

Lesson Title:	“What Are They Wearing?” Bring the Iditarod to Life with a Living Museum
Background Information	
Created By:	Kate Newmyer, Seabrook, TX, 2024 Teacher on the Trail™
Grade Level/ Subject:	K-12 Reading, Writing, History, Public Speaking
Background Information:	<p>In the “What Are They Wearing?” section of Braverman’s book <u><a href="#">Dogs on the Trail</a></u>, she writes about the winter gear mushers and other volunteers wear. This month, you will get to help your students research and recreate these Iditarod personas through research, writing, public speaking, graphic design, and costumed interpretation. This lesson will be more of a guide than a step by step instruction. You know your students the best, so please enjoy this amazing activity in your classroom, homeschool group, or around the dinner table.</p> <p>One of my favorite lessons in our school is the Living Museum unit that takes place at the end of the year. Students choose a historical or living figure unique in the in grade level. The 5-6-week unit is a learning experience rich with research, reading, writing, evaluating information, and social skills like preparing and giving a speech. Students also develop art and technology skills when they design a magazine cover about their person. On the day of presentations, students line the main hallway dressed in their costumes, some with props, and give a speech as if they were their person. Students in other grade levels “activate” the living museum figurines by placing a piece of candy in their cup. My students love that! In the past we have used the event as a fundraiser for 5<sup>th</sup> grade end-of-year celebrations by having family members place coins in students’ cups. Please check with your school’s fundraising/money-handling policies before doing this. You and your instructional team will need to work together to determine scope, logistics, and other factors.</p> <p>In prior years, I have used a figure I admired from history as a model to show my students how to do the steps of the project. This past year, I chose Libby Riddles, first woman to win the Iditarod, as a figure that I could use as my model for instruction. Several reasons led me to do this, the most important being that she is an Iditarod figure I admire! I also knew that research information would be relatively easy to find. I would be able to show students how to determine the most important information from their reading. I also wanted to find out more about her, but really, I didn’t want to miss the fun the students were having. I wanted to dress up, too!</p> <p>Here in this lesson I present the Iditarod Living Museum. Feel free to adapt any or all of this guide for what works for your students and timeframe, keeping in mind you can expand or add in subsequent years. I hope you have snow mush fun!</p>
Learning Objectives/ Essential Questions:	<p>Content Learning Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students evaluate information about Iditarod personnel and choose one to research.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students engage in a variety of research skills, including avoiding plagiarism and citing sources, to create a written/spoken account about their person.</li> <li>• Students write informational text describing their person’s life and accomplishments in an engaging style.</li> <li>• Students utilize appropriate public speaking skills to present or give a speech impersonating their chosen figure.</li> </ul> <p>Language Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read, write and speak about their person.</li> <li>• Students listen and ask questions about their peers’ persons.</li> </ul> <p>SEL Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students identify a person associated with the Iditarod race and talk about why they chose them, including character traits, goals and accomplishments they admire, and/or personality characteristics.</li> <li>• Students inhabit the character through dress and mannerisms of a person associated with the Iditarod so they can model these character traits, goals, accomplishments, and emotions for others.</li> <li>• Students use whole body listening and good audience behavior when listening to the speeches and conversation of peers.</li> <li>• Students use appropriate digital skills when reading and commenting on the work of peers.</li> </ul>
Standards Addressed	<p>Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)</p> <p>Reading, English Language Arts Strand 5. The student uses critical inquiry to analyze the authors' choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts. The student analyzes and applies author's craft purposefully in order to develop his or her own products and performances.</p> <p>Writing, English Language Arts Strand 6. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful.</p> <p>Public Speaking:</p> <p>(2) Speech forms. The student recognizes and analyzes varied speech forms.</p> <p>(3) Invention. The student plans speeches.</p> <p>(4) Organization.</p> <p>(6) Style. The student develops skills in using oral language in public speeches.</p> <p>(7) Delivery. The student uses appropriate strategies for rehearsing and presenting speeches. The student is expected to:(A) employ techniques and strategies to reduce communication apprehension, develop self-confidence, and facilitate command of information and ideas.</p>
Materials Needed:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faces of Iditarod web site. <a href="https://faces.iditarod.com/">https://faces.iditarod.com/</a></li> <li>2. 2024 Musher bios on the Iditarod web site.</li> <li>3. Iditarod Special Awards and Record Holders Archive: <a href="https://iditarod.com/iditarod-special-awards-archive/">https://iditarod.com/iditarod-special-awards-archive/</a></li> <li>4. Student notebooks, pencils.</li> <li>5. Student access to MS word for magazine cover. Alternatively, students can create poster boards, see below.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. School databases, encyclopedias, books, etc.</li> <li>7. Space and permission from your team and/or school to hold an Iditarod Living Museum event.</li> <li>8. Family communication (optional) see example below.</li> <li>9. Article, magazine cover, and speech templates, see examples below.</li> </ol>
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Procedure	
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Engagement:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Direct students to the Faces of Iditarod web site, which they may already be familiar with. Navigate to one of your favorite figures. Race Marshall Mark Nordman is one of the most recognizable, but a volunteer like Hannah Strickland could resonate with students. Engage students in the responses the people give to the questions, asking them to notice how they answer.</li>   <li>2. Have students on their own look at the 2024 mushers list, looking at bios and noticing other information about the person, including links to their kennel web site. They can also look at the record holders archive, Iditarod Education, and other places such as the books you have in your classroom, to get ideas of who they would like to be for the Iditarod Living Museum.</li>   <li>3. Encourage students to investigate a variety of volunteer positions, mushers past and present and other people involved in the Iditarod. The student’s choice can be tied to their desired career (pilot, vet, publicist, IT specialist, teacher) or someone they relate to.</li> </ol>
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Lesson Procedure:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When you feel students have had enough time to think about who they would like to be, have students write their first, second and third choice on a piece of paper, then collect them. On your own, enter these choices into an Excel spreadsheet, to make it easier to eliminate duplicates. This is what I do for a grade level of about 120 students, so if you are doing this lesson just with your class or with a smaller group, do what works for you. Be careful of letting students select someone for whom there is not a lot of information—they may have to adjust their research strategy. If you have two more students that want to be the same person, use your most reliable dispute solving method to determine who gets their first/second/third choice—"Rock Paper Scissors," I'm looking at you.</li>   <li>2. Post the list or communicate to your students the final roster of names. Allow time for last minute changes or duplicates that need to be changed, and to ensure the list has a wide variety of Iditarod volunteers, past and present favorites, rookies, and other persons that you feel best represent the race as an event celebrating the bond of mushers and their dogs.</li> </ol> <p>STEP 1: Research, 4-5 days over your reading time</p> <p>All grade levels can do research, even Kinder students! Direct students to find out the basic facts about the person. Before teaching this part, ensure that students have a good idea of what they are looking for and some knowledge of research methods. (I like having my Learning Technology Coach come in and teach about how to research properly.) There should be a nice mix of basic facts (birth date, place, accomplishments) and the in-between—influences, motivations, their legacy or how people remember them, if known. You can have students use the template I use or</p>
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create your own. I like my template because you can give students a blank one as a guide for students to organize their facts and information while they research. It has a place for details and summary, the major accomplishments, quotes, and lesser-known facts. Do what works best for your grade level. It is simply a Word doc with text boxes and shapes behind them. I really like including quotes from the person, so this is where the Faces of Iditarod web site really adds interesting information that will come in handy for the speeches.

Remind students that sometimes they have to research “around” their person, such as finding out what a trail guard does, or what it’s like at the checkpoint the person volunteers in. They will also have to check multiple sources, especially if there is not a lot of information about the person.

A note on researching regular people: guide and oversee with sensitivity. It’s different researching someone like Libby Riddles, who has lots of coverage, than someone who loves to volunteer at the Iditarod but who may be a private person. If you would like to, guide students to select more well-known people likely to appear in newspaper articles, and as always, do what feels comfortable to you.

#### STEP 2: Writing (3-5 days over your writing time)

You know your grade level and the abilities of your students. Put together a template, or use mine, to help students compile their facts into a logical, meaningful order. Some years we have done a full research paper, and some years, we have done this template. A picture with lines underneath works well for younger grades; a research paper with correct citations is appropriate for older students, with background information about the Iditarod and its participants as you see fit.

#### STEP 3: References

Proper citations are an important component of the project and will help your students learn to state where they found information so others can find it. It’s a great opportunity to talk about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. I give my 5<sup>th</sup> graders four basic MLA formulas--book, web site, article, encyclopedia entry--and they can plug the information in. I work with individual students for less common sources.

#### STEP 4: Sharing the writing

Definitely find a way to share the students’ writing with one another! What a great way to learn about other Iditarod figures, through what their peers and friends have presented. I use the platform SeeSaw which allows students to upload their work and for other students to comment on, in a moderated environment. I give my 5<sup>th</sup> graders sentence frames to guide their feedback, such as, “What I liked was \_\_\_\_\_” then reference a particular aspect of the research paper. Another great one is, “I enjoyed learning more about \_\_\_\_\_. I didn’t know he/she\_\_\_\_\_!” You can use whatever learning platform or technology you are familiar with. As students finish, you can let them access the platform and comment on their peers’ work.

If you would like to display student work on a bulletin board, make time for students to visit and make comments. You can also do a writing celebration, where students place their finished work on their desk along with a comment sheet, then for a period of silent engagement time, students walk around and read and make

comments. This is absolutely so fun for the students to learn from one another.

#### STEP 5: Speeches

One year I did not do the full Living Museum, so I had students do the research and then give their speech with a one- or two-item costume during class. Some students were quite nervous, but afterward felt so confident that they had given a speech! This part of the project is necessary your Living Museum event, but even if you are not doing a big event, consider having students give their speeches in front of the class. This took about 2 ½ days during our designated reading/writing time.

The speech can be as long as 2-3 minutes, or as short as 20-30 seconds. Students will be giving the speech as if they were the person, so be sure they use “I” and “my.” I prefer speeches that are short on a recitation of dates and facts, and long on personality. Encourage students to read and listen to the words of their subjects and create a speech that captures the person’s voice and perspectives. Students can type their speech on a word document and then transfer to note cards.

For students who have never done this before, the key is to model! The main purpose of the speech, in my view, is for students to get inside the person’s head and tell a story or talk about a memory. A good example is the story of Riddles pushing through the biting wind and cold in the dark, the thoughts that went through her head, and the sensation of finally realizing she was ahead and would win. You can have students talk about a fond memory (such as those on the Faces of Iditarod), and even a belief or life philosophy. This is a great time to include sensory language in the story so the listener can experience what the person did.

Students can exercise a little creative freedom here, so that even if they don’t have a lot of facts, they can provide background, sensory language, and other aspects of the memory that would be plausible. I find I have to be explicit in giving this freedom to students, to encourage them to think about what it would be like if you were in that position. It’s a great exercise in examining a situation from someone else’s perspective. Encourage students to include a few facts about the Iditarod sprinkled throughout their speech, so that visitors can learn about it as they visit the different figures.

Be sure to allow time for students to practice giving all or part of their speech in class. I like to give my students an “audience rubric” also. Build in time to teach students how to properly give a speech. Encourage them to memorize all or part of the speech and to use the note cards as stimuli and not to read directly off them. Make sure students give eye contact to their audience. My introvert’s secret for giving speeches is to plan where I will look up to make eye contact with someone.

#### STEP 5: Magazine Cover

I tried so hard to find a spiffy tech program to create magazine covers but found myself resorting to good old MS Word for the price, availability, and the fact that students already knew how to use it. If you know of a great resource, please share! Depending on the grade level, students can type their person’s name and Iditarod role and then include a picture. Older students can use Word to layer text boxes and photos, imitating font styles. Students can use an established magazine as inspiration for their cover or create their own. I used National Geographic because I

	<p>grew up with that iconic yellow rectangle. Save time to print the magazine covers in color if you have the resources.</p> <p>Alternatively, students can use small poster boards to cut out letters, pictures, and/or draw. They can create a timeline or other nonfiction text feature such as a diagram or map to include on their poster board.</p> <p>If you are not activating the Iditarod figurines by placing an item in their cup, you can affix a dot or small sticky note to the wall behind each student so that visitors can “push” the button to make the figure come to life.</p> <p><b>STEP 6: Costumes</b></p> <p>I love the costume part of this activity. As you look through the images, encourage students to look hard to see the variations that set a person apart. It could be a signature hairstyle, a tag or badge that signifies their position, a pair of mittens or a hat, a prop, or even just a certain posture, gesture, or facial expression. While I never say that students must go out and purchase the components of their costume, many do. Encourage students to find what they need at home, borrow it, or acquire it cheaply such as at a second-hand store. The only thing I bought for my Libby Riddles costume was one sled dog plushie. The rest of the items I either had or I borrowed. Sometimes you can help students make certain parts of their ensemble. You can often capture the essence of a person with just a prop or two. Don’t forget international flair!</p>
<p><b>Conclusion &amp; Reflection:</b></p>	<p><b>Your Big Event</b></p> <p>The day of Living Museum is the most fun. All the elements come together. You should do a bit of preparation to determine where students will be standing in the designated space. For a group of over 100 students, we practice where they will stand (separating incompatible real-life personalities) and helping them to put their magazine cover up. Consider grouping different jobs/roles of the Iditarod, arranging mushers in order of their wins or appearances, or let the students decide.</p> <p>Communicate with families, staff, and your school admin to coordinate the best time and place for your event. We hold several mini sessions during the designated day for other grade levels to attend, and then an early evening event for families. Get your PTA or other group involved—they will be great supporters.</p> <p>One thing I thought about as I walked up and down a crowded hallway in May in Texas wearing a parka with the hood up, was making sure my students feel comfortable. Bulky costumes worn over a long period of time might be uncomfortable, so think about this when determining the day and length of time for your event. (I very much doubt Libby Riddles wore sandals on the Iditarod, but I could not fathom putting snow boots on.)</p>
<p><b>Assessment:</b></p>	<p>You can assess the success of this activity for your students through each step of the process by guiding them to do their best research and writing, and encouraging them to share a well-crafted, meaningful speech. Use the rubrics you would normally use for research, writing, and/or design creativity. I know I’m doing it right when the entire grade level of 5<sup>th</sup> graders is bursting with excitement to put on their costumes,</p>

	<p>come to life, and give their speeches. It means they have done careful research and know their persons really well.</p> <p>Take lots of pictures and share with families (being mindful of privacy).</p> <p>Ask students to reflect: how did this experience help them learn more about the Iditarod and everyone involved? What specific things did they learn how to do? What was their favorite part?</p>
<b>Notes</b>	
<b>Enrichment/ Reinforcement Suggestions:</b>	<p>For grade levels and/or families that visit your event:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Communicate with teachers ahead of time to share that the students will be depicting famous and not so famous people involved in the Iditarod. Give a few facts to the teachers to help their class get excited.</li><li>2. You can also give a list of jobs/roles and have visitors do a scavenger hunt to find, for example, a veterinarian, a musher, a dog handler, a trail guard, a pilot, a cook, a comms worker, etc.</li></ol> <p>For students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Consider brainstorming unusual roles, such as IditaRider, sponsor, spectator (there have been some memorable spectators including at least one wedding!), Ceremonial Start emcee, merch vendor, etc., to represent.</li></ol>

Sample Family letter about Iditarod Living Museum

Dear Families,

Your student will be participating in **Living Museum** on the evening of Thursday, May 18 from 5:15 – 6, right after the PTA meeting.

In preparation for this event, students are choosing an Iditarod person to research. This person will have multiple outstanding qualities in their role as a racer or volunteer in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. They will be reading, taking notes, preparing a report, and creating a speech. The assignment will be a combination of classwork and homework. This assignment is a required Reading/Writing assignment. Students will practice their speeches in class, but they do not need to dress up for the classroom rehearsal.

We appreciate your efforts in encouraging your child to participate in **Living Museum** on May 18. At **Living Museum**, your child will dress up as a famous Iditarod person, past or present, and recite their speech. Students will be reading from notecards. The entire fifth grade student body will be positioned throughout the hallways. The students will stand silent and still. As people pass by, they will press a “button”, and the students will “come to life” and recite their prepared biographical sketch.

*If your child is not able to participate on May 18, due to other commitments, we are requesting a note from the parents stating that they will not be attending and explaining why.*

Your child still **must** complete the other related assignments and participate in the rehearsal held during class time. If you have any questions, please call or email me. Please sign and return the signature slip by Monday, May 1, 2023.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Newmyer  
[Phone number/contact info]

**Detach below** and return to teacher by Monday, May 1, 2023.

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I have read the information about **Living Museum**, and I understand that this assignment **must** be completed. I also understand that unless I send a note, my child is expected to attend Living Museum on Thurs., May 18.

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Libby Riddles: First Woman to Win the Iditarod

### Major Accomplishments

Libby Riddles was the first woman to win the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in 1985. Prior to this, the only winners of the difficult, nearly-one-thousand-mile race had been men. Riddles showed determination and grit by following her dream to live in Alaska. She began raising sled dogs shortly after. She credits her amazing win in the 1985 Iditarod to taking a chance on running through a powerful snowstorm. The race had been problematic from the start, but once she got through the storm and left her competition behind, she was destined to win.



Photo Credit: Wisconsin Life

### Early Life

Libby Riddles was born in Madison, Wisconsin on April 1, 1956. She spent most of her time in the woods near her home in Minnesota and the Pacific Northwest. When she was 17, she moved to Alaska. She worked hard to finish high school early and save money so she could follow her dream. Riddles lived bush-style, meaning she built her own cabin, cut wood for heat, and ate moose meat. In 1973, she was in Anchorage when she saw sled dogs racing, and thought it was beautiful and exciting. She competed in a sprint race in 1978 and won. After racing in the Iditarod in 1980 and 1981, coming in 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> place, she decided to breed and train her own Alaskan sled dogs.

### Details of Major Accomplishments

In 1985, she was ready to race the Iditarod again. That year, the race was difficult because of deep snow and severe weather. On the way to Shaktoolik, a checkpoint on the Yukon river, a snowstorm turned into a blizzard. Riddles had a decision to make—press on after all her hard work and risk her life and that of her dogs? Or take the chance to go into the blizzard and put her competition behind? She looked at her dogs and they agreed—mush on! She had to walk several times, trying to find race markers with howling wind whipping her face, but the dogs knew the trail. Riddles finally got out of the snowstorm and found she was way ahead! She finished the race in Nome with hundreds of spectators cheering for her and her lead dogs, Dugan and Axle.



Photo Credit: Chewy, November 3, 2020

## Quotes

“With dog racing, I think we say you can have your entire life out there, because it’s so intense.”

“I got into every kind of disaster out there with the dogs and it was just great!”

## End of Life and Legacy

Riddles went on to race her dogs for another twenty years. She mentored other mushers and advocated for the Iditarod and the sled dog way of life. After she ended her racing career, Riddles continued her dog breeding program. Riddles became a public speaker. She tells thousands of guests annually about the Iditarod and about her winning “storm run.” Riddles’ achievement is noteworthy because at that time, women everywhere were changing people’s minds about what they could accomplish in the world of sports. In the Iditarod, much depends on the relationship mushers have with their dogs and the training they give them. A musher can’t win without happy, healthy, dogs and a determined spirit. Libby Riddles has both.

## Fun Facts

Riddles lost her team on the first day of the famous 1985 Iditarod and was dragged behind them for 3 miles!

Riddles credits the bond of trust she has with her dogs to get her out of any problem. She has to trust them, and they have to trust her.

A sled dog can eat 10,000 or more calories a day while racing in the Iditarod.

Riddles currently owns about twenty dogs and talks about her experiences on Princess Cruises.

## Written and Designed by: Mrs. Newmyer

### Citations

George, Alice. “Facing Blizzards and Accidents, Iditarod’s First Woman Champion Libby Riddles Persisted.” Smithsonian Magazine, 2023.

“Libby Riddles’ Iditarod Victory.” Alaska Sports Hall of Fame, 2023. Accessed April 25, 2023.

<https://alaskasportshall.org/inductee/libby-riddles-victory/>  
Riddles, Libby. *Storm Run*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2003.

Sample magazine cover (snip). In Word, I made the page color yellow, then layered elements.

April 1985



# National Geographic

**LIBBY RIDDLES: FIRST WOMAN TO WIN  
ALASKA'S IDITAROD TRAIL SLED DOG RACE**



LEAD DOGS DUGAN AND AXLE HELP RIDDLES GET THROUGH A POWERFUL BLIZZARD, LEAVING COMPETITION BEHIND. EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW, P. 12

**PLUS: Maps, Photo Essay of Historic Win**