Lesson Title:	Take Your Students to the "Cranberry Bog:" Media Literacy with the Iditarod Web Site
Background Information	
Created By:	Kate Newmyer, Seabrook, TX, 2024 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™
Grade Level/ Subject:	K-12 English Language Arts—Media Literacy 4-12 Reading Comprehension of Informational Text
Learning Objectives/ Essential Questions:	In her book, <u>Dogs on the Trail: a Year in the Life</u>, Blair Braverman writes about a cranberry bog where she brings her sled dog puppies to play. At first, the young dogs are hesitant, but after visiting a few times they come to love it. The Iditarod might be unfamiliar to your students. This lesson will bring your students to the Iditarod web site and let them explore and learn at their own pace. Then, when it comes time for the race in March, they will be familiar with how to navigate the site and be able to share information with others. Learning Objectives: • Students will develop media literacy skills—*access, analyze, evaluate, create,* and *act*—using the Iditarod web site. • Students will learn and share information about the Iditarod. Essential Questions: • What is the Iditarod? What questions do I have about it? (who, what, where, when, why, how) • What information is provided on the Iditarod web site, and how is that information presented? • What information about the Iditarod is important to communicate to others, and how do I want to convey it?
Standards Addressed:	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English Language Arts --Media Literacy: *Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning.*

Materials Needed:	Computer lab, laptops, or devices
	Web sites: https://iditarod.com/# Official Iditarod site https://iditarod.com/leaders-in-dog-care/ Dog Care main page https://iditarod.com/race/checkpoints/ Checkpoint list with links to each Notebooks, paper, pencils, crayons/markers Optional: Posterboard Video site such as Flip (formerly Flipgrid) Podcasting tool or audio recorder Other digital content tools of your choice

Procedure

Engagement:	Students may not know anything about the Iditarod. Tell students they will be working on media literacy skills by learning about the Iditarod. That means exploring the Iditarod web site to find, evaluate, and communicate accurate information. Engage students in any of the following suggested ways that works for your grade level and content. K-4: Give a simple one-sentence statement about what the Iditarod is (such as, "The Iditarod is a 1,000 mile race across Alaska in the winter, run by people called mushers and their dog teams.") Then show several images of the Iditarod and ask students to tell what they see, and what more they can learn about the Iditarod from these photos. Then have students ask questions—have them write the questions, you jot them down, or record using audio. 5-8: Create a scenario in which your classroom has just received "breaking news." All the information they have is the word "Iditarod," that it is a race taking place in Alaska and involves dogs. You could pre-record an audio snippet, show part of a video, or other engagement tool. As investigative reporters, your students must determine what questions to ask based on their background knowledge. Students can write down their questions in groups or a whole class setting. 9-12: Discussion: ask students about their current media use—what news sites or other informational web sites do they use? (Wikipedia, news media, etc.) What kind of news do they get from social media, and if so, how do they use that information? Tell students they will be developing media skills by using the Iditarod web site. Brainstorm any prior knowledge/misconceptions students may have about the Iditarod—keep the discussion open so that students can later analyze the information.
Lesson:	Like my students, yours may Google a topic and then read the paragraph Google presents without clicking a link to an informational site. Teach students to notice the results listed by the search engine and then click through to the site they need.

Step 1—Access
First, have students google the word "Iditarod. Notice and discuss what the Google search brings up. If students have further questions, invite them to write them down. Then have students click through to the official Iditarod web site. For younger grades, you may want to provide a link on their digital learning platform. Upper grades can compare the information provided by different search engines such as Google and Bing. You could challenge HS students to think about the concept of media access—does everyone have access? What is needed for people to have it?

Step 2—Analyze
K-4: Direct students to or provide a link to the Dog Care main page. The Dog Care main page is a wonderful resource for looking at photos and finding letters, words, and numbers. Students can look at all the images on the page and discuss what they can learn about the Iditarod from the images. Students can practice reading topic headings and make predictions about what information they will learn.

Students can then click the link above to Checkpoints (note—if you are coming up to the current race you can navigate to this area. I have provided a link to the 2023 checkpoints because at the time of writing the 2024 checkpoint list is not available yet). Each checkpoint name is listed as a blue underline link. Students practice clicking the links, then the back button, to discover the photos and information about each checkpoint. What can they learn about checkpoints? If they wanted to find a race map, where would they look?

5-8: As reporters, students want to capture all the most important information about the Iditarod in the first sentence. Who, what, when, where, why and how should be answered in that sentence. Have students craft a one-sentence statement either in groups or whole class, orally or in writing. Using their questions generated during engagement, students research the answers from the Iditarod web site. Guide students to utilize reading skills such as looking for headings, topic sentences, and graphic features, or determining main idea and author's purpose.

9-12: Have students explore the different parts of the web site to look for answers to the questions from Step 1. HS students can also apply critical thinking to analyze how the Iditarod web site's images, videos, organization, and text impact the message. As they do so, guide them to reflect on the following questions: How are different kinds of information presented? Which information is the most important and how do you know?

Step 3—Evaluate
K-4: Lead a discussion about the information students have learned. Tell students that the Iditarod web site is made by people who know about the Iditarod race very well, so the information will be accurate. Reflect on what students enjoyed looking at and exploring, and what questions they still have.

5-8: Guide students to evaluate their findings also. Students can talk about how they know the information is accurate—for example, articles quoting veterinarians and scientists, mushers sharing their experience, or Eye on the Trail reports. Students can list the types of media found on the site—text, photos, podcasts, videos, charts,

| | etc., and think about how the media type shapes the message. Students can evaluate the pros and cons of informational writing, audio & video, or infographics.

9-12: As with younger students, this age group should understand that this site was created by people who are closest to the race and therefore have the best and most accurate information. Some additional ways for HS students to evaluate the information are: choose two different pages, e.g., Dog Care and Iditarod Race History, and compare/contrast how the information is presented; create an organization map of the information presented; sort the information about the race into different categories.

Step 4—Create
K-4: Students can draw pictures of what they have learned, create a poster showing their facts and illustrations, create a Flip video, or record an audio podcast. Students should decide what the most important information is that they want to share and why they want to share it.

5-8: Students will determine their audience—who they would like to share the information with. Examples include their families, students, other adults, or community members. What media tools would best present the information to their chosen audience? Give students time to craft a news report conveying their findings. You could consider a gallery walk when students are finished so that they can discover more facts about the Iditarod from their peers.

9-12: Upper grades may want to choose a page on the Iditarod site where information is presented in one way, e.g., text, and then create another way to present it such as through a podcast or visuals, then discuss their choices. Students could also create a list of frequently asked questions about the Iditarod and where to find answers, share snapshot information through "tweets," or ask students to create other types of graphic features such as timelines, charts, or diagrams. |
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| Conclusion: | Through this lesson, students will develop digital and print media literacy, improve their reading skills, and develop self-directed learning habits. These skills will benefit students all year long. At the same time, you are setting up students to learn more about the Iditarod from the official web site, so that you can later refer to it when reading literary texts or addressing misconceptions. |
| Assessment: | Step 5—Act
Review with your students what facts and information they learned about the Iditarod. Then ask students to evaluate the following questions:

What surprised you? What was most interesting? What would you like to learn more about? What information will you bring to others about the Iditarod? How can you teach others to use the Iditarod web site?

These questions are great for a class discussion, quick write, or small group work. |

Notes:	
Enrichment/ Reinforcement Suggestions:	1. Use a literary text such as Kiana's Iditarod by Shelley Gill to compare information about the Iditarod and how it is presented in each type of text. 2. Examine other web sites about the Iditarod such as https://www.iditarodalaska.net/iditarod-faq.html to compare/ contrast the messages we are meant to receive. How are the perspectives from each source different or the same? 3. Return to the Iditarod web site in several months, and then right before the race, to see what components have changed or updated, and why.
Other:	Sources: Blair Braverman and Quince Mountain, Dogs on the Trail: a Year in the Life. New York: Ecco, 2021. National Association for Media Literacy Education, "Media Literacy Defined." NAMLE, https://namle.net/resources/media-literacy-defined/ Accessed July 2, 2023. Iditarod Tour Packages and Northern Lights Tours, "Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Alaska—Interesting Facts." Alaska Travel Network Group. https://www.iditarodalaska.net/iditarod-faq.html Accessed July 4, 2021.