

Yesterday is burned to memory. Please bear with me as I get the details down – today as I rest.

Monday, 11 March 1918. It was raining softly - felt ominous. I had stayed with my mother over Sunday in Melita. I left at first light with my horse and carriage - going 10 miles - north west along the river to West Brenda school. Miss Reid - the children call me.



I settled my horse and hurried in - against a gathering breeze. I was late. The children were fidgeting around the stove they'd lit - relieved to see me. We were short a few. Little Viola. Darn. I board with her parents. She was meant to bring me lunch.

I have to admit. I'm a dreamer, I lose myself in books. Oddly, I'm reading *Middlemarch* these days by Mary Evans. It's like she knows my life, though she lived in rural England. Miss Reid! I shook myself! Jake needed assurance. It was nasty outside. I couldn't see the stable. Harry, I called. Come help with the door. The snow hit us with such force we were gasping. I couldn't even see my hand, stretched out. We were going nowhere.



*West Brenda School*

Fortunately the coal was inside. But little food! The children offered to share theirs. No, I said, my stomach isn't right. And no water! The pump is out there. Invisible! Deep breaths. I have to get the children talking - What they're looking forward to this spring! Cora wants the war to end – hoping her uncle Edgar comes back soon. I sighed a worried prayer.

The wind shook our tiny room relentlessly. Supper was meager. The stove pipe smelled hot, and sounded wrong – banging loudly. How would we find the stable if the school took fire? Inside the noise, it was pitch dark. We had no light. I sang my mother's songs - encouraging the children to sleep at their desks.

George Elliot was Mary Evans' pen name. She wanted to write about important things, politics, women voting - so chose to write as a man. Good that's nearly behind us! Like Nellie McClung tells us. We women are equal with men. Surely that's not so hard!

Nellie was a teacher. Just down the river. Married a farmer. Mother says it's my turn - at 23. Heck, I've got books, work, money and the valley to roam in. I'm good! For now.

We comforted each other through that long night. Finally - the light. With the wind still buffeting we sang *God Save the King* and halfheartedly began our lessons. Then, in the window. A snowman atop a horse. And then another. We brought them in - to thaw and join the sudden party.

Two fathers - found their way through the blizzard. Each took my hand, looked me square in the eye - with tears in theirs - thanked me for being strong. I held each child in a good long hug - and felt the weight of many millstones fall.

*David Neufeld adapted *Blizzard (at West Brenda)* from a story written for *Vantage Points* 4.*