

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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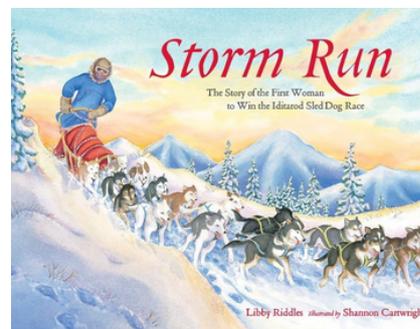
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Book of the Month

Storm Run: The Story of the First Woman to Win the Iditarod Sled Dog Race
by Libby Riddles

There is a t-shirt in Alaska that says, "Alaska: Where Men Are Men and Women Win the Iditarod." It all started with Libby Riddles.

The book *Storm Run* tells of Riddle's story from growing up in the midwest to moving to the great state of Alaska and how she made her way. She describes in detail her winning run and the emotions she had along her journey.

This autobiography is accompanied not only by real pictures, but illustrations by Shannon Cartwright. It's a great read aloud for all ages and also very readable for students 3rd grade and older. There is a reason this book is called "*Storm Run*" - give it a read and find out!



March Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

Idita-Quiz

Do you ever need a time filler for your students? Do you need a brain break to re-engage their attention? Here are several short Iditarod quizzes on facts about the race. Students can recharge by working together to come up with answers based upon the background knowledge they have gleaned.

[Idita-Quiz](#)

Science

The sled dog teams and mushers will often run at night to stay cool. Learn about the aurora borealis they may see. Video links of the science behind the lovely colored lights are included. The lesson also provides a timelapse of the Northern Lights; use it during independent reading time with your students!

[Turn On The Lights!](#)

Math

When mushers draw their bib/starting numbers at the mushers' banquet a couple days before the start of the race, some wish for a low number. Others prefer to start at the back of the pack. How does the time get made up for those who start far behind the front runners? Read this article with your students. A math computation activity is included to figure the time differentials for the teams during their 24 hour mandatory stop (Feel free to update using current mushers).

[Time Differentials](#)

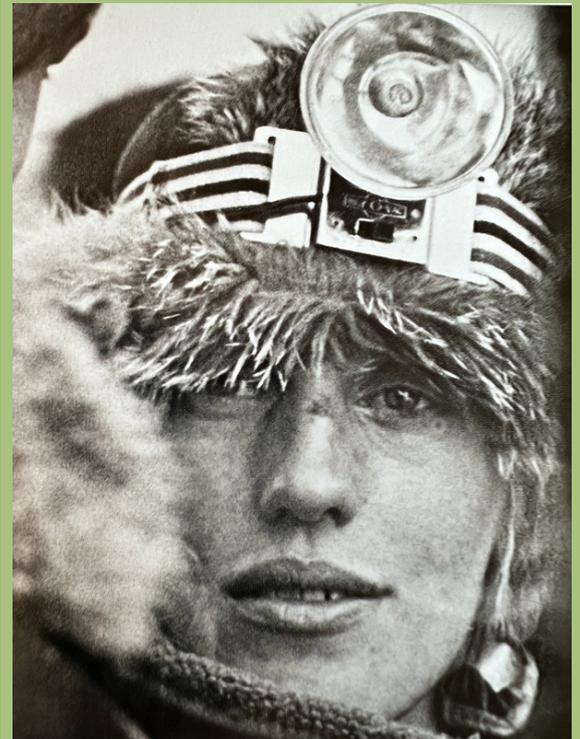
Coding

Going along with Gypsy's article this month, this lesson emphasizes the Trailbreakers of the Iditarod. Your students learn of this valuable team and work with coding.

[Trailblazers - Coding](#)

“I had not planned on being a racer - I just loved dogs and used them to help haul drinking water and fetch firewood and go exploring. I had put in some time volunteering for the Iditarod . . . When I finally tried a race, it was just a 5-miler, and I won it, and was hooked.”

Libby Riddles
["Iditarod: The First Ten Years."](#)



Libby Riddles
Photo from [Iditarod: The First Ten Years.](#)

If You Mush Know

by Lynne Witte

How do mushers sleep during the race?

Mushers sleep very little during the Iditarod. They begin with a run/rest schedule for the dogs. It will vary as the race progresses. Having a well rested, fed, and healthy team is most important to the musher.

Mushers may choose to rest and care for their dogs at a checkpoint or along the trail. Part of their mandatory gear is an Arctic sleeping bag. If there is time after their dog care, they will take out their sleeping bag and rest on their sled parked behind the team or alongside their dogs on the straw.

If the team stops at a checkpoint, particularly during one of the two mandatory 8 or the 24 hour stop, they might use the floor in a gymnasium or community building to sleep a few hours.

Mushers work hard to keep their dogs well rested with dog care being their top priority. Seeing a musher napping on their sled or alongside their dog team is very common along the Iditarod race trail.



Original artwork by Jon Van Zyle

What's In Kate's Sled Bag?

by Kate Newmyer



Kate Newmyer
2024 Iditarod

Teacher on the Trail™

On Saturday March 2, all eyes will be focused on the mushers and their eager sled dogs. But behind the scenes, a very special group of pilots and their aircraft will be flying around the clock to bring drop bags, volunteers, and supplies to the remote checkpoints. The hundreds of missions flown by the Iditarod Air Force are critical to the race's success.

The March lesson plan will highlight the Iditarod Air Force and its pilots and aircraft. Students will become part of a team developing and testing an aircraft, then plan and execute flight plans up and down the trail. In this STEM lesson, the Design-Engineering process takes center stage. Students will develop a plan of logistics that gets supplies and people where they need to be, while taking care of returned dogs in a timely manner. Students will have to plan for adverse weather conditions, fuel needs, and other factors.

In "Classroom Culture," I will share how stories about dogs, mushers, and the race can bring a class together. Fans, spectators, and volunteers come together into a shared culture that includes meeting old and new friends, sharing food and work, and of course, stories. I'll bring you new stories from the trail and help your students become race "insiders."

"Houston, We Have a Connection" is going to be about launches! Braverman writes about what it's like before the sled starts moving and after—and we'll see what this has in common with blasting into space.



K9 Journalist Corner

by Gypsy



Dear Friends,

It's Gypsy here, writing to you about ALL the snow in Alaska this season! Around Anchorage, Alaska, there has been more than 110 inches this winter! We sled dogs do not have long legs, so running in deep snow would be tough on us for 1000 miles. How does the Iditarod help us?

There is a team of volunteers called the Trailbreakers. They scout out the Iditarod Trail before the race and cut any big trees or branches that have fallen across the path. Sometimes they build snow bridges out of logs and snow to help us cross streams of water. Snowmobiles, or snow machines as they are called in Alaska, flatten snow to make a nicer path on which we dogs can run. Other animals appreciate not having to wade through deep snow: moose! Dog teams would prefer never to see a moose on the trail as they can be very dangerous.

Sometimes a team of dogs wants to rest on the trail outside of a checkpoint because it is quieter and they can get more sleep. It is polite for the resting team to get off the packed down trail so that other teams can race on the flat surface of the trail. If we get off the trail to rest, we will be in deep snow! We sled dogs are used to being outside, however, so we don't mind burrowing into the snow to rest. Our two layers of hair keep us warm.

As you watch the race this year, think of how the Trailbreakers help keep the trail flat for us dogs!

Until next time,
Gypsy



**Deep Snow
Pics by Heidi Sloan**



2024 Educator's Conference

Teachers from Alaska and the Lower 48 gathered at the 2024 Iditarod Educator's Conference in Anchorage, AK. Lessons and ideas were shared throughout the week. Speakers included teachers, mushers, volunteers, and authors. Wednesday's field trip included a trip to Iditarod Headquarters to see vet checks. After lunch teachers were treated to a visit to Travis Beals and Sarah Stokey's Turning Heads Kennel. If you're an avid Iditarod teacher and would like to experience the Iditarod first hand, watch for details about next year's conference.

Pictures by Erin Montgomery



And They're Off . . .



Get up-to-date information on Iditarod Insider.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

March 17: Finisher's Banquet (Livestreamed from Nome)

June: Summer Educators Conference in Idaho - Watch for Details

Iditarod® **EDU**

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