

# Snow Angels

**E**very flake of snow that falls to Earth is different. Like a fingerprint, each one is unique; and the reason one snowflake is never the same as another is that each one has been hand made by an angel – a snow angel.

During sunny and warm periods, snow angels spend their time designing new snowflakes. Then, when it turns cold and icy and snow is needed, they use their tiny, delicate hands to make their designs out of the smallest slivers of ice. They gently blow these snowflakes out of their hands and watch them float down to Earth.

Snow angels are peaceful. Snow angels are gentle. Snow angels are quiet. Snow angels are so nice that they can be a real pain.

Alfred wasn't like the other snow angels. He was bigger, taller and wider, with larger, heavier hands. He moved slowly and loved to talk. On top of all this, he hated making snowflakes. Those he did design were much simpler than the snowflakes of the other angels. When he blew them off his hands, they would plummet to Earth like hailstones rather than float like feathers.

Alfred was not suited to being a snow angel, but the chief snow angel insisted that he stick at it. The other snow angels looked at him with pity, but never encouraged him or offered to help. They left him to get on with his chunky designs and oversized shapes. Alfred just had to put up with it.

Now, you know that if you have to keep putting up with something that's not right for you – day after day, hour after hour, minute after minute – you will eventually do one of three things: suffer in silence, lose your patience and blow your top, or start to mess about. For example, if you are a boy who likes to think on the move and you keep getting told to sit still, or if you are a girl who enjoys talking and you always get told to be quiet, then, sooner or later, you'll get very cross, very sad, or very naughty.

What did Alfred do? Well, he started to mess around. He made unusual snowflakes: ones with rude words on them; ones made out of cornflakes, plastic, tin and spaghetti; and snowflakes shaped like bottoms. He lit fires under the clouds, melting the other angels' work.



He made himself sneeze so that he startled the angels, making them blow their snow to the wrong country. He made one huge snowflake that landed on France, completely covering the country. He even made snowflakes that flashed and said, 'Santa will be on holiday this Christmas.'

The chief snow angel was not impressed. He made Alfred sit on a tiny, delicate chair with a finger to his lips, and told him to write out the words 'I must not mess around. I must learn to make snowflakes like the other snow angels.' He was meant to write this a hundred times. However, as soon as the chief snow angel went away to praise the other snow angels, Alfred began his pranks once more.

Here are some of the snowflakes he made this time: he made one that told you how beautiful you are; he made another that hovered in the air and followed the first person it saw, but always kept just out of reach; he made snowflakes that would never melt; he made snowflakes that were very hot; he created others made of rubber; and even fashioned snowflakes that exploded like fireworks when they touched the ground.

The chief snow angel was not amused. However, he was the chief snow angel and was wise enough to realise that his first approach with Alfred had not worked. So he decided to try something different.



## About this story

If you are aware of learning-style theory and practice, then you will recognise what is going on in this story. Alfred's preferred learning and working style is not recognised or appreciated by the chief snow angel. He has to work and learn in an environment that is contrary to his preferences. Alfred likes to talk, but the other snow angels work in silence. He is big and strong and enjoys moving around, but he has been given delicate tactile work to do. He feels uncomfortable and misunderstood, so he tries to exert a degree of control by being subversive and going underground.

Alfred's misbehaviour actually reveals his strength: he's a wonderfully creative individual. I wonder if the chief snow angel will recognise this and find a way to play to Alfred's strengths?

## Using this story

### **The big question**

What does the chief snow angel do with Alfred this time?

### **Get thinking**

#### **Information processing**

What did Alfred do when he was messing around?

#### **Reasoning**

Why do you think the snow angels behaved as they did?

This question can be used to address the preferred learning style of the other snow angels, as well as their treatment of Alfred.

#### **Enquiry**

What do snowflakes look like close up?

A quick check through an Internet search engine should reveal a wealth of images of snowflakes.

#### **Creativity**

What other sorts of surprising snowflakes could Alfred make?

#### **Evaluation**

What do you think is the best thing that Alfred did when he was messing around? Why did you choose this?

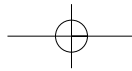
#### **Metacognition**

How do you think Alfred got all his wonderful ideas?

This is a tricky question for children to understand at first, but it can reveal some interesting insights into what inspires your children.

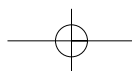
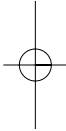
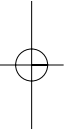
#### **Transfer**

Have you ever felt like Alfred? What happened? How did you react?

**Think some more**

The ideas in 'Snow Angels' address important issues related to personalised learning – how the individual learning preferences of children can be valued and used in the classroom.

The first step to achieving this is to find out what your children's learning preferences are. On page 124 is a photocopiable activity that will help you to begin to match your teaching styles with your children's learning styles. Ask each child to fill in a copy of this table, with help if necessary. Once you have collated the responses, you may find some valuable details that will have an impact on how you teach and how you expect your children to learn.



# Preferred learning style

Ring the number that best describes how you feel about each statement. 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree.

<b>When I'm working I like to . . .</b>					
. . . be warm.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . be able to talk to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . work on my own.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . have something interesting to look at.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . have something interesting to listen to.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . have something interesting to touch.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . have the lights dim.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . sit somewhere comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5
. . . get up and move about.	1	2	3	4	5