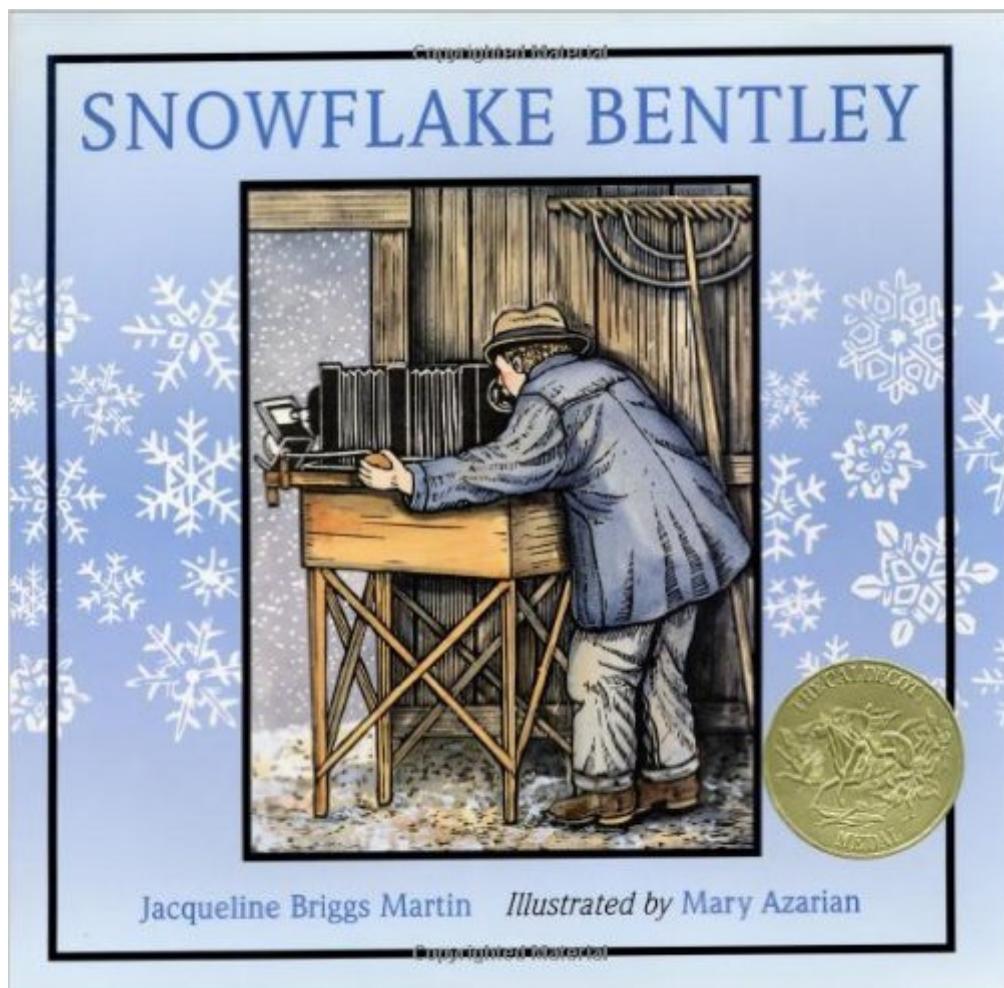


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# Snowflake Bentley (Caldecott Medal Book)



## **Synopsis**

"Of all the forms of water the tiny six-pointed crystals of ice called snow are incomparably the most beautiful and varied." -- Wilson Bentley (1865-1931) From the time he was a small boy in Vermont, Wilson Bentley saw snowflakes as small miracles. And he determined that one day his camera would capture for others the wonder of the tiny crystal. Bentley's enthusiasm for photographing snowflakes was often misunderstood in his time, but his patience and determination revealed two important truths: no two snowflakes are alike; and each one is startlingly beautiful. His story is gracefully told and brought to life in lovely woodcuts, giving children insight into a soul who had not only a scientist's vision and perseverance but a clear passion for the wonders of nature. Snowflake Bentley won the 1999 Caldecott Medal.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: AD830L (What's this?)

Series: Caldecott Medal Book

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin; 1st edition (September 28, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0395861624

ISBN-13: 978-0395861622

Product Dimensions: 10 x 0.3 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (136 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #108,255 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Photography #69 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Earth Sciences #106 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Science & Technology

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## **Customer Reviews**

As a seasoned primary teacher eager for a new slant on teaching the traditional science unit on water, I was delighted to find Snowflake Bentley having been familiar with him from his famous pictures of snowflakes. Living in Alaska, snow is about the best way to start. I quickly bought the book impressed with the illustrations and the sidebar full of detailed facts which my second graders

enjoyed and the story line which was more accessible to my first graders. Snowflakes will never be the same again for them! They loved it and loved Bentley for his patience and curiosity for nature. Additionally, they admired the parents of Bentley who spent most of their earnings on his sought after camera for his famous study. Go out and buy it before the snow melts!

This children's book, illustrated by Mary Azarian, won the 1999 Caldecott Medal for best illustrations in a book for children. It is the story of Wilson A. Bentley (1865-1931) of Jericho, Vermont, who had a passion for studying snowflakes. Having developed a technique for photographing snowflakes, he spent years collecting and giving lectures in the midst of running his farm: a true farmer-scientist. He even wrote a text called *Snow Crystals*. He noted the six sidedness of most crystals and a few three-sided. One wonders what he would have said upon hearing that some researchers in the late 1990s had found two identical snowflakes since he had never been able to find two that were alike. This book is a celebration not only of the man but of our love and interest in the natural world. Children will enjoy this book with its magnificent woodcuts immensely.

This lovely book is a perfect blend of fascinating real-life story and beautiful illustration. I am purchasing it for grandchildren in hope that some of them are encouraged to follow their dreams, some are persuaded to persist in exploring their interests and some just bask in the beauty. I think children up to ten will enjoy this book.

Snowflake Bentley is one of the best biographies I have seen for children because it combines so many elements of a worthwhile children's book so successfully. First, the book deserves its Caldecott Medal for outstanding illustrations from the gorgeous hand-colored woodcuts that provide a wonderful old-fashioned feel. Second, the book also describes the beauty of snowflakes and shows both abstract designs of them as well as some of Mr. Bentley's own photographs. Third, many of the fundamental science facts about snowflakes are described (I learned more about why snowflakes are unique than I had ever known before). Fourth, Mr. Bentley's life is inspirational in several ways. He followed and lived his passion. His parents also supported him in the passion, in a wonderfully loving way. He succeeded in bringing beauty to the world that has changed the way everyone sees it. In doing so, he has lightened the burdens of winter a little for us all. Mr. Bentley was "a boy who loved snow more than anything else in the world." Where others saw cold and discomfort in his home of Jericho, Vermont, he saw beauty. That was good because the snowfall averages around 120 inches a year there. "He said snow was as beautiful as butterflies, or apple

blossoms." In the good weather, he could net butterflies or carry apple blossoms to show to others, but snowflakes were more difficult to share. His mother (who was his teacher until he was 14) gave him an old microscope, and he began to look at snowflakes in the cold. He noticed that no two were alike, and began to draw them. At 17, he learned that you could photograph what you could see in a microscope. His parents made an enormous investment and got him one. The cost was equal to the value of his father's whole herd of ten cows. The camera was as large as a calf. In those days (1882), you had to use large glass plates to make images. From then one, he was committed to his photography. Some winters, he could only make a few photographs successfully. The best time was during a snow storm in 1928, when he made over 100 in two days overlapping Valentine's day. He learned to make his images better and better, and shared them with others. During the good weather, he also photographed spiders' webs, the dew on natural objects, and other small scenes of nature. He earned a little money from all this, but his costs exceeded his revenues by almost 4 to 1 over a lifetime. All of his money went for photography. When he was 66, some scientists gave him the money to publish a book of his photographs. Shortly thereafter, he died of pneumonia contracted after photographing during a blizzard. The town honored him with a plaque. The book contains the story of Mr. Bentley's life, has sidebars that provide more detail on the science and certain aspects of his life, shows photographs, and is illustrated with the hand-colored woodcuts I mentioned earlier. The result is something that can appeal to a child in different ways at different ages. You can read this mostly as being a biography, or as mostly about snowflakes, or as mostly about photography of nature. Most parents would encourage their children to do what they love. Here is a life that shows the wisdom of that inclination. In the course of reading this book, I encourage you to tell your child that she or he should find a similar passion and explore it. In the process, you should describe your own passions, and how you explore them to provide a further example. Explore all of the uniqueness of yourself and your children! No two are exactly alike -- like snowflakes!

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