

Rain and Shine



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The weather has a big effect on people's lives. Hot, cold, wet or dry: the weather influences the environment of a country and the mood of the people who live there.

This booklet is all about extreme weather and the impact it has on people.

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The Hottest Day



Garnet

In the 1930s, farmers in the Midwest of America went through very hard times. This is a story about a girl, Garnet, who lived at that time. Citronella was her friend and neighbour.



Citronella

Garnet thought this must be the hottest day that had ever been in the world. Every day for weeks she had thought the same thing, but this was really the worst of all. This morning the thermometer outside had pointed a thin red finger to one hundred and ten degrees Fahrenheit*.



It was like being inside a drum. The sky like a bright skin was stretched tight above the valley, and the earth too was tight and hard with heat. Later, when it was dark, there would be a noise of thunder, as though a great hand beat upon the drum; there would be heavy clouds above the hills, and flashes of heat lightning, but no rain. It had been like that for a long time. After supper each night, her father came out of the house and looked up at the sky, then down at his fields of corn and oats. ‘No,’ he would say, shaking his head. ‘No rain tonight.’

* Very hot temperature, roughly 46°C.

The oats were turning yellow before their time, and the corn leaves were torn and brittle, rustling like newspaper when the dry wind blew upon them. If the rain didn't come soon there would be no harvest.

Garnet looked up at the smooth sky angrily, and shook her fist. 'You!' she cried. 'Why can't you let down a little rain!'

At each step her bare feet kicked up a small cloud of dust. There was dust in her hair and up her nose, making it tickle.

Behind her, a door twanged shut and Citronella came down the steps of her house flapping a dish towel like a fan.

'Isn't it hot!' she called to Garnet. 'Where you going?'

'For the mail,' said Garnet.



Citronella had to help her mother with the ironing. ‘A fine thing to have to do on a day like this,’ she said rather crossly. ‘I bet you I’ll melt all over the kitchen floor like a lump of butter.’

Garnet giggled at this picture and started on her way.

‘Wait a minute,’ said Citronella, ‘I might as well see if there’s any mail for us too ... Days like this make me wish I could find a waterfall somewhere. One that poured lemonade instead of water. I’d sit under it all day with my mouth open.’

‘I’d rather be up on an Alp,’ said Garnet. ‘You know, one of those mountains they have in Europe. There’s snow on top of them even on the hottest days of summer. I’d like to be sitting in the snow looking miles and miles down into a valley.’

‘Too much trouble climbing up,’ sighed Citronella.

They turned the corner and came to the mailboxes. Garnet took the mail from her box. These weren’t real letters, she could tell at a glance. The envelopes were thin and business-like with small printed names of companies in upper left-hand corners. No, these weren’t real letters. Bills, that’s what they were.

Bills. She knew what that meant. Tonight her father would sit late in the kitchen, worried and silent, doing sums on a piece of paper. Long after everyone else had gone to bed, he would be there by himself. If it would only rain! Then there would be good crops and more money. She looked up at the sky. It was as smooth, as empty, as it had been for weeks.

‘I’ve got to get back to my precious ironing board,’ said Citronella grimly.

As Garnet walked up the hill to her house, drops of perspiration rolled down her forehead and into her eyes like big tears. Her back felt wet. She wished that she didn’t have to give those bills to her father. Slowly Garnet walked to the yellow house under tall maple trees and opened the kitchen door.

Her mother was cooking supper and her little brother Donald sat on the floor making a noise like a train.

Her mother looked up. Her cheeks were red from the hot stove. ‘Any mail, darling?’ she asked.

‘Bills,’ replied Garnet.

‘Oh,’ said her mother and turned back to her cooking. Garnet set the table by the open window. Knife, fork, knife, fork, knife, fork, but only a spoon for Donald. Then she went down to the cold room.



It was still and dim down there. A tap dripped peacefully into the deep pool of water below, where the milk cans and stone butter crock were sunk. Garnet filled a jug with milk and put a square of butter on the plate she had brought. She knelt down and plunged both her arms into the water. It was cloudy with spilled milk but icy cold. She could feel coolness spreading through her veins and a little shiver ran over her.

Going into the kitchen was like walking into a red hot oven.

Donald had stopped being a train and had become a fire engine. He charged round and round the room hooting and shrieking. How could he be so lively, Garnet wondered. He didn't even notice the awful heat although his hair clung to his head like wet feathers and his cheeks were red as radishes.

Her mother looked out of the window. 'Father's coming in,' she said. 'Garnet, don't give him the mail now, I want him to eat a good supper. Put it behind the calendar and I'll tend to it afterwards.'

Garnet hastily pushed the bills behind the calendar on the shelf over the sink.

The door opened with its own particular squeak and her father came in. He went to the sink and washed his hands. He looked tired and his neck was sunburned. 'What a day!' he said. 'One more like this –' and he shook his head.

It was too hot to eat.

Garnet said goodnight and tiptoed up the stairs to her room under the eaves. It was so hot there that the candle in its holder had swooned till it was bent double. Garnet blew out the candles and lay down. It was too hot even for a sheet. She lay there, wet with perspiration, feeling the heat like heavy blankets and listening to the soft thunder, the empty thunder, that brought no rain. After a while she fell asleep and dreamed that she was in a rowing boat on a wide, flat ocean.

Late in the night Garnet woke up with a strange feeling that something was about to happen. She lay quite still, listening.

The thunder rumbled again, sounding much louder than it had earlier in the evening; almost as though it were in the earth instead of the sky, making the house tremble a little. And then slowly, one by one, as if someone were dropping



pennies on the roof, came the raindrops. Garnet held her breath: the sound paused. 'Don't stop!' she whispered. A noise of wind stirred in the leaves, and then the rain burst strong and loud upon the world. Garnet leaped out of bed and ran to the window. The watery air was cold against her face and as she looked the many-branched lightning stood for an instant on the horizon like a tree on fire.

Quickly she turned and ran down the little stairway to her father's and mother's bedroom. Loudly she banged upon the door and threw it open, calling, 'It's raining! It's raining hard!' She felt as though the thunderstorm were a present she was giving to them.



Rain

The lights are all on, though it's past midday.
There are no more indoor games we can play.
No one can think of anything to say,
It rained all yesterday, it's raining today.
It's grey outside, inside me it's grey.

I stare out of the window, fist under my chin,
The gutter leaks drips on the lid of the dustbin,
When they say 'cheer up', I manage a grin,
I draw a fish on the glass with a sail-sized fin,
It's sodden outside, and I'm damp within.

Matches, bubbles and papers pour into the drains,
Clouds smother the sad laments from the trains,
Grandad says it brings on his rheumatic pains,
The moisture's got right inside of my brains,
It's raining outside, inside me it rains.

by Brian Lee

Rain in Summer

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!
How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs!

How it gushes and struggles out
From the throat of the overflowing spout!
Across the window pane
It pours and pours;
And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter it roars
The rain, the welcome rain!

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Rain and Shine – in Britain

Weather affects people's lives in Britain, as it does everywhere in the world. Records of British weather have been collected for over 100 years. These are some of the more extreme weather records.

Braemar, Grampian, 10th January 1982, had the lowest ever recorded temperature in Britain: -27.2°C . In temperatures such as these, it is important to dress warmly, stay dry and try to keep moving to generate body heat.

With an average annual temperature at 6.5°C , Braemar is the coldest overall low-level place in the UK.



Sprinkling Tarn, Cumbria, holds the record for the heaviest rainfall for a single year. Over the 12 months in 1954, 6528mm (over 6.5 metres) of rain fell in this spot.

Walshaw Dean Lodge, West Yorkshire, holds the record for the heaviest downpour. On 19th May 1989, 193mm fell in just 2 hours. This is the amount of water collected by the weather station rain gauge. It is estimated, however, that 500 million litres of water can fall from a single thunderstorm.

Brogdale, Faversham, Kent, 10th August 2003, recorded the highest ever temperature in Britain: 38.5°C .

When the weather becomes as hot as it was on 10th August 2003, people want to enjoy themselves. In that week in 2003, supermarkets had to stock up on the sorts of products that people want in hot weather. Compared to the week before, they sold:

- 800% more burgers
- 500% more hot dog rolls
- 700% more lettuce
- 300% more bottled water and juices
- 400% more sun cream.











24-hour weather forecasts

Weather forecasting has become such an advanced and precise science that very detailed predictions can be made. If you want to know what weather to expect for the rest of the day, you can now find the information on the internet in the morning. This will help you plan your clothes, your food and drink, and travel arrangements for the whole day.

Forecast for Friday 16th May

00:00 midnight		10°C
04:00		11°C
08:00		16°C
10:00		18°C
12:00 noon		20°C
14:00		24°C
18:00		26°C
20:00		20°C

St Osyth, Essex, is the driest recorded place in the UK, with just 513mm of rainfall per year. The longest drought in the UK, however, occurred elsewhere. See below.

Sussex. A drought lasted 60 days between 17th March and 15th May 1893 when not a single drop of rain fell. Now, as then, periods of dry weather have a serious impact on people. To help conserve water during long periods of dryness, people are asked:

- to take showers rather than baths
- to repair dripping taps and leaking pipes
- not to water their lawns
- not to wash their cars
- not to use children's paddling pools, inflatable swimming pools, etc
- not to run the tap while brushing teeth or washing up.

‘The Hottest Day’, adapted from *Thimble Summer* by Elizabeth Enright, Yearling Newberry, 1987.

‘Rain’, by Brian Lee from *Six of the Best*, ed. Anne Harvey, Penguin, 1989.

‘Rain in Summer’, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, from *Footprints on the Page*,
compiled by Fiona Waters, Evans Brothers Ltd, 1998.

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