

### Here at last.

There has been a scraping sound in Wenatchee for about a week. It's the sound of snow shovels. Finally, the snow is here. And there isn't just a little of it. Out of the blue\*, a storm moved in, just as we were getting used to a snowless Winter. It took us all by surprise\*, and it has had its usual impact on everything. Our lives have adjusted by becoming slower. You can't rush around if you are walking or driving on snow and ice. You can't afford\* to be a little late, because by the time you get to where you planned on going, you will be very, very late. One of my kids told me yesterday, that one of her classmates was late for school because her front and back doors were frozen shut! There are inconveniences everywhere, and you just have to get used to them. On my way to the grocery store, there was a hold up\* in the traffic. One car had slid into the snow bank that was in the middle of the road. It was stuck, and sticking out\*, right in the way of the traffic. People were looking out of their windows, honking their horns, and generally looking impatient. Finally, a hero turned up to rescue the stranded person. It was a policeman. He walked slowly over to the stranded driver who was desperately spinning his wheels, assessed the situation\*, got back in his car, and literally pushed the car out of the way with his police car. It worked; problem solved. One thing about living in this area is that you become more flexible in the Winter. I think you become more understanding. Everyone has things to do; we are all in a hurry, but there is a white obstacle out there, in the streets and driveways, that slows us all down, and sometimes causes accidents. So what does all of this mean? It means we have to be more thoughtful. One of our neighbor's boys cleared the snow from my friend's driveway because she's in her late seventies, and lives alone. You'll often see people snow blow their own driveways and walkways, and then continue on to the neighbor's. I'll be going over to my mother's house today to clear her walkway while she's at work because she's terrified of slipping and falling. To avoid an accident, she wears attachable\*, rubber crampons, believe it or not. They keep her stable and safe. Whoever sells those should be making some good money this time of year.

Related vocabulary and expressions: out of the blue, to be taken by surprise, you can't afford to, to stick out.

1. It was a quiet, Spring day, when, out of the blue, a noisy jet screamed through the air, right above my house.
2. I was in a daydream, looking at the flowers, when John came up to me and started talking. He took me completely by surprise.
3. You can't afford to spend your time watching television when you have an exam tomorrow.
4. I cut my leg on a nail that was sticking out of the step.