

### **Grade 3: Unit 3, Week 3** Ecosystems in Balance

Read Aloud: **The Snowdrop** based on a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen

Wonderful Words: *penetrate, stirring, humility, delicate, tempt*

**Note:** *Snowdrops* are the first flowers of spring; they may even poke through a covering of snow. In the south, they may bloom all winter long. Some people think snowdrops resemble three drops of milk hanging from a stem.

#### **The Snowdrop**

The snow lay deep, for it was winter time. The winter winds blew cold but there was one place where all was snug and warm. And in this place lay a little flower—it lay in its bulb, under the snow-covered earth.

One day rain fell. The drops penetrated through the icy snow and down into the earth. Rain touched the flower-bulb, and talked of the bright world above the ground. Soon a Sunbeam—pointed and slender—pierced its way through the snow and earth and tapped softly on the bulb.

“Come in,” said the Flower.

“I cannot,” said the Sunbeam. “I am not strong enough to unlock the door! I shall be stronger when summer comes!”

“When will it be summer?” asked the Flower. She repeated this question each time a new Sunbeam made its way down to her. But winter was long and summer was far off. Snow lay upon the ground, and there was a coat of ice on the water every night.

“What a long time winter takes!” said the Flower. “I feel a stirring within me; I must unlock the door for I am cramped inside here. I must get out, and say good morning to the summer. What a happy time that will be!”

The Flower stirred and stretched itself within the thin walls of its bulb. The snow and the earth warmed. When the next Sunbeam touched the bulb, the Flower shot forth from under the snow, with a pale green bud on its stalk and thick leaves which seemed to want to protect it. The snow was cold, but was warmed by Sunbeams, so it was easy for the Flower to sprout through it. And now the Sunbeams came with greater strength than before.

“Welcome, welcome!” sang and sounded every ray of sun. And the Flower lifted itself up over the snow into the brighter world. The bud opened, white as snow, decorated with green stripes. The Flower bent its head in joy and humility.

“Beautiful Flower!” said the Sunbeams, “how graceful and delicate you are! You are the first, you are the only one! You are our love! You are the bell that rings out for summer, beautiful summer. All the snow will melt; the cold winds will be driven away. Everything will become green. You will have companions; tulips, lilies, and roses; but you are the first, so graceful, so delicate!”

It seemed as if the air were singing. There the Flower stood, so delicate and so easily broken, and yet so strong in its young beauty; it stood there in its white dress with the green stripes. But summer was not to come for a long time. Clouds hid the sun, and bleak winds were blowing.

“You have come too early,” said Wind and Weather. “We still have the power, and you will feel it, and give yourself up to us. You should have stayed quietly at home and not have run out to make a display of yourself. The time to bloom has not yet come!”

It was bitter cold! The days which now came brought not a single Sunbeam. It was weather that might break such a little Flower in two. But the Flower had more strength than she herself knew. She was strong in joy and had faith in the summer, which would be sure to come. And so she remained standing in the snow in her white garment, bending her head even while the snowflakes fell thick and heavy, and the icy winds swept over her.

“You’ll break!” said the Wind and Weather, “and fade, and fade! What did you want out here? Why did you let yourself be tempted? The Sunbeams were having fun. They were playing a game to see if they could get you to sprout. Now you have what you deserve, you winter fool!”

“Winter fool” the Flower sadly repeated in the cold morning hour.

“What a lovely Snowdrop!” cried some children happily; “over there stands one—how beautiful! The first one, the only one!”

These words made the Flower feel good; they seemed like warm sunbeams. In her joy the Flower did not even feel pain when it was broken off. It lay in the child’s hand and then was kissed by the child’s mouth. The child carried the Flower into a warm room and put it into water. The Flower thought she had suddenly come upon the summer.

The daughter of the house, a beautiful girl, had a dear friend. He was far away studying for an examination. The daughter took the delicate Flower and laid it in a piece of scented paper, on which verses were written. She folded the paper like a letter, with

the Flower tucked inside. It was dark around the Flower, dark as in those days when she lay hidden in the bulb. The Flower went on a journey and lay in the mail-bag. It was pressed and crushed, which was not pleasant; but that soon came to an end.

The journey was over and the letter was opened and read by the friend. How happy he was! He kissed the letter and the Flower and laid them both in a box in which there were many beautiful verses of poetry, but none of the others had a flower. She was the first, the only one, as the Sunbeams had called her; and it was a pleasant thing to think about.

The summer passed and the long winter went by, and then the summer came again before the Flower appeared once more. But now the young man was angry. He took the letter and threw it, so that the Flower fell to the ground. Flat and faded, the Flower lay there.

The next morning, the sun shone upon the little flattened snowdrop. A girl who was sweeping the room picked up the flattened flower and laid it in one of the books which were on the table. Again the flower lay among verses of poetry.

After years went by, the book was taken from the shelf and somebody read out of it. It was a good book filled with verses and songs by the old Danish poet Ambrosius Stub—which was well worth reading. The man who was now reading the book turned over a page.

“Why, there’s a flower!” he said. “A snowdrop! This flower must have been put in here for a reason. Poor Ambrosius Stub! He was a snowdrop too—a poet fool who came too early and therefore he had to taste the sharp winds of his time. And yet he was

the first, the only, a fresh young Danish poet of those days. Yes, little snowdrop, you shall remain in the book,” said the man. “You have been put there for a reason.”

The Snowdrop was put back into the book and felt honored and happy to know that it was in a glorious book of songs.

And that is the story of the Snowdrop.

### **penetrate**

**Define:** **Penetrate** is to go in or pass through.

**Example:** The plastic spoon could not **penetrate** the cold ice cream.

**Ask:** What kind of spoon would **penetrate** ice cream?

### **stirring**

**Define:** When someone feels a **stirring**, it means he or she wants to become active.

**Example:** Jasper felt a **stirring** after he heard a speech about stray animals in the community.

**Ask:** When have you felt a **stirring** inside you to do something or go someplace?

### **humility**

**Define:** **Humility** is not thinking too highly of yourself when you are successful.

**Example:** The singer accepted the award with **humility**.

**Ask:** Why is **humility** an important character trait?

### **delicate**

**Define:** When something is **delicate**, it is fine or dainty in how it is made.

**Example:** The **delicate** butterfly’s wings had the most beautiful pattern.

**Ask:** Which is **delicate**—a lace tablecloth or blue jeans? Why?

### **tempt**

**Define:** When somebody is **tempted**, they are thinking about doing something foolish or wrong.

**Example:** When my mom wasn’t watching, I was **tempted** to eat another cookie.

**Ask:** Why is it hard to stay away from something that you are **tempted** to do?