

Lesson Plan Title: Analyzing the Historic Routes of Alaska

**Developed by:** Jim Deprez - 2021 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™ & Kristin Cave - Ridgewood Elem. 4th grade teacher

**Discipline / Subject:** Social Studies, Reading & Writing

**Topic:** Analyzing the Historic Routes of Alaska

**Grade Level:** 5-8

**Resources / References / Materials Teacher Needs:**

- Maps attached
- Assessment attached
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-wemy\\_G7mQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-wemy_G7mQ) - history of the Iditarod Trail video (provides background for why the route of the Iditarod Mail Trail was chosen)  
(whole video is about 22 minutes)
  - You can start at 6:55 of the video to get more information specifically about the trail and map - play it until 12:00.
  - At 15:40 - The serum run map is talked about until 17:40
- Background information on the town of Iditarod: <https://iditarod.com/iditarod-gold-rush-to-ghost-town/>
- <http://www.iditarod.com/> website for research and information

**Lesson Summary:**

- Students will examine multiple maps of Alaska including maps of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, the historic Iditarod Trail, and the route of the Serum Run
- The teacher will lead students in a discussion about the maps and ask guiding questions that will direct their thinking to discover important information about some of the towns and routes traveling across Alaska through simple research
- Students will end the lesson (with a modern-day connection) by writing their opinion and mapping out a route to determine the best route to travel based on knowledge gained from discussion and research

**Standard's Addressed: (Local, State, or National)**

Ohio's Learning Standards: Writing

- W.5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Ohio's Learning Standards: Reading

- RI.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly

Ohio's Learning Standards: Social Studies

- Geography Strand: SPATIAL THINKING AND SKILLS - **Grade 5**
  - Content Statements: 4. Geographic tools can be used to gather, process and report information about people, places and environments. Cartographers decide which information to include in maps.
- Geography Strand: SPATIAL THINKING AND SKILLS - **Grade 7**
  - Content Statements: 12. Maps and other geographic representations can be used to trace the development of human settlement over time.
- Geography Strand: HUMAN SYSTEMS - **Grade 7**
  - Content Statements: 13. Geographic factors promote or impede the movement of people, products and ideas.
  - Content Statements: 15. Improvements in transportation, communication and technology have facilitated cultural diffusion among peoples around the world.
- Geography Strand: SPATIAL THINKING AND SKILLS - **Grade 8**
  - Content Statements: 15. Modern and historical maps and other geographic tools are used to analyze how historic events are shaped by geography.
- Geography Strand: HUMAN SYSTEMS - **Grade 8**
  - Content Statements: 16. The availability of natural resources contributed to the geographic and economic expansion of the United States, sometimes resulting in unintended environmental consequences.
  - Content Statements: 17. The movement of people, products and ideas resulted in new patterns of settlement and land use that influenced the political and economic development of the United States.

**Learning objectives:**

1. Students will compare maps of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, the historic Iditarod Trail, and the route of the Serum Run to determine why the route is important.
2. Based on information gained through simple research and discussion of the maps, students will be asked to come up with their opinion of the best route to travel in a hypothetical situation as their assessment.

**Assessment:**

- Students will answer a hypothetical scenario relating today's COVID conditions to those of the 1925 Diphtheria outbreak.
- Using what they learned from examining the maps, having teacher-led discussions, watching the video and conducting research, students will map out a route and explain their reasoning to get a hypothetical COVID vaccine to the somewhat isolated town of Huslia.

### Procedural Activities

- Begin lesson by distributing the maps to groups of students (or have copies/share electronically to individuals)
- Start with open-ended discussion time - ask them “What do you notice?” / “What do you wonder?” about the maps
- Give time for group (either whole group or small group) discussion
- Then pose the question: “Why are there so many different maps?”/ “What is the purpose for each?”
- Show the video to have students gain some background information - see notes above [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-wemy\\_G7mQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-wemy_G7mQ)
- Have a discussion about what Diphtheria is and the importance of getting the medicine to Nome quickly
- Next, ask students “Why did they not take the medicine from Anchorage and follow the Iditarod Trail?” - guide them to notice the RR system and how that would be faster than going the WHOLE route by sled dogs
- Pose the question “Why is the town of Iditarod on the Serum Run Map?” and “Why is it not on the current road map?” - refer back to the video - it is now a “ghost town” - no inhabitants
- UPPER GRADE STUDENTS: Read a more detailed account of the history of the town here: <https://iditarod.com/iditarod-gold-rush-to-ghost-town/>
- LOWER GRADE STUDENTS: Continue the discussion from what they learned in the video about the towns of Iditarod and Flat
- Look at the current road map and discuss the lack of roads and possible reasons
- Start to look more closely at the placement of the towns overall on all of the maps and discuss WHY the towns are where they are. “Why do the towns seem to be on rivers?”
  - This may lead to economic reasons in upper grades - gold rush, other natural resources etc...
- Also lead them to a discussion of transportation
- Relate back to the Serum Run map - discuss:
  1. Why a boat could not bring the serum to Nome directly - ocean was frozen over
  2. Why a train could not deliver it all the way - no RR tracks to Nome
  3. Why could they not drive there - no roads connecting to Anchorage
- Pose Final question - “Would the route they took in 1925 still be the optimal route today given the same circumstances?”
- Introduce assessment piece: HYPOTHETICAL challenge question and activity:

Given our current global situation with COVID-19 and the rush to find a vaccine, there are some similarities that can be made to the Serum Run of 1925.

Here is your HYPOTHETICAL scenario:

If there was a COVID outbreak in the town of Huslia during March of 2021, and there was a huge blizzard (as there was during the Diphtheria outbreak in 1925), how would you recommend getting a potential vaccine to the people there, from Anchorage? Remember, like in 1925, planes are not an option due to the blizzard and unsafe flying conditions. Time is of the essence! You must get the vaccine there safely and quickly!

1. Using the road map, highlight/mark your route of travel

2. On this paper, explain in detail the route you would take. Include:
- Directionality
  - Modes of transportation
  - Towns you would pass through
  - Rivers/Roads you would travel on

**Materials Students Need:**

- Attached maps
- Internet access and a device
- Additional copy of the road map for the assessment piece

**Technology Utilized to Enhance Learning:**

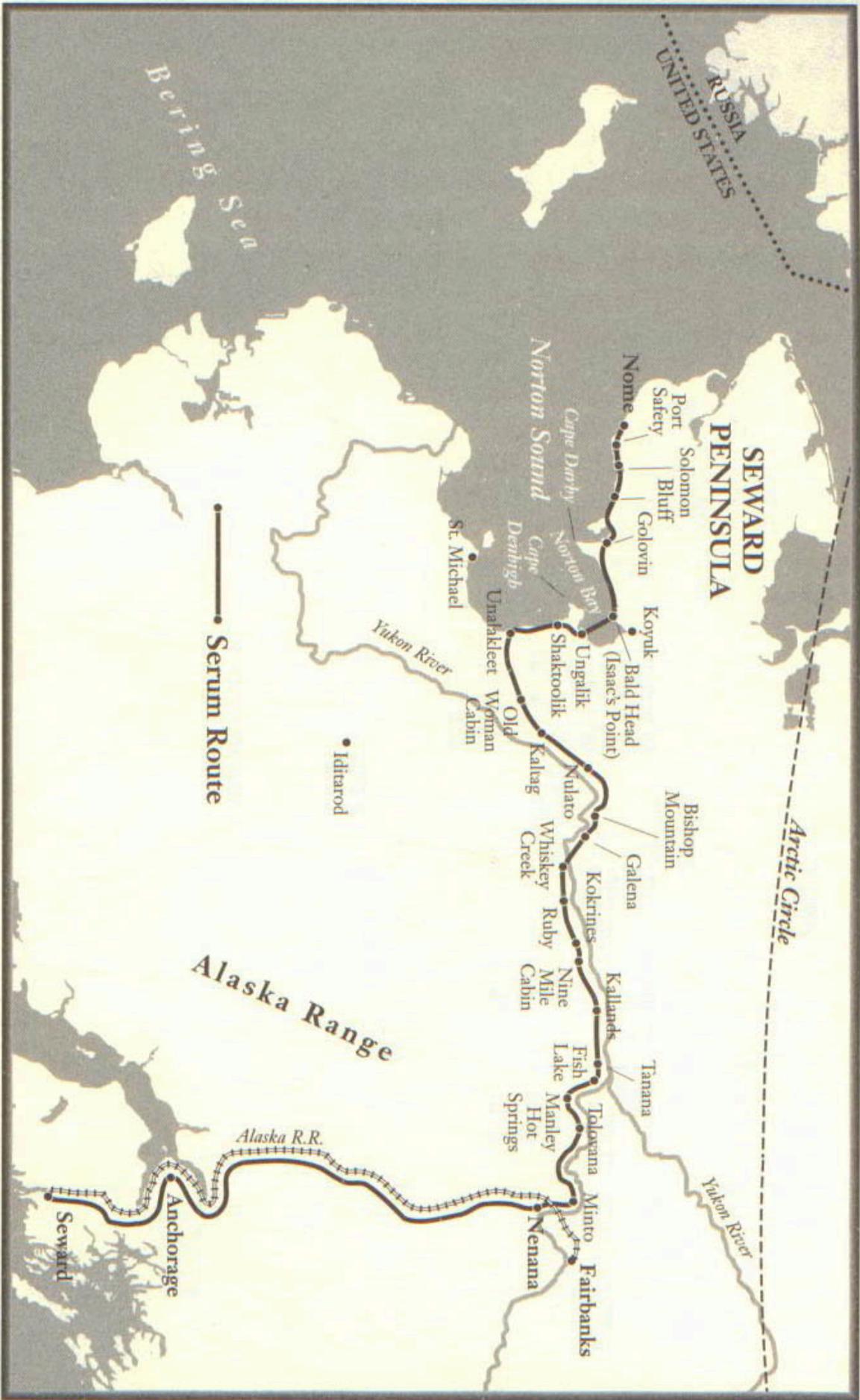
- Personal device to conduct research
- Possibly use Google Earth to get “Street view” of some of these places now

**Other Information**

- Depending on time, this activity may take more than 2 days - read through procedures and adjust to your schedule accordingly
- Teachers (especially those newer to teaching about the Iditarod) may want to watch the entire video beforehand
- Teachers may also want to research a little about the town of Iditarod and its history on the Iditarod website <https://iditarod.com/iditarod-gold-rush-to-ghost-town/>
- Familiarize yourself with the 1925 Serum Run a bit - here is a summary: <http://www.alaskaweb.org/disease/1925serumrun.htm>

**Modifications for special learners/ Enrichment Opportunities**

- Enrichment opportunities include:
  - Looking more in depth at the routes by exploring the “race map” and looking specifically at the route between the checkpoints used in this activity <https://iditarod.com/race-map/>
  - Have students research the natural resources of the area to help determine location of towns
  - Look at other towns along the route and dig into their history a bit more using the “checkpoints” information on the [iditarod.com](https://iditarod.com) website
  - Students can use Google Earth to get “Street view” of some of the bigger towns
- Struggling Learner modifications include:
  - Small group guidance with understanding these relationships (location & transportation & resources)
  - Provide a different town for the assessment
  - Have students explain as opposed to write out their justification for their route in the assessment piece



# The Official Map of the IDITAROD

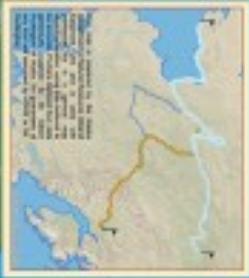
## NORTHERN ROUTE (Even Years)



# The Official Map of the IDITAROD

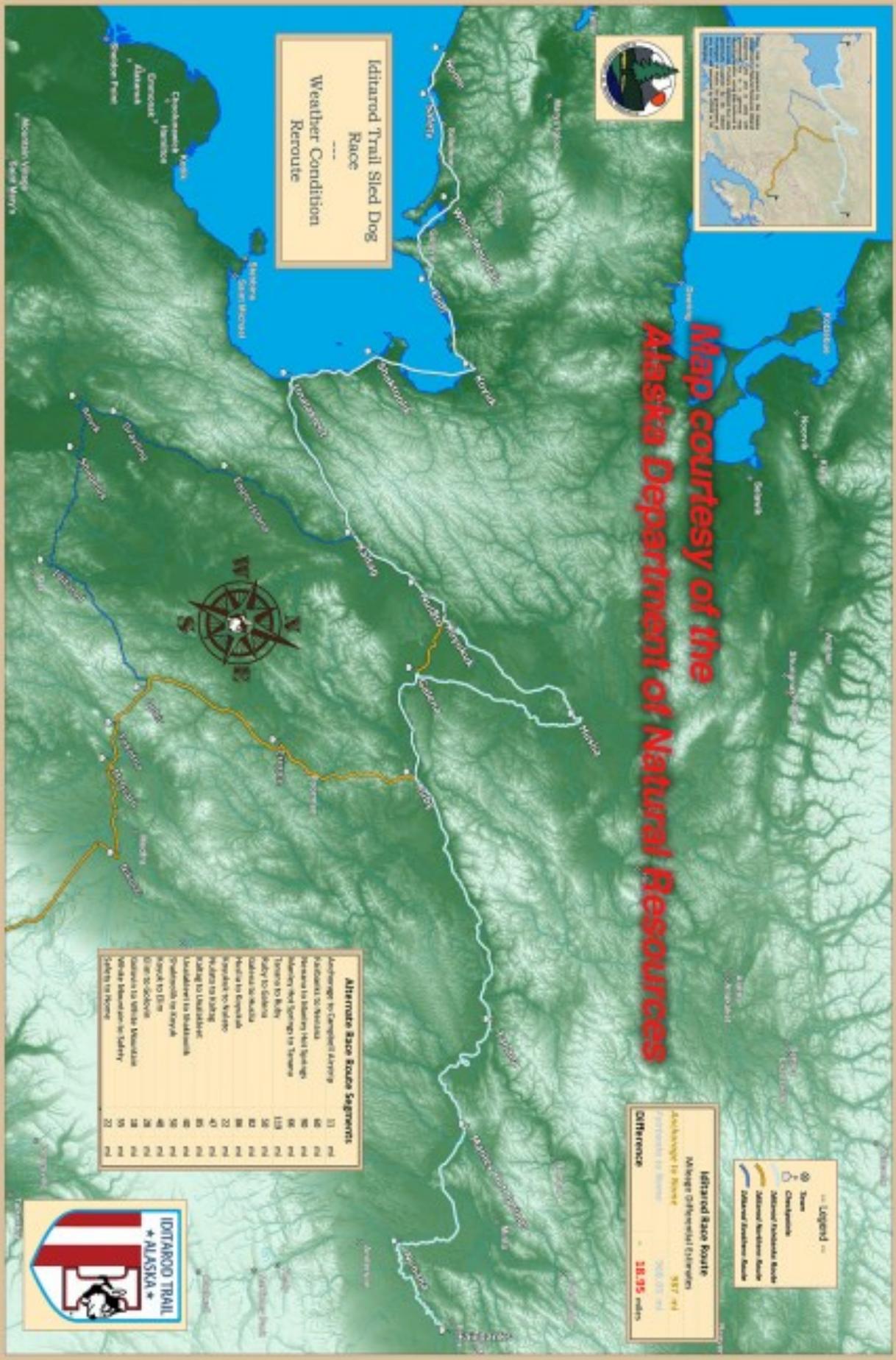
## SOUTHERN ROUTE (Odd Years)





# Map courtesy of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources

**Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race**  
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**Weather Condition Reroute**



**Legend**

- Snow
- Challenges
- Iditarod Reroute Route
- Iditarod Weather Route
- Iditarod Another Route

**Iditarod Race Route**  
 Mileage (Iditarod Distance) 1027 mi  
 Challenge to Race 1027 mi  
 Challenge to Reroute 1027 mi  
**Difference 18.25 miles**

**Iditarod Race Route Segments**

| Challenge to Reroute                | Mileage | Challenge to Race |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Challenges to Campfire              | 11      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds                 | 46      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 86      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 86      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 119     | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 58      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 82      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 88      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 22      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 47      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 83      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 88      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 56      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 49      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 28      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 18      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 19      | mi                |
| Challenges to Sleds (not including) | 22      | mi                |



