

Inspire Student M.H.

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English 10A

Day Month Year

### Avalanches

What damage can an avalanche really do? Most people do not know how much damage an avalanche can cause. Since I am a snowboarder, I constantly hear about the dangers of avalanches. Living near the Sawtooth Mountains, there are several avalanches that happen every year. An avalanche in 1985 inspired the author Isabel Allende to write “And of Clay Are We Created.” No one ever knows how or when an avalanche can occur. Avalanches not only inspire stories but also train people to respect the destruction, understand prevention methods, and accept the recovery process.

In the story by Isabel Allende the main character Rolf Carle is trying to help 13-year-old girl recover from avalanche. The girl is trapped because of the mud that came after the avalanche. This story shows how devastating an avalanche can be, “... and walls of snow broke lose, rolling in an avalanche of clay, stones, and water...” (Allende 121). The girl eventually dies showing the sadness and destruction an avalanche can cause.

Avalanches causes a tremendous amount of damage. Close to twenty thousand people died in in the biggest recorded avalanche on May 31, 1970. An earthquake caused the avalanche in Peru. “As it moved, it completely devastated all that came in its path, with its massive volumes of ice, water, mud, and rock alike” (Sen Nag). Avalanches are all around the world in

many different sizes. As more people do outdoor activities more people have died from avalanches. It is important that people understand the destruction and harm avalanches cause.

There are several things people can do to prevent being in an avalanche. As a snowboarder, I have taken an avalanche safety course. In that course they say to stay inbounds if you are on a protected hill. They also say that if you are in the backcountry that you shouldn't ski or snowboarded on more than a 30 degree slope. The reason for that is that an avalanche can't happen if it is below or on a 30 degree slope. When doing back country you have to make sure that you have all the right gear before you start. According to National Geographic, "Although avalanches appear spontaneous and unpredictable, learning warning signs to evaluate risks can help avoid dangerous areas" (Howard). Knowing how to avoid an avalanche can prevent you from being involved in one.

After every avalanche there is always the recovery process for people, animals, and land. Once an avalanche is over there are many damages people have to accept. Avalanches destroy the ecosystem and can sometimes kill animals and people. Personally I have seen the damage an avalanche can cause to the environment. A hiking trail can be completely destroyed and covered after an avalanche hits. Sometimes houses get destroyed by avalanches if they are on a mountain or close to a mountain. After time the ecosystem starts to build back. "Forested slopes frequently beset by avalanches typically show distinct strips – avalanche tracks or chutes – that differ in structure and species composition from the surrounding woods" (Shaw). Areas are able to recover from an avalanche.

Once you know more about avalanches, the more you start to take precautions. All avalanches cause destruction to the ecosystem, animal homes, and can kill people. The natural disaster of an avalanche can also inspire stories. Avalanches do damage in a lot of different ways

so it's important that we know when and how to prevent avalanches. Accepting the recovering process always starts with knowing how they affect the world. It's always a good idea to know and have the proper gear when going into backcountry. Dealing with the destruction, knowing the prevention methods, and being aware of the recovery process helps people manage avalanches.

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