

Quotes about climate (and a few weather quotes)

Collected by Neville Nicholls

Please email me any quotes you think should be added to this page

The Rainy Day, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart, and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

The way to ensure summer in England is to have it framed and glazed in a comfortable room.

[Horace Walpole, Letter to William Cole, 1774]

Instead of the glorious and ever-memorable year 1759, as the newspapers call it, I call it this ever-warm and victorious year. We have not had more conquest than fine weather: one would think we had plundered East and West Indies of sunshine.

[Horace Walpole, Letter to George Montagu, 1759]

Spring is the season of gaiety, and winter of terror; in spring the heart of tranquillity dances to the melody of the groves, and the eye of benevolence sparkles at the sight of happiness and plenty: in winter, compassion melts at universal calamity, and the tear of softness starts at the wailings of hunger and the cries of the creation in distress.

[Samuel Johnson, *Rambler*, 22 December 1750]

It is commonly observed, that when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather; they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm.

[Samuel Johnson, *Idler*, 24 June 1758]

This morning Mr Berkenshaw came again, and after he had examined me and taught me something in my work, he and I went to breakfast in my chamber upon a collar of

brawn, and after we had eaten, asked me whether we had not committed a adult in eating today; telling me that it is a fast day ordered by the Parliament, to pray for more seasonable weather; it having hitherto been summer weather, that it is both as to warmth and every other thing, just as if it were the middle of May or June, which do threaten a plague (as all men think) to follow, for so it was almost the last winter; and the whole year after hath been a very sickly time to this day.

[Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 15 January 1661/1662]

11: In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12: And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

[The Bible, Genesis, 7]

6: And all the multitude sat trembling in the broad court of the temple because of the present foul weather

[Esdras (Apocrypha), 9]

4: He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap

[The Bible, Ecclesiastes 11]

...in January the gardener cultivates the weather. There is something peculiar about the weather; it is never quite right. Weather always shoots over the mark on one side or the other. The temperature never reaches the hundred years' normal; it is either five degrees below or five degrees above. Rainfall is either ten millimetres below the average or twenty millimetres above; if it is not too dry, it is inevitably too wet.

[Karel Capek, *The Gardener's Year*, 1929; English translation 1931]

They call this war a cloud over the land but they made the weather then they stand in the rain and say shit it's rainin.

[From the movie *Cold Mountain*; based on the novel by Charles Frazier]

Choosing shorts or long underwear on a particular day is about weather; the ratio of shorts to long underwear in the drawer is about climate.

[Charles Wohlforth, *The whale and the supercomputer. On the northern front of climate change*, North Point Press, 2004, p 150.]

It was certainly possible to argue that other, smaller effects would cancel greenhouse gas warming, but the burden of proof belonged on those who made such claims. Yet even as the evidence piled up on the side of the most reasonable assumption, the public repeatedly spun off in weird directions, with every “what if” given equal weight. It was as if a murder defendant caught with a bloody weapon in one hand and a written confession in the other were acquitted on the theory that an alien might have beamed him into that position.

[Charles Wohlforth, *The whale and the supercomputer. On the northern front of climate change*, North Point Press, 2004, p 169.]

When winter first begins to bite
and stones crack in the frosty night,

when pools are black and trees are bare,
'tis evil in the Wild to fare.
[JRR Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring, 1966]

When Spring unfolds the beechen leaf, and sap is in the bough;
When light is on the wild-wood stream, and wind is on the brow;
When stride is long, and breath is deep, and keen the mountain-air,
Come back to me! Come back to me, and say my land is fair!
[JRR Tolkien, The Two Towers, 1966]

1 Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
When April with its sweet-smelling showers
2 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
Has pierced the drought of March to the root,
3 And bathed every veyne in swich licour
And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid
4 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
By the power of which the flower is created;
5 Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
When the West Wind also with its sweet breath,
6 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
In every wood and field has breathed life into,
7 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
The tender new leaves, and the young sun
8 Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
Has run half its course in Aries,
9 And smale foweles maken melodye,
And small fowls make melody,
10 That slepen al the nyght with open ye
Those that sleep all the night with open eyes
11 (So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),
(So Nature incites them in their hearts),
12 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
Then folk long to go on pilgrimages,
[Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, General Prologue, 1387-1400. Interlineal translation by L. D. Benson (<http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>)]

The sun became dark and its darkness lasted for eighteen months...The fruits did not ripen, and the wine tasted like sour grapes
[Michael the Syrian, 11th century, quoted in Krakatoa by Simon Winchester, 2003]

The observations made...upon land as well as at sea would be collected, as, if that were done, he anticipated that in a few years, notwithstanding the variable climate of this country, we might know in this metropolis the condition of the weather 24 hours beforehand.
(M J. Ball, Member for Carlow, House of Commons, 30 June 1854, in debate to establish Meteorological Office)

Response from House: Laughter
[quoted in Gribbin & Gribbin, Fitzroy, 2003, p 251]

Whatever may be the progress of the sciences, never will observers who are trustworthy and careful of their reputations venture to foretell the state of the weather.
[The Times, 18 June 1864, quoted in Gribbin & Gribbin, Fitzroy, 2003, p 279]

Each day hath a planet that ruleth it: so if the first day in the year fall on First Day (Sunday) that day is the Sun's and this portendeth (though Allah alone is All-knowing!) oppression of kings and sultans and governors and much miasma and lack of rain; and that people will be in great tumult and the grain-crop will be good, except lentils, which will perish, and the vines will rot and flax will be dear and wheat cheap from the beginning of Túbah to the end of Barmahát.
[1001 Nights, vol. 5]

BAKER'S WIFE

Into the woods,
The weather's clear,
We've been before,
We've nought to fear...
Into the woods, away from here--

[...]

CINDERELLA

Into the woods,
But not too long:
The skies are strange,
The winds are strong.
Into the woods to see what's wrong...

["Into the Woods", by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine]

Part of the success of the invasion of the French Coast [in WWII] came by virtue of the fact that the weather forecast for that event, made by the American forces, was so inconceivably bad that the German meteorological experts, who were substantially better, simply couldn't believe that we would be so stupid as to make so bad a forecast, and could not believe that we would act upon it, and therefore could not believe that the invasion would occur at the time when it actually did. So, rather curiously, we profited by the bad state of our meteorology at that moment.

[Warren Weaver, 1962, cited in "Controlling gunfire, inventory, and expectations with the exponentially weighted moving average", Judy Klein, 1998].

The atmosphere forms a vast ocean above us, an ocean but little explored. We crawl about the ground like crabs on the bottom of the sea. We make our meteorological observations down on the ground, ignorant of all that is going on in the midst of that great expanse of air above our heads, where the clouds hang about, where the rain and the hail are formed, where the lightning-flashes have their origin.

[Baden-Powell, Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society, 1907, p 193]

You get a quite different set of meteorological conditions in the Indian Ocean - quite different. Any fool knows that.

[quoted in *Down Under*, Bill Bryson, Doubleday, 2000]

It rained for four years, eleven months, and two days. There were periods of drizzle during which everyone put on his full dress and a convalescent look to celebrate the clearing, but the people soon grew accustomed to interpret the pauses as a sign of redoubled rain. The sky crumbled into a set of destructive storms and out of the north came hurricanes that scattered roofs about and knocked down walls and uprooted every last plant of the banana groves.

[Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*]

The house was away from everything, in the heart of the desert, next to a settlement with miserable and burning streets where the goats committed suicide from desolation when the wind of misfortune blew.

[Gabriel García Márquez, *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Inocent Eréndira and her Heartless Grandmother*]

Winter fell one Sunday when people were coming out of church

[Gabriel García Márquez, *Monologue of Isabel*]

I was born on an island in love with the wind
Where the air has the smells of sugar and vanilla
and which cradles in the moving tropical sun
the warm and blue currents of the Caribbean sea
[Daniel Thaly, *L'Ile lointaine*]

I've lived in good climate, and it bores the hell out of me. I like weather rather than climate.

[John Steinbeck, *Travels With Charley*]

Creeds and carrots, catechisms and cabbages, tenets and turnips, religion and rutabagas, governments and grasses all depend upon the dewpoint and the thermal range. Give the philosopher a handful of soil, the mean annual temperature and rainfall, and his analysis would enable him to predict with absolute certainty the characteristics of the nation.

[John James Ingalls, *In praise of blue grass*, 1875 – cited in *Prairyerth* by William Least Heat-Moon, 1991]

The climate of many countries seems to be one of the great reasons why idleness, dishonesty, immorality, stupidity, and weakness of will prevail. If we can conquer climate, the whole world will become stronger and nobler.

[Huntington, *Civilization and Climate*, Yale Univ. Press, 1915, p 294]

Climate Condition (of a region or country) in relation to prevailing atmospheric phenomena as temperature, humidity, etc., esp. as these affect animal or vegetable life
1611. "The climate's delicate, the air most sweet" Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, III, I.

[Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1966]

Climate is what you expect, weather is what you get.
[Robert Heinlein, 1973, Time enough for love]

Climate lasts all the time and weather only a few days.
[Mark Twain, English as she is taught]

... the spring, the summer,
The chilling autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
[A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare]

So we can claim that these islands of frequent changes, of the terrible Atlantic gales whose endless roar besets our coasts in winter, of the exquisite long June days celebrated by our poets throughout the centuries, of the harsh biting north-easter in April, the wind-driven rain day after day if there comes a wet autumn, the occasional spell of three weeks of snow and frost, the persistent dryness that quite frequently leads to shortage of water in early summer – all these give us much cause to grumble, but even more cause to enjoy the march of the seasons and the opportunities for such a variety of flowers that the poorest man can still grow them in his garden.
[Gordon Manley, The Weather in Britain, Anglia, 1963]

Is not their climate foggy, raw and dull,
On whom, as in despite, the sun looks pale,
Killing their fruit with frowns?
[Henry V, William Shakespeare]

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.
[In the bleak midwinter, Christina Rossetti]

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.
[Who has seen the wind? Christina Rossetti, 1872]

What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.
[Lord Byron, Don Juan, I, lxiii]

I looked forward to the coming of the monsoon and I became a watcher of the skies, waiting to spot the heralds that preceded the attack. A few showers came. Oh, that was nothing, I was told; the monsoon has yet to come. Heavier rains followed, but I ignored them and waited for some extraordinary happening. While I waited I learnt from various people that the monsoon had definitely come and established itself. Where was the pomp and circumstance and the glory of the attack, and the combat

between cloud and land, and the surging and lashing sea? Like a thief in the night the monsoon had come to Bombay, as well it might have done in Allahabad or elsewhere. Another illusion gone.

[Jawaharlal Nehru, *The monsoon comes to Bombay*, 1939. Quoted by Colin Ramage in *Monsoon Meteorology*]

It is too well known that there was not sufficient warmth in the summer of 1816 to ripen grain; and it is generally thought that if the ten or twelve days of hot weather at the end of June last had not occurred, most of the corn must have perished. The warm and settled appearance of the weather at this early period of the season, leads us to hope that an agreeable change is about to take place in our planet; and that we shall not, as for many past years, have to deplore the deficiency of solar heat which is so necessary to ripen the productions of the earth.

[*The Observer*, 18 June, 1818, quoted in *Climates of the British Isles* by Hulme And Barrow].

The true problem for the climatologist to settle during the present century is not whether the climate has lately changed, but what our present climate is, what its well-defined features are, and how they can be most clearly expressed in numbers.

[Cleveland Abbe, *Is our climate changing?*, *Forum*, 6, pp 687-688, 1889]

There is not the hundredth part of the wine consumed in this kingdom that there ought to be. Our foggy climate wants help.

[Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*]

Every morning he went out with his umbrella and put a stick in the place where the water came up to, and every next morning he went out and couldn't see his stick any more, so he put another stick in the place where the water came up to, and then he walked home again, and each morning he had a shorter walk than he had the morning before.

[A.A.Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*]

It is considered very important that screens of uniform pattern should be employed in each country, and that detailed descriptions, with sketches and descriptive lettering, should be published, so that the conditions of exposure may be imitated exactly in any other place.

[Codex of resolutions adopted at the International Meteorological Meetings, 1872-1907, London, 1909]

Climate is a function of time. It varies; it is subject to fluctuations; it has a history.

[Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Times of feast, times of famine. A history of climate since the year 1000*, Allen & Unwin, 1972]

...when the great countries of antiquity rose to eminence they enjoyed a climatic stimulus comparable with that existing today where the leading nations now dwell. In other words, wherever civilization has risen to a high level, the climate appears to have possessed the qualities which today are most stimulating.

[Huntington, *Civilization and Climate*, Yale Univ. Press, 1915, p 294]

Our guides assured us in 1741 that in the time of their fathers the Glacier [Mer de Glace on Mont Blanc] was but small, and that there was even a Passage through these Valleys, by which they could go into the Val d'Aosta in six hours, but that the Passage was then quite stopped up, and that it [the glacier] went on increasing every year." [a letter from a Mr Windham, cited in Grove, J. M., *The Little Ice Age*, Methuen, 1988, p 112]

...the ice spreads out more and more every year...the experiment has been tried of erecting a post on the bare ground a good distance from the ice, and the next year it was found to be overtaken by it. So swift is this growth that present day Greenlanders speak of places where their parents hunted reindeer among naked hills which are now all ice.

[Otto Fabricius, missionary at Frederikshåb, Greenland, 1768-1773, cited in Grove, 1988].

After the 28th of October, when the frosts began, the flight of the French assumed a still more tragic character, with men freezing, or roasting themselves to death by the camp-fires.

[L.N.Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Penguin, 1957, p 1263]

The Conference recommends Central Offices to continue observations with as little change as possible at one or more stations within their systems – the numbers to depend on the size of the system – and to publish the results regularly. A request was added for the examination and publication of series of observations extending over long periods which have not yet been printed.

[Codex of resolutions adopted at the International Meteorological Meetings, 1872-1907, London, 1909]

In the past hundred years the burning of coal has increased the amount of CO₂ by a measurable amount (from 0.028 to 0.030 per cent), and Callendar sees in this an explanation of the recent rise of world temperature. But during the past 7000 years there have been greater fluctuations of temperature without the intervention of man, and there seems no reason to regard the recent rise as more than a coincidence. This theory is not considered further.

[Brooks, C. E. P., *Geological and historical aspects of climate change*, pp 1004-1023 in *Compendium of Meteorology*, American Meteorological Society, 1951]

Human beings are now carrying out a large scale geophysical experiment of a kind that could not have happened in the past nor be reproduced in the future. Within a few centuries we are returning to the atmosphere and oceans the concentrated organic carbon stored in sedimentary rocks over hundreds of millions of years. This experiment, if adequately documented, may yield a far-reaching insight into the processes determining weather and climate.

[Roger Revelle & Hans Suess, *Carbon dioxide exchange between the atmosphere and ocean and the question of an increase in atmospheric CO₂ during the past decades*, *Tellus*, 9, p 19-20, 1957]

..if carbon dioxide is the most important factor [in the earth's climate], long-term temperature records will rise continuously as long as man consumes the earth's reserves of fossil fuels.

[Gilbert Plass, Scientific American, July 1959, p 47]

MARK ANTONY [To OCTAVIUS CAESAR]
Thus do they, sir: they take the flow o' the Nile
By certain scales i' the pyramid; they know,
By the height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth
Or foison follow: the higher Nilus swells,
The more it promises: as it ebbs, the seedsman
Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,
And shortly comes to harvest.
[Antony and Cleopatra, William Shakespeare]

Any contemporary atlas will contain, next to the map of the world's vegetation, a map of the world's climate... The two will match because they are the same map.
[Paul Colinvaux, Why big fierce animals are rare, Penguin, 1980, p 45].

Comparing our records with those of India, I find a close correspondence or similarity of seasons with regard to the prevalence of drought, and there can be little or no doubt that severe droughts occur as a rule simultaneously over the two countries.
[Charles Todd, 1888, The Australasian, p 1456]

It is evident that we shall never discover the laws which govern the general movements of the atmosphere if the only observations we make on the earth's surface are those in civilized countries. What is clear is that the atmosphere is a continuous mass resting on the earth and the sea, and that these two react upon each other. Any disturbance which appears at any one point must make itself felt at very considerable distances from that point. We shall often have to seek for the cause of a certain phenomenon in another which has taken place perhaps in another hemisphere... we have found interesting simultaneous relations between the barometrical pressure and the rain at different centres of action. So we have shown that there exists a sort of compensation between certain neighbouring centres of action.
[Hildebrandsson, H., H., Report on the establishment of observatories at the centres of action of the atmosphere. Appendix XI in Report of the International Meteorological Committee, St Petersburg, 1899]

Because Drought, who's in on every forced sale,
Though he may have seen the farmers granted bail
This summer, has the continent in his entail.
Even smashed, he's seen you:
That old man up a back road fumbling his mail
Gets letters from El Niño.
[Les Murray, Variations on a measure of burns]

An earthquake, a landslip, an avalanche, overtake a man incidentally, as it were – without passion. A furious gale attacks him like a personal enemy, tries to grasp his limbs, fastens upon his mind, seeks to rout his very spirit out of him.
[Joseph Conrad, Typhoon]

It rained and it rained and it rained. Piglet told himself that never in all his life, and he was goodness knows how old – three, was it, or four? – never had he seen so much rain. Days and days and days.

[A.A.Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh]

Phenomena that are supposedly chaotic include simple everyday occurrences, like the falling of a leaf or the flapping of a flag, as well as much more involved processes, like the fluctuations of climate or even the course of life itself.

[Edward Lorenz, The essence of chaos, UCL Press, 1993, p 4-5]

I think it is likely that after long ages of belief in the control of our affairs by the heavenly bodies men are born with instinctive faith in the existence of periods in the weather. I lost mine when the imperative need of reliability in seasonal forecasts drove me to replace instinct by valid quantitative criteria.

[Walker, G. T., On the periods and symmetry points in pressure as aids to forecasting, QJRMS, 72, 265-283]

...here give you the observations of a full year, made by order of the philosophical society at Oxford, not only of the rise and fall of the quicksilver (mark'd by the wandring prickt line, after Dr Lister's method) and the weather; but also how the wind stood each day. If the same observations were made in many foreign and remote parts at the same time, we should be enabled with some grounds to examine, not only the coastings, breadth, and bounds of the winds themselves, but of the weather they bring with them; and probably in time thereby learn to be forewarned certainly of divers emergencies (such as heats, colds, dearths, plagues, and other epidemical distempers) which are now unaccountable to us; and by their causes be instructed for prevention, or remedies.

[Robert Plot, Secretary to the Royal Society in the 17th century. Quoted in G. J. Symons, Jubilee Address, QJRMS, 26, 176-181, 1900]

While it is admitted that plague is due to a specific microbe, it cannot spread except under certain meteorological conditions associated with the conditions of the ground, which must be in such a state as to exhale what is necessary for the propagation and spread of this particular disease.

[Latham, B., 1900. The climatic conditions necessary for the propagation and spread of plague, QJRMS, 26, 37-94]

He never caught fever; nor coughs nor colds; dysentery passed him by; and the malignant ulcers and vile skin diseases that attack blacks and whites alike in that climate never fastened upon him.

[Jack London, Yah! Yah! Yah!, from South Sea Tales, 1911]

The rain it rains without a stay
In the hills above us, in the hills;
And presently the floods break way
Whose strength is in the hills.
The trees they suck from every cloud,
The valley brooks they roar aloud--
Bank-high for the lowlands, lowlands,
Lowlands under the hills!

[Rupyard Kipling, The Floods]

What dreadful hot weather we have! It keeps me in a continual state of inelegance.

[Jane Austen, Letters, 18 Sept. 1796]

We who live in Kansas know well that its climate is superior to any other in the world, and that it enables one, more readily than any other, to dispense with the use of ale.

[Carl Becker, Kansas, 1910 - quoted in Prairyerth by William Least Heat-Moon, 1991]

Back in nineteen twenty seven
I had a little farm and I called it heaven
Prices up and the rain come down
I hauled my crops all into town
Got the money...bought clothes and groceries...
Fed the kids...and raised a big family

But the rain quit and the wind got high
Black old dust storm filled the sky
I traded my farm for a Ford machine
Poured it full of this gas-i-line
And started...rocking and a-rolling
Deserts and mountains...to California
[Talking Dust Bowl Blues, Woody Guthrie]

.....

It rained and rained and rained
The average fall was well maintained
And when the tracks were simply bogs
It started raining cats and dogs
After a drought of half an hour
We had a most refreshing shower
And then the most curious thing of all
A gentle rain began to fall
Next day also was fairly dry
Save for a deluge from the sky
Which wetted the party to the skin
And after that the rain set in

[A visitor to the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand, quoted in the Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit: New Zealand, 1996]

It was raining in the small, mountainous country of Llamedos. It was always raining in Llamedos. Rain was the country's main export. It had rain mines.

[Terry Pratchett, Soul Music, Corgi Books, p 13, 1995]

"I don't know how it is, Christopher Robin, but what with all this snow and one thing and another, not to mention icicles and such-like, it isn't so Hot in my field about

three o'clock in the morning as some people think it is. It isn't Close, if you know what I mean – not so as to be uncomfortable. It isn't Stuffy. In fact, Christopher Robin," he went on in a loud whisper, "quite-between-ourselves-and-don't-tell-anybody, it's Cold."

[A.A.Milne, The House at Pooh Corner]

I never allow myself to be influenced in the smallest degree either by atmospheric disturbances or by the arbitrary divisions of what is known as time.

[Marcel Proust, In search of lost time, 1913]

The frost set in in November. I have respect for the Danish winter. The cold – not what is measured on a thermometer, but what you can actually feel – depends more on the force of the wind and the relative humidity in the air than on the actual temperature.

[Peter Høeg, Miss Smilla's Feeling For Snow, Panther, 1993, p 4].

It is freezing, an extraordinary -18C, and it's snowing, and in the language which is no longer mine, the snow is qanik - big, almost weightless crystals falling in stacks and covering the ground with a layer of pulverized white frost.

[Peter Høeg, Miss Smilla's Feeling For Snow, Panther, 1993, p 3].

The stranger [to Kansas], if he listened to the voice of experience, would not start upon his pilgrimage at any season of the year without an overcoat, a fan, a lightening rod, and an umbrella.

[John James Ingalls, In praise of blue grass, 1875 – quoted in Prairyerth by William Least Heat-Moon, 1991]

Darkness

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air
Morn came and went – and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires – and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings – the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;

[Lord Byron, written at Geneva in 1816 and inspired by the cold, wet, dreary summer following the eruption of Tambora in April 1815. Quoted on p 273 of Climates of the British Isles by Hulme And Barrow]

"Autumn" [Gyodai]
The falling leaves
fall and pile up; the rain
beats on the rain.

"Summer Garments" [Buson]
Upon the golden screens
are summer garments -- whose?
The autumn wind...

It was one of those mild, idyllic spring days novels tell us are made for lovers, and Alice and Eric did their best to live up to meteorological and other expectations. [Alain de Botton, *The romantic movement*, Picador, 1994, p 52]

"I always think when it's nice, it'll always be nice." The climate begged to differ. Because an inclination of 23° meant the sun was directly over the Tropic of Cancer [23.5°N] on June the twenty-second, London summers were warm enough to sunbathe and Eric could play tennis in the evenings and breakfast on his small rear patio. But because the sun arrived directly over the Tropic of Capricorn [23.5°S] on December the twenty-second, the winters were without leaves on the trees, the nights were dark and taxis were impossible to find in the rush-hour drizzle. 'Wouldn't it be nice to live somewhere where it was always warm?' continued Alice in a reflective mood. [Alain de Botton, *The romantic movement*, Picador, 1994, p 86]

He had read somewhere that the Eskimos had over two hundred different words for snow, without which their conversation would probably have got very monotonous. So they would distinguish between thin snow and thick snow, light snow and heavy snow, sludgy snow, brittle snow, snow that came in flurries, snow that came in drifts, snow that came in on the bottom of your neighbour's boots all over your nice clean igloo floor, the snows of winter, the snows of spring, the snows you remember from your childhood that were so much better than any of your modern snow, fine snow, feathery snow, hill snow, valley snow, snow that falls in the morning, snow that falls at night, snow that falls all of a sudden just when you were going out fishing, and snow that despite all your efforts to train them, the huskies have pissed on. [Douglas Adams, *So long, and thanks for all the fish*]

And as he drove on, the rainclouds dragged down the sky after him, for, though he did not know it, Rob McKeena was a Rain God. All he knew was that his working days were miserable and he had a succession of lousy holidays. All the clouds knew was that they loved him and wanted to be near him, to cherish him, and to water him. [Douglas Adams, *So long, and thanks for all the fish*]

It is your human environment that makes climate.
[Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*, Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar].

A law was made a distant moon ago here

July and August cannot be too hot;
And there's a legal limit to the snow here
In Camelot.

The winter is forbidden till December
And exits March the second on the dot;
By order summer lingers through September
In Camelot

[Alan Jay Lerner, Camelot]

Climate, indeed, is a subject upon which the most extravagant and unreasonable statements are made. Not only do many men, even of much scientific information, imagine that within the short scope of their own recollection they can detect a permanent change in weather or some other phenomenon, which would involve a connected change over all the regions of the earth, but they even assert that man's muscular strength and mental ingenuity can effect such changes. The clearing away of trees they say will render a climate dry; extensive reservoirs of water may increase the moistures of the atmosphere.

[William Stanley Jevons, Some data concerning the climate of Australia and New Zealand, in: Waugh's Australian Almanac for 1859, Sydney, 1859, p 79).

It will be seen that rational climatology gives no basis for the much-talked-of influence upon the climate of a country produced by the growth or destruction of forests, the building of railroads or telegraphs, and the cultivation of crops over a wide extent of prairie.

[Cleveland Abbe, Is our climate changing?, Forum, 6, pp 687-688, 1889]

So nicely adjusted was the system, so independent of meteorology, that the sky, whether calm or cloudy, resembled a vast kaleidoscope whereon the same patterns periodically returned.

[E.M.Forster, The Machine Stops, 1909]

...wars were always suspended in winter, otherwise what would have become of the men on horseback, scantily clad beneath their corslets and sleeveless coats of mail, with the drizzle penetrating the holes, rents and gashes, and the less said about the foot-soldiers the better, trampling practically barefoot in the mud and with their hands so frostbitten that they can scarcely hold the puny weapons...

[José Saramago, The History of the Siege of Lisbon, Harvill Press, 1996, p 102].

"It's snowing still," said Eeyore gloomily.

"So it is."

"And freezing."

"Is it?"

"Yes," said Eeyore. "However," he said, brightening up a little, "we haven't had an earthquake lately."

[A.A.Milne, The House at Pooh Corner]

Well, if you go when the snowflakes storm,
When the rivers freeze and summer ends,

Please see if she's wearing a coat so warm,
To keep her from the howlin' winds.
[Bob Dylan, Girl of the North Country, 1963]

Wintertime in New York town,
The wind blowin' snow around.
Walk around with nowhere to go,
Somebody could freeze right to the bone.
I froze right to the bone.
New York Times said it was the coldest winter in seventeen years;
I didn't feel so cold then.
[Bob Dylan, Talkin' New York, 1962]

You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.
[Bob Dylan, Subterranean Homesick Blues, 1965]

The Great Frost was, historians tell us, the most severe that has ever visited these islands. Birds froze in mid-air and fell like stones to the ground. At Norwich a young countrywoman started to cross the road in her usual robust health and was seen by onlookers to turn visibly to powder and be blown in a puff of dust over the roofs as the icy blast struck her at the street corner. The mortality among sheep and cattle was enormous. Corpses froze and could not be drawn from the sheets. It was no uncommon sight to come upon a whole herd of swine frozen immovable upon the road.

[Virginia Woolf, Orlando]

The great cloud which hung, not only over London, but over the whole of the British Isles on the first day of the nineteenth century stayed, or rather, did not stay, for it was buffeted about constantly by blustering gales, long enough to have extraordinary consequences upon those who lived beneath its shadow. A change seemed to have come over the climate of England. Rain fell frequently, but only in fitful gusts, which were no sooner over than they began again. The sun shone, of course, but it was so girt about with clouds and the air was so saturated with water, that its beams were discoloured and purples, oranges, and reds of a dull sort took the place of the more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century.

[Virginia Woolf, Orlando]

SEBASTIAN What a strange drowsiness possesses them!

ANTONIO It is the quality o' the climate

[Shakespeare, The Tempest]

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

[Shakespeare, Twelfth Night]

How beautifully blue the sky,
The glass is rising very high,
Continue fine I hope it may,

And yet it rained but yesterday.
To-morrow it may pour again
(I hear the country wants some rain),
Yet people say, I know not why,
That we shall have a warm July.
[The Pirates of Penzance, W.S.Gilbert]

The aire so kinde and temperate that not only the Summers be not excessive hot by reason of continual gentle winds that abate their heat...but the winters are also passing mild.
[William Camden, Brittainia, 1637. Quoted in A History of Britain, Simon Schama, 2000]

The essential features of white pastoral settlement - a stable home, a circumscribed area of land, and a flock or herd maintained on this land year-in and year-out - are a heritage of life in the reliablekindly climate of Europe. In the drought-risky semi-desert Australian inland they tend to make settlement self-destructive.
[Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand, 1938]

The people of the pastoral country in Australia...think a lot of the weather. Or, to be more exact, they think a lot about it. Of the weather, and of the rain which doesn't come when it should, or comes too suddenly and too heavily, they have not a very high opinion.
[Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand, 1938]

"We have had seven dust-storms already this month: I don't mean just days with dust in the air, but bad enough for me to have to clean the house out. Three out of the seven were bad; and by that I mean that I got about half a kerosene tin of dust and sand out of every room!"
[quoted in: Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand, 1938]

THE AUSTRALIAN INLAND MUST EXPECT A SMASHING DROUGHT ONCE EVERY DECADE, AND LESSER DROUGHTS MORE OFTEN
[Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand, 1938]

To defeat that arch-enemy, drought, is of course impossible; but cannot its attacks be circumvented and their more lasting effects avoided?
[Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand, 1938]

One of the most extraordinary and at the same time most discouraging aspects of the whole matter is the reluctance, amounting almost to stubborn refusal, on the part of the Australian people, to recognize the inevitability of drought. The tacit assumption that drought is an exceptional visitor to the inland country has shaped and infected public thought and official policy alike.
[Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand, 1938]

... semicivilized and barbarous peoples have given credence to the prophesies of their priests and medicine men and today, fakirs and charlatans in the various professional and scientific fields, astrologers, fortune tellers and long-range weather forecasters,

command in civilized communities a lucrative following. Long-range weather forecasts have ever been impossible of achievement.

[E B Garriott in 'Weather, folk lore and local weather signs' prepared under the direction of the Chief, US Weather Bureau, 1903]

Whoever wishes to pursue the science of medicine must first investigate the seasons of the year and learn what occurs in them.

[Hippocrates 4th century B.C.]

And then there was Hortense's horror of weather reports. Whoever it was, however benign, honey-voiced and inoffensively dressed, she cursed them bitterly for the five minutes they stood there, and then, out of what appeared to be sheer perversity, proceeded to take the opposite of whatever advice had been proffered (light jacket and no umbrella for rain, full cagoule and rain hat for sun). It was several weeks before Irie understood that weathermen were the secular antithesis of Hortense's life work, which was, essentially, a kind of supercosmic attempt to second-guess the Lord with one almighty biblical exegesis of a weather report. Next to that weathermen were nothing but upstarts And tomorrow, coming in from the east, we can expect a great furnace to rise up and envelop the area with flames that give no light, but rather darkness visible while I'm afraid the northern regions are advised to wrap up warm against thick-ribbed ice, and there's a fair likelihood that the coast will be beaten with perpetual storms of whirlwind and dire hail which on firm land thaws not Michael Fish and his ilk were stabbers-in-the-dark, trusting to the tomfoolery of the Met Office, making a mockery of that precise science, eschatology, that Hortense had spent over fifty years in the study of.

[Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, Penguin, 2000, p. 341]

Where, if not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows? To whom, if not to them and their master, do we owe the lovely silver mists that brood over our river, and turn to faint forms of fading grace curved bridge and swaying barge? The extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the past ten years is entirely due to this particular school of Art...At present people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the mysterious loveliness of such effects. There may have been fog for centuries in London, I dare say there were. But no one saw them, and so we do not know anything about them. They did not exist until Art invented them [Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, in *The Writings of Oscar Wilde*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1989, pp 232-33]

Limits of survival are set by climate, those long drifts of change which a generation may fail to notice. And it is the extremes of climate which set the pattern. Lonely, finite humans may observe climatic provinces, fluctuations of annual weather and, occasionally may observe such things as "This is a colder year than I've ever known." Such things are sensible. But humans are seldom alerted to the shifting average through a great span of years. And it is precisely in this alerting that humans learn how to survive on any planet. They must learn climate. --- Arrakis, the Transformation, After Harq al-Ada.

[Frank Herbert, *Children of Dune*, 1976].

It was an uncertain spring. The weather, perpetually changing, sent clouds of blue and of purple flying over the land. In the country farmers, looking at the fields, were apprehensive; in London umbrellas were opened and then shut by people looking up at the sky. But in April such weather was to be expected. Thousands of shop assistants made that remark, as they handed neat parcels to ladies in flounced dresses standing on the other side of the counter at Whiteley's and the Army and Navy Stores.
[Virginia Woolf, *The Years*, 1937].

I am sorry my mother has been suffering, and am afraid this exquisite weather is too good to agree with her. I enjoy it all over me, from top to toe, from right to left, longitudinally, perpendicularly, diagonally; and I cannot but selfishly hope we are to have it last till Christmas -- nice, unwholesome, unseasonable, relaxing, close, muggy weather.
[Jane Austen, letter of 2 December 1815].

The fine rain, the gentle rain, poured equally over the mitred and the bareheaded with an impartiality which suggested that the god of rain, if there were a god, was thinking Let it not be restricted to the very wise, the very great, but let all breathing kind, the munchers and chewers, the ignorant, the unhappy, those who toil in the furnace making innumerable copies of the same pot, those who bore red hot minds through contorted letters, and also Mrs Jones in the alley, share my bounty.
[Virginia Woolf, *The Years*, 1937]

The Soote Season
The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale.
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her make hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs;
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;
The fishes flete with new-repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she slings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.
[Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, 1517-1547]

The Melancholy Year
The melancholy year is dead with rain.
Drop after drop on every branch pursues.
From far away beyond the drizzled flues
A twilight saddens to the window pane.
And dimly thro' the chambers of the brain,
From place to place and gently touching, moves
My one and irrecoverable love's

Dear and lost shape one other time again.
So in the last of autumn for a day
Summer or summer's memory returns.
So in a mountain desolation burns
Some rich belated flower, and with the gray
Sick weather, in the world of rotting ferns
From out the dreadful stones it dies away.
[Trumbull Stickney, 1874-1904]

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