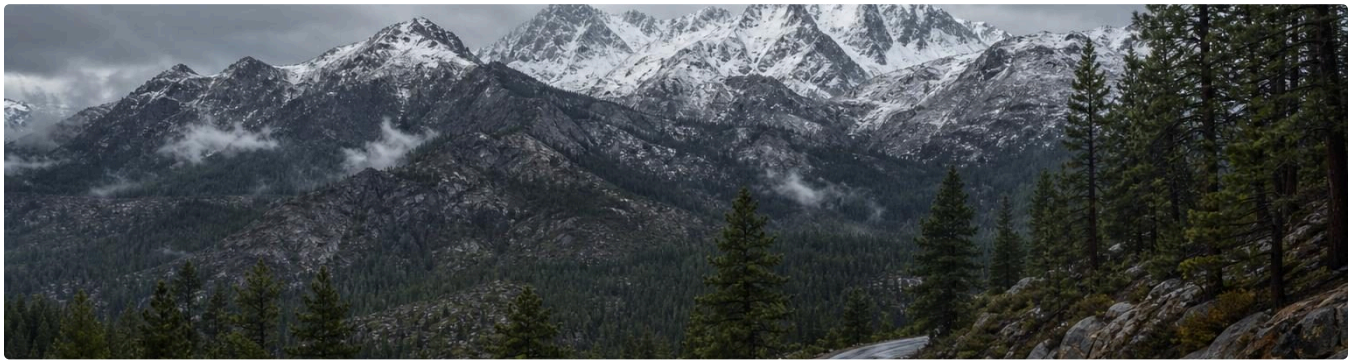
Fresh Snow Turns the Sierra Nevada White

A NASA satellite showed how one November storm changed California's mountains in just two days.



Snow covers high mountain peaks while a wet empty road curves through pine trees below.

According to NASA's Earth Observatory, an early snowstorm covered California's Sierra Nevada mountains in mid-November. One of the first big snowfalls of the season arrived on November 13, 2026. Lower places near Sacramento got heavy **rain**. Higher **mountain** areas got **snow**. Donner Pass, northwest of Lake Tahoe, got nearly 12 inches.

That much snow can change a day quickly. A mountain road that was bare on Wednesday can be white by Friday. Drivers may need **chains**, slow speeds, or a new plan. On November 13, officials closed Interstate 80 in both directions near Donner Pass that evening. Farther south, Yosemite National Park closed several roads before the **storm**.

NASA saw the change from space. Its Terra satellite flew over the area on November 14, during a break between storms. A satellite is a machine that moves around Earth and takes measurements from above. Terra carries an instrument called MODIS. It made an image showing fresh snow on the Sierra Nevada. Two days earlier, the same mountains were mostly bare. Snow showed only on the highest places.

The storm was part of a fast line of Pacific storms. They were bringing rain, snow, and wind to the U.S. West. The story is also about **height**. In mountains,

Elementary · Wednesday, November 18, 2026 · Teacher copy · © 2026 3andB Inc.

weather can be very different from place to place. Rain may fall in a city while snow falls high above it. Elevation means how high a place is above sea level.

The National Weather Service warned about more stormy weather from November 18 to 20. The warning was for parts of the Sierra Nevada above 5,000 feet. Above 8,000 feet, forecasters said around 4 feet of snow was possible.

For people nearby, the storm was not just a pretty picture. It affected travel, park roads, and ski areas. Mammoth Mountain reported 9 to 13 inches of new snow. That is enough to cover boots and make familiar trails look new.

A satellite image helps people see the whole scene at once. From the ground, a storm is a wet coat, a slippery road, or flakes on a window. From space, it becomes a wide white stripe across mountains. Both views matter. One shows what it feels like to be there. The other helps weather watchers understand what changed.

Written from reporting by NASA.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. When a big mountain storm is coming, should officials close roads early or wait longer? Defend your choice.

> **A strong answer:** A strong answer weighs safety, travel needs, uncertainty in forecasts, and the cost of closing roads too soon.

2. Which view teaches more about this storm: seeing it from the ground or seeing it from a satellite? Explain your reasoning.

> **A strong answer:** A strong answer compares personal experience with the wider pattern shown from space, and may argue both are needed.

3. How might the same storm feel different to someone in a city, a driver in the mountains, and a park worker?

> **A strong answer:** A strong answer uses perspective and evidence from the article to show how one event can create different problems and benefits.

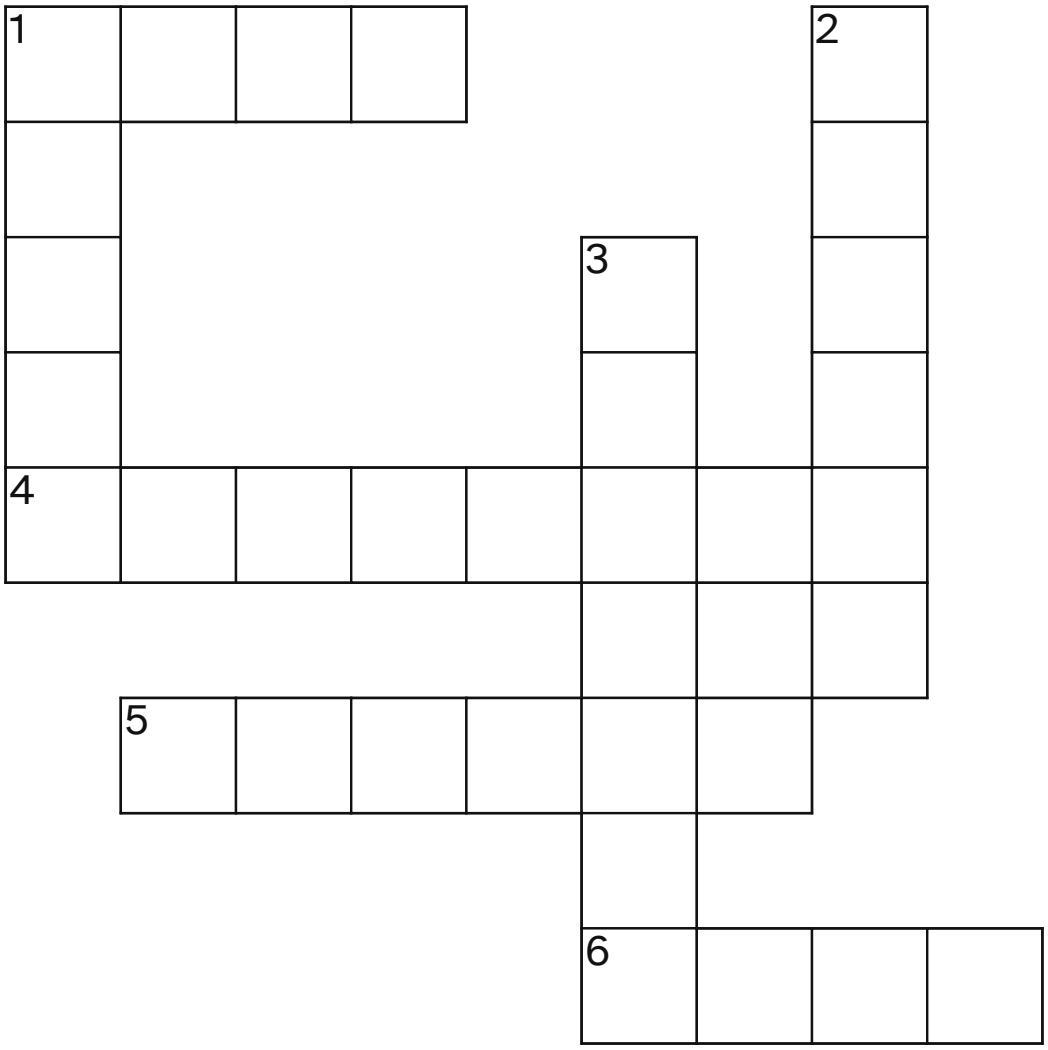
Fresh Snow Turns the Sierra Nevada White

R T T I U A H H E U
H M C A N T E E E I
G M S U I N H I T R
S N O W O I W G S I
U I W U D R C H T I
C H A I N S E T O A
A R W E A T H E R E
I A C N O T A R M N
T R S A H H N I O I
Y N M Y R R A I N R

CHAINS HEIGHT MOUNTAIN RAIN SNOW STORM WEATHER

Elementary · Wednesday, November 18, 2026 · Teacher copy · © 2026 3andB Inc.

Fresh Snow Turns the Sierra Nevada White



ACROSS

1 White winter stuff falling from clouds

4 Very high land with steep sides

5 How high something is above the ground

6 Drops of water falling from clouds

DOWN

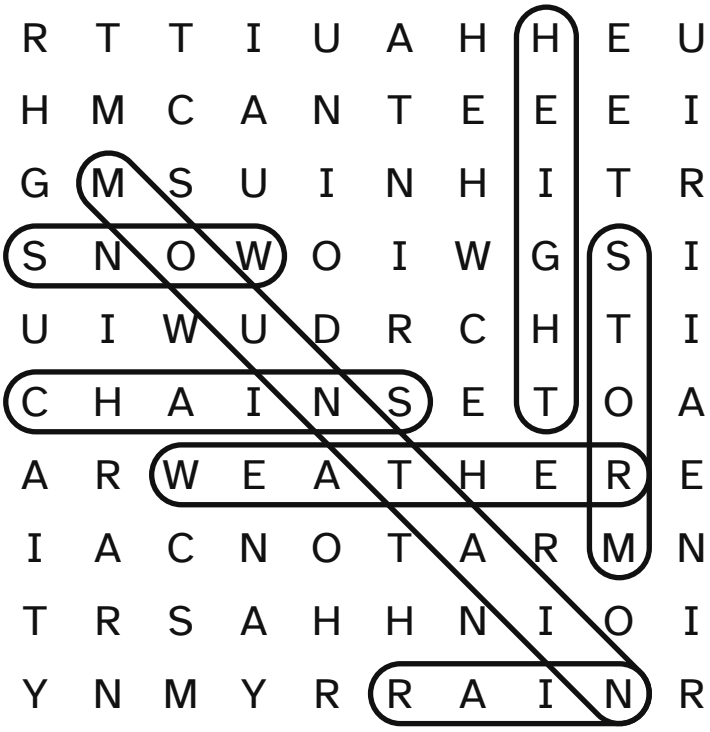
1 Rough time with strong wind and rain

2 Metal links wrapped around tires on icy roads

3 What it is like outside each day

Elementary · Wednesday, November 18, 2026 · Teacher copy · © 2026 3andB Inc.

Fresh Snow Turns the Sierra Nevada White — answer key



CHAINS HEIGHT MOUNTAIN RAIN SNOW STORM WEATHER

Fresh Snow Turns the Sierra Nevada White — answer key



ACROSS

1 White winter stuff falling from clouds

4 Very high land with steep sides

5 How high something is above the ground

6 Drops of water falling from clouds

DOWN

1 Rough time with strong wind and rain

2 Metal links wrapped around tires on icy roads

3 What it is like outside each day

Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

NASA

"Sierra Snow Season Spins Up"

Published	Wednesday, November 18, 2026
Read by us on	Wednesday, November 18, 2026

https://science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/sierra-snow-season-spins-up/

WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

COPYING AND REUSE

Free to print, copy and hand out for classroom use. Please keep this page with the packet, so the next teacher can see where the story came from.

More where this came from

If this short lesson worked for your class, our full workbooks go further with the same care:

- Complete units with student and teacher editions
- Worked solutions for every exercise
- Standards-aligned, classroom-tested, print-ready

See the full lessons at 3andB.com

© 2026 3andB Inc.