

THE IDITAROD: A RACE TO SAVE NOME
BY BRYANT GARRIDO

In 1925, the Alaskan city of NOME was beset by a horrendous outbreak of DIPHTHERIA. Diphtheria is an infection caused by a bacteria: it was highly contagious being that it was AIRBORNE, and direct contact spreads the disease easily. The outbreak in Nome was becoming a bigger and bigger problem, and town PHYSICIAN, Dr. CURTIS WELCH, did not have any usable ANTITOXIN. The antitoxin he had in his supply had expired. So he sent out a telegram looking for a fresh supply.

Spell: OUTBREAK CONTAGIOUS PHYSICIAN

Nome was beset by what horrendous disease?

DIPHTHERIA

Who was the town's doctor (full name)? CURTIS WELCH

What did Dr. Welch send out to request fresh anti-toxin?

TELEGRAM

What is one way to contract diphtheria? AIRBORNE,
DIRECT CONTACT In a complete sentence, can you explain why Dr.
Welch requested a new supply of antitoxin? THE ANTITOXIN HE HAD
WAS EXPIRED.

However, the nearest antitoxin was in ANCHORAGE, which was over 1,000 miles away! Storms kept planes from flying, ships would be too slow, and there were no passable roads. How could the sick and dying citizens of Nome get the medication needed to save their lives? The city's salvation came from man's best friend: dogs. Dog mushing teams made the run to Anchorage and back to Nome, carrying the SERUM in what has now become known as the "Great Race of Mercy."

Spell: CITIZENS PASSABLE SALVATION

Question Type Key

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According to the paragraph, who is man's best friend? Dogs
 The dog mushing team that managed to retrieve the medication is known as the Great Race of what? MERCY

Who was going to be able to make the run to Anchorage to get the

medicine? MUSHING TEAMS, DOGS

What is one reason why dog mushing teams were necessary to get the medication? IMPASSABLE ROADS, STORMS KEPT PLANES FROM FLYING, SHIPS TOO SLOW

In what year did these events take place? 1925

In order for the anti-toxin to be delivered to Nome, sled dogs had to be used. Governor SCOTT BONE assembled a team which consisted of 20 mushers, which meant more than 150 dogs. They took turns by running in RELAYS averaging 31 miles (50km), and thus, managed the ARDUOUS (difficult and tiring) journey in only 5 ½ days. Many dogs died on the journey, and many mushers suffered severe frostbite from the below-normal temperatures.

Spell: ARDUOUS

ASSEMBLED

JOURNEY

What was the governor of Nome (full name)? SCOTT BONE

What did many mushers suffer from due to below-normal temperatures?

FROSTBITE

What is a synonym for arduous? DIFFICULT, TIRING

How was the run done? RELAYS, TOOK TURNS RUNNING

How many mushing teams were assembled? 20

The journey started on January 27 and was successfully completed on February 2, when a NORWEGIAN musher named GUNNAR KAASEN, and his lead dog BALTO, arrived at Nome. The MEDICATION

Question Type Key

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was immediately distributed to the sick, and hundreds, maybe thousands, of lives were saved. They instantly became national heroes. In fact, if you go to CENTRAL PARK in NEW YORK CITY today, you can find a statue of Balto - the only animal to get his own statue in the park!

Spell: HEROES NORWEGIAN DISTRIBUTED

What was the musher's name who finally got the serum delivered? GUNNAR KAASEN

In what month did the journey end? FEBRUARY

What was immediately distributed to the sick? MEDICATION, ANTITOXIN, SERUM

Where can you find a statue of Balto? NEW YORK CITY, CENTRAL PARK



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BALTO'S FAMOUS CENTRAL PARK STATUE



BALTO WITH GUNNAR KAASEN

Balto may be the most famous of the sled dogs, but he most certainly is not the only one that deserves RECOGNITION. TOGO and his musher, LEONHARD SEPPALA, were actually the ones who ran through the most

HAZARDOUS part of the route. Their team had to cross the open ice of NORTON SOUND. The night and a BLIZZARD prevented Seppala from being able to see the path, but Togo navigated them to the opposite shore, preventing certain death for his team.

Spell: RECOGNITION HAZARDOUS NAVIGATED

What was Togo's musher's last name? SEPPALA

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SOUND The team had to cross the open ice of what? NORTON

What was one thing that prevented Seppala from seeing the path? NIGHT, BLIZZARD

UNSAFE What is a synonym for hazardous? DANGEROUS, RISKY,

However, the blizzard continued to worsen, and at night the temperature dropped to -40°F , and the wind increased to 65 miles per hour. Seppala and Togo's team ran across the ice, which was breaking up. They then followed the shoreline, scaled a 5000-foot mountain, and finally passed the serum to CHARLIE OLSEN, who in turn would pass it to Gunnar Kaasen and Balto.

Spell: SHORELINE TEMPERATURE SCALED

Who did Seppala pass the serum to (full name)? CHARLIE OLSEN

They scaled a 5000 foot what? MOUNTAIN

What kind of conditions did Togo and Seppala face? BLIZZARD, FREEZING TEMPERATURES, ICE BREAKING UP, NO VISIBILITY

So not only did Togo lead his musher and team through unbelievable HARDSHIP: they also ran the longest distance compared to the other teams, an unbelievable total of 264 miles (425 km). Togo and Seppala are the UNSUNG [not celebrated] heroes of this adventure, despite Kaasen and Balto receiving all the recognition. And here's another interesting fact: it was actually Seppala who bred and raised both Togo and Balto. Maybe another statue is called for?!

Spell: UNBELIEVABLE ADVENTURE UNSUNG

Togo led his team through unbelievable what? HARDSHIP

Togo and Seppala are considered unsung what? HEROES

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What dogs did Seppala breed and raise? BALTO, TOGO

How many miles did Seppala and Togo travel? 264

Why do you think Balto got more recognition than Togo?



SEPPALA AND TOGO - OUR UNSUNG HEROES!

Let's go over what dog mushing is. Dog mushing is a sport or transport method powered by dogs. A team usually has 14 dogs. A mushing team has six elements to it: the musher, the sled, wheel dogs, team dogs, swing dogs, and lead dogs. The musher is any human, regardless of age, sex, or race who gives out commands to the team. The sled is what the musher stands on as the dogs pull them and their cargo. Older ones are made of wood, while newer ones are made from KEVLAR or TITANIUM.

SPELL: TRANSPORT POWERED CARGO

What are older sleds made of? WOOD

Who gives the commands to the dogs? MUSER

What is dog mushing? A SPORT OR METHOD OF
TRANSPORT POWERED BY DOGS

Question Type Key

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Newer sleds are made of what material? KEVLAR,
TITANIUM

Name something that is included in a dog mushing team:
MUSHER, SLED, WHEEL DOGS, TEAM DOGS, SWING DOGS, LEAD
DOGS, DOGS.

How many dogs does a team usually have? 14

The WHEEL dogs are the FOUNDATION for the team; they are the strongest dogs in the group. The team dogs are the HORSEPOWER for the team and help pull the sled along. The SWING dogs are there to follow the lead dogs and help the sled turn corners. Finally, last but certainly not least, the LEAD dogs are the most important dogs as they listen to the

COMMANDS of the musher, they find and follow trails, as well as, set the pace of the team. By the way, in case you're wondering what kind of dog can accomplish these incredibly difficult TREKS, it is the SIBERIAN HUSKY.

Spell: TRAILS HORSEPOWER TREKS

Wheel dogs are considered the _ of the team?

FOUNDATION

Explain in a sentence what is special about the wheel dogs? THEY ARE THE FOUNDATION FOR THE TEAM AND THE STRONGEST DOGS IN THE GROUP

Which dogs are considered the most important on the team?

LEAD DOGS

What kind of dog is used in mushing? SIBERIAN HUSKY

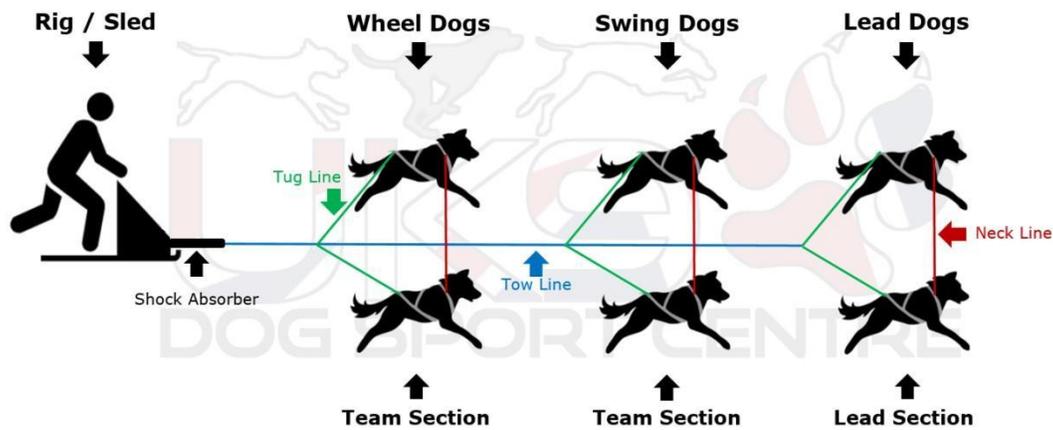
What do swing dogs do? HELP THE SLED TURN
CORNERS, FOLLOW THE LEAD DOGS

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What important tasks do lead dogs do? LISTEN TO COMMANDS OF MUSHER, FIND AND FOLLOW TRAILS, SET THE PACE FOR THE TEAM Name another breed of dog.

What would you call your mushing team?



VAKT: HERE IS A DIAGRAM OF A MUSHING TEAM. POINT TO EACH GROUP OF DOGS (WHEEL, SWING, LEAD)

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A SIBERIAN HUSKY

The IDITAROD [ai·di·tuh·raad] is a long-distance sled dog race that takes place on the first Saturday of March. The first race of the Iditarod took place in 1973. It starts in Anchorage and ends in Nome. In the beginning, there was only one route that the mushers could take, but that changed in 1977.

The two routes that are taken for the race vary based on whether or not it is an odd or even year. This was decided because the impact of the event was too BURDENSOME for small villages where only a few hundred people lived.

Spell: IDITAROD

NOME

ANCHORAGE

What weekday does the race start? SATURDAY

What state does the Iditarod take place in? ALASKA

Tell me why the race alternates routes each year? TOO BURDENSOME FOR SMALL VILLAGES, TOO MUCH IMPACT ON SMALL VILLAGES

Name another city in Alaska? JUNEAU, FAIRBANKS

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VAKT: Iditarod explained:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMJQnp-1FnM>

On even years the mushers take the northern route, and on odd years, they would take the southern route. The southern route has the town of Iditarod on the way; however, passing through it is secondary for the race. How's this for a fun fact?! The person who completed the race the fastest in history is also the oldest person to complete it! MITCH SEAVEY was 57 years old in 2017. It took him 8 days, 3 hours, 40 mins, and 13 seconds. To give you some idea of just how fast that is, CARL HUNTINGTON won the 1974 race with the slowest winning time, 20 days, 15 hours, 2 minutes, and 7 seconds!

Spell: HISTORY

ROUTE

SECONDARY

Which route has the town of Iditarod? SOUTHERN

The southern route is taken on ___ years? ODD

Name one of the competitors that were mentioned: MITCH SEAVEY, CARL HUNTINGTON

How many years has it been since the first race took place?

Show me in a math sentence: $2022 - 1973 = 49$

What is another sport that involves racing animals? HORSE RACING, GREYHOUND RACING

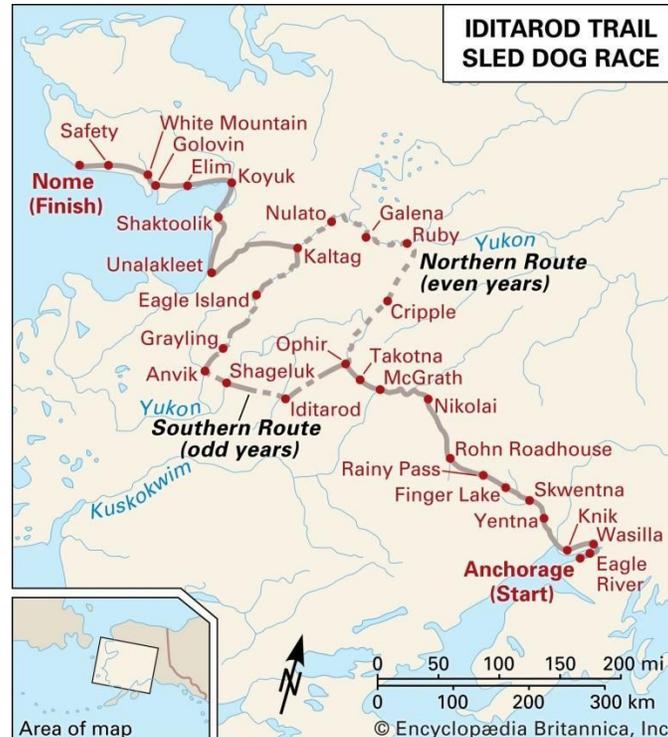
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VAKT: WITH YOUR FINGER TRACE THE ROUTE YOU WOULD TAKE

There are 26 CHECKPOINTS on the NORTHERN route and 27 on the SOUTHERN route. The mushers are required to take three breaks during the race. The first break is 24 hours and can be taken at any checkpoint. The second break requires the musher to stay put for 8 hours somewhere along the YUKON river. The last break is another 8 hour stop at WHITE MOUNTAIN. In order to complete the race, the musher needs to cross the finish line with at least 5 dogs on the towline (the main line attaching the pulling dogs to the sled). In the first race of 1973, 34 mushers started but only 22 could complete it.

Spell: CHECKPOINT NORTHERN SOUTHERN

The second break is taken near what? YUKON RIVER

Where is the last break taken? WHITE MOUNTAIN

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The musher needs to finish the race with at least 5 dogs on what? TOW LINE, MAIN LINE ATTACHING THE DOGS TO THE SLED

How many hours is the first break? 24

How many teams completed the first ever Iditarod? 22

Which route would you take, and why?

VAKT: Official Song of the Iditarod:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaLIP4pQjnA>

To conclude, a few fun bits of Iditarod trivia! The meaning of the word Iditarod is CONTESTED. According to some, it meant clear water and was named by the SHAGELUK [SHAG-uh-look] Indians after the local river. Others say it means distant place, from an INGALIK Indian word. And how about this record: RICK SWENSON is the only five-time winner of “The Last Great Race,” having won in 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, and 1991. He is now the only person to win the Iditarod in three different decades, a record that will probably never be broken! So, what do you think? Are you DESTINED to become the first speller to take part?!

SPELL: DESTINED, CONTESTED, SHAGELUK

According to some, Iditarod is the Shageluk Indian word meaning what? CLEAR WATER

Who is the only person to win the Iditarod 5 times (full name)? RICK SWENSON

Tell me in a sentence what makes Swenson’s record all the more remarkable? HE WON IN THREE DIFFERENT DECADES. HE WON FIVE TIMES

Would you ever consider taking part in the race? Why or why not?

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Creative Writing: Iditarod Challenge!

Here is the list of mushers for the next year. Pick one and write an email letting your musher know you're a fan and why!

<https://iditarod.com/race/2022/mushers/list/>

Sources

<https://www.britannica.com/sports/Iditarod-Trail-Sled-Dog-Race>

<https://www.forgottenhistory.me/amazing-feats/the-great-race-of-mercy>

<https://iditarod.com/booms-and-busts-iditarod-trail-history/>

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<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/news/togo-siberian-husky-sled-doghero-of-1925/>



Bryant Garrido is a PIT who works in Bedford Hills, NY, at Mouth to Hand Therapy center. He is the first generation of immigrant parents and currently lives in Norwalk, CT. He loves video games and eating lots of meat! This lesson was inspired by his love for Disney movies!

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