simple as ripples in the snow, an animal print, a leaf landing on the snow. The possibilities are endless. Finish with a natural art exhibition, where each child shows everyone else their frame, explains the title and takes a photo. This can be followed up in class by looking at the work of Andy Goldsworthy who has produced natural sculptures in all seasons. Google images for "Andy Goldsworthy Winter".

### *Ice Sculptures*

If you are able to freeze snow then it makes for an interesting texture. Leave it on a tray for a few minutes. Soon children can start chipping off pieces with a spoon. To keep the sculptures they will have to go back in a freezer. The alternative is to take a photo and have fun observing how the sculpture melts. If the snow is sprayed with coloured water before freezing, this can add interest.

### **Health and Wellbeing (including physical activity)**

#### *Snowball and spoon races*

In teams, take turns to run or walk carefully around a cone and back to the team. If the snowball is dropped, another must be made to replace it before continuing.

#### *Snowy obstacle course*

In groups children have to design an obstacle to be climbed over or walked through. Then the whole class plays follow my leader and completes the obstacle course. Snowy hurdles work well. This works best with groups or classes who do can manage the challenge of keeping every obstacle intact.

#### *To the sky snow pile*

Split the children into groups of five or six and give them five minutes to try and build the highest snow pile. Discuss how best to measure this. It's also a great team game as useful discussions can take place about how teams can work efficiently together.

#### *Snow scoop*

This is a useful way of collecting snow for indoors experiments. Split your class into groups and give each group a bucket or container. The aim is to see who can fill the bucket of snow the fastest or which team has the most snow in their bucket after a certain period of time. If you wish to make it more challenging, you can add stipulations such as "Only using the left hand" or blindfold half the team! This adds an interesting problem solving element for older children.

#### *Grab a bag*

Equipment: 5 hoops, 4 cones, a beanbag for every child.

Using 4 cones and 4 hoops, make a square with one of each in every corner. Then put a hoop in the centre of the square and place all the beanbags there. Divide your class into 4 teams and assign each team to a cone. When you give the signal, one player from each team runs to the centre hoops and takes a beanbag and returns it to their team's own hoop. The next team member then goes and collects another beanbag and so on, until there are no beanbags left in the centre hoop. At this point the relay continues with the team members, one at a time, choosing another team's hoop to run to a take a bag. The game can continue indefinitely. At the end of the game, the team with the most bags wins!

### *Snowman Shy*

If your class love building snowmen then this is a simple follow on activity. Each snowman needs a hat. The challenge is to stand a few metres away and let the children take turns in throwing a hat Frisbee style to land on the snowman's head. If the children wish, you can build in penalty clauses for missing, e.g. you must do 10 star jumps or dance "funky chicken" (this is where you flap your wings, make chicken like movements with your head and strut about like a chicken for a few seconds).

### *Roll it up*

A very simple activity for clearing the playing field of snow or creating a maze of paths. In pairs the children must make the biggest snowball they can. The contest ends when you run out of snow or the teams can no longer roll their snowball. It is a useful problem solving activity in that consideration needs to happen about this finite resource. Link this to how humans are using other resources for some meaningful discussions.

### **Multicultural Activities**

The arrival of snow always brings an interest in how people survive in the snow. For older children these are great picture books about the Inuit:

- 1) Kusugak MA *Northern Lights and the Soccer Trails* Annick Press Ltd ISBN 1-55037-338-2. This is written from an Inuit girl's perspective about her learning to cope with the death of her mother. It's a powerful story which suits many follow up literacy activities. I find using De Bono's "Thinking Hats" approach particularly effective for a quality discussion of this book.
- 2) Kusugak MA *Baseball Bats for Christmas* Annick Press Ltd ISBN 1-55037-338-2. This is a gently humorous book which describes Christmas customs in the far north of Canada in one settlement. The minister arranged for Christmas trees to be flown in much to the appreciation of the children who chopped them up into baseball bats for some great games.
- 3) Alexander B and Alexander A (1995) *What do we know about the Inuit?* MacDonald Young Books ISBN 0-7500-2350-3. A non-fiction books which looks at modern Inuit life.

The following games came from Sheldon Outdoor Centre in Canada. They are more appropriate for upper primary classes:

### *Back Push*

Place a piece of masking tape on the ground about 50cm long. Two players sit back to back with the piece of tape exactly between them. The object is for one person (A) to push the other back until A is over the line. Bottoms must stay on the ground and hands must stay off the floor.

### *Knee Tag*

In pairs, the children face each other. At the signal, both try to touch the knee of the other person. When one person is successful, he or she gets a point. Once three points are scored, the pair must split up and find new partners and begin again.

A similar game to this is Toe Tag. Instead of the players trying to touch each others' knees, they try to tap the toes of their partner whilst holding hands.

### *Hand Push*

Each person stands facing his or her partner about an arm's length apart. Both feet of each player must be tight together. When they are both ready one yells "Go!" and they try and knock each other off balance by pushing at each other's hands. When the foot of one person moves, the other gets a point. The first person to get three points is the winner. The pairs should then split up and find new partners. There is no locking of fingers to try and push the other person off balance. Open palms only.

### **RME**

The following activities help children develop a greater awareness and appreciation for the natural world. If you have a quiet corner of the school grounds with undisturbed snow, then this is the place to go for these activities. If you have an excitable class, then these activities may work better at the end of your outdoor session once the children have been active.

### *Treasure Everywhere!*

Equipment: Treasure detector (cardboard circles...make them gold or cover with holographic paper for a more dazzling effect).

This activity only works on soft snow. Adults can have a lot of fun embellishing this to make it more magical, especially with younger children. Tell the children that treasure can be found everywhere. Demonstrate with your treasure detector. Throw it into the air with a spinning action. Where it lands, dig a hole in the snow and see what treasures can be found...a leaf, an interesting stone, a stick.

If you are concerned about undesirables being discovered such as glass, litter or animal scat, describe this as "treasure of doom" that only an adult can pick up.

**FINALLY - Enjoy these activities, take care, keep warm and have fun while you learn. Remember to adapt everything to suit the weather conditions, terrain and the children's age, interests and abilities!**