

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 24 Word Count: 1,916

Book Summary

In 1925, a sled-dog team made a heroic trip across Alaska carrying life-saving medicine to Nome. To commemorate this event, the Iditarod race was established. Each year mushers, with the help of their sled dogs, race across Alaska's rugged and wild terrain from Anchorage to Nome. They compete for nearly \$70,000 in first-place prize money.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Connect to prior knowledge

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of connecting to prior knowledge to make sense from text
- Identify a fact and opinion in text
- Identify and use descriptive adjectives in text
- Identify context clues

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*The Last Great Race* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Fact or opinion, descriptive adjectives, context clues worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

- Content words:

Story critical: *diphtheria* (n.), *inspiration* (n.), *insulate* (v.), *mandatory* (adj.), *musher* (n.), *serum* (n.)

Enrichment: *ceremonial* (adj.), *exhaustion* (n.), *frostbite* (n.), *grueling* (adj.), *incentive* (n.), *tundra* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Involve students in a discussion about sports. Ask students which sports they play or like to watch. Ask if they have ever been in a race at school or at home. Have them tell how they feel when they win or lose.
- Ask students what they know about Alaska, sled-dog racing, and the Iditarod. Have them tell what they think it would be like to race across Alaska behind a dogsled in the dead of winter.
- Create a KWL chart on the board. Review or explain that the *K* stands for knowledge we know, the *W* stands for questions we want to know, and the *L* stands for the knowledge we learned. Fill in the first (*K*) column with information students already know about Alaska, sled-dog racing, and the Iditarod.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students a copy of the book. Have them preview the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers and offer ideas as to what kind of book this is and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Talk about the information that is written on the page (title of book, author's name).
- Direct students to the table of contents on page 3. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of what the book is about. Each chapter title provides an idea of what they will read in the book.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Connect to prior knowledge**

- Explain to students that having some prior knowledge about a topic and making a connection with what they know while they are reading helps them understand and remember the information in the book.
- After reviewing the table of contents, model using it as a way to think of questions.
- **Think-aloud:** *The chapter titled "The Inspiration" reminded me of my mother who inspired me to run outside in the winter, because she runs outside almost every day—no matter how cold it is. I wonder if this story will tell us what inspires people to take on the challenge of racing dogsleds through the extreme cold. I'll write that question under W on the KWL chart.*
- Have students look at the other chapter titles. Write any questions they have about the Iditarod, based on the covers and table of contents, in the W column of the KWL chart. Remind students that no question is ever inappropriate if they truly do not know the answer.
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at photos, maps, charts, and boxes with additional text. Add any additional questions students may have to the KWL chart.
- Point out page 23 and tell students that it provides additional resources for learning about the Iditarod. Encourage students to explore further.
- Show students the glossary and explain its purpose.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary


- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work out words they don't know. For example, they can use what they know about letter and sound correspondence to figure out a word. They can look for base words within words, prefixes, and suffixes. They can use the context to work out meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Model how to apply word-attack strategies. Tell students to turn to page 5 and find the first word in bold, *diphtheria*. Model how students can use the context to figure out the meaning of the word. Tell them that reading the sentence containing the word and the following sentence will tell them what diphtheria is. Ask a student to define *diphtheria* (a disease that usually attacks children, caused by bacteria attacking the lungs and suffocating the victim). Say: *Let's read the sentence with the words that attacks the lungs.* Have students follow along as you read the sentence to confirm the meaning of the word.
- Have students turn to the glossary on page 24. Have them read the glossary words and their definitions aloud. Next, have students turn to the pages indicated and read the sentence in which the glossary word appears. Use context clues in the surrounding sentences to work out unfamiliar vocabulary words, as necessary.

Set the Purpose


- Have students read the book while thinking of their racing experiences in order to answer their questions on the KWL chart.

During Reading

Student Reading

 **Guide the reading:** Have students read the first chapter of the book. Tell them to underline the information that answers any of the questions on the KWL chart. Tell students to go back and reread the chapter if they finish before everyone else.

- Model answering a question on the KWL chart.
Think-aloud: I'll circle the first question on our KWL chart and write the answer because I found what I wanted to know. I read that children were struck with diphtheria in Nome, Alaska. The only way to get the serum to them to save their lives was to use dogsleds. Brave mushers carried the serum on dogsleds for 700 miles through a raging storm and saved the children of Nome. This event was the inspiration that created the Iditarod.
- Review the remaining questions on the KWL chart, circling and writing the answers as students provide the information.
- Ask students if they had any other questions while reading. Add these to the KWL chart.
- Have students read the remainder of the story, looking for answers to the questions on the KWL chart as they read.

 Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading


- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Reinforce that asking questions based on prior experience before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading, keeps them interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find the answers to their questions and helps them understand and remember what they have read.
- Review the KWL chart with students. Circle questions that were answered and write the information students provide.



Teach the Comprehension Skill: **Identify fact or opinion**

- **Discussion:** Ask students if they can imagine being a musher. Remind them that women as well as men have won the Iditarod. Ask students to tell why they would or would not want to be in this 1,870 km (1,162 mile) race. Write some of their responses on the board. Then ask if these statements are based on facts or opinions.
- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain that many stories include facts and opinions. Explain that one of the ways to evaluate written material is to recognize the difference between statements based on fact and statements based on opinion. An opinion tells how a person feels about something. You can agree or disagree with an opinion. A fact, on the other hand, can be verified or proven. Say: *I like baseball. This is an opinion because it's how I feel.* Say: *The Boston Red Sox won the 2004 World Series. This is a fact because I can prove it is true.*
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read the Introduction on page 4. Ask them to decide if each sentence is a fact or an opinion. (O, O, F, F, O) Then have students read each sentence aloud. Discuss what makes each sentence a fact or an opinion.
- **Independent practice:** Give students the **fact-or-opinion worksheet**. Tell them to read the sentences carefully and decide whether each one is a fact or an opinion. If a statement is a fact, students should verify it by writing the page number from the book where the information is found. If a statement is an opinion, students should verify it by describing someone who would not share that opinion. Discuss their answers.

-  On the inside back cover, have students write whether or not they would want to race in the Iditarod and to explain why or why not.

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: **Descriptive adjectives**

- Review that adjectives modify nouns or pronouns. Explain that *descriptive adjectives* describe a noun: a person, a place, or a thing.
- Ask students to read the title aloud. Ask what the words *last* and *great* describe (race). Tell students that these words are descriptive adjectives. Discuss how these descriptive words add interest to the title. (A book called *The Race* wouldn't sound nearly as intriguing as one called *The Last Great Race*.)
- Have students turn to the last sentence on page 4. Write it on the board. (It is without a doubt one of the most grueling sporting events ever held.) Ask students to name the adjectives describing events (most grueling sporting).
-  Tell students to turn to page 9, underline the descriptive adjectives in the second paragraph, and circle the nouns. Discuss student answers.
-  **Check for understanding:** Have students complete the [descriptive adjectives worksheet](#). Discuss student answers.

Word Work: **Identify types of context clues**

- Review different types of context clues. Write the following on the board:
 - Definition:*
The definition is written in the sentence.
 - Cue words (used with commas):*
Include: *which is, this is, called, and or*
 - Compare or contrast:*
The word is compared to a familiar word.
 - Cue words:*
Include: *like, unlike, and similar to*
 - Read around the word:*
Read the whole sentence or paragraph to find the meaning.
- Check for understanding:** Give students the [context clues worksheet](#). Explain that it shows several bold-faced words from the text. Tell students that they are to find the words in the book. In the second column, they are to name the type of context clue used. In the third column, they are to write the meaning they got from the context clues.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, allow partners to take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends.

Extend the Reading

Writing Connection

Have students write a first-person account of the Iditarod in the form of a journal. Ask students to tell about their adventure from the musher's or lead dog's point of view. Encourage students to use their imaginations to include an assortment of descriptive adjectives. Tell them to include both facts and opinions. Share journals with the class.

Math Connection

Turn to page 15. Give students graph paper. Have different groups of students graph the winning times of the Iditarod since 1973 in line graphs or bar graphs.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- use prior experiences and their KWL questions to better understand the text
- identify facts and opinions in informational text and on a worksheet
- understand how descriptive adjectives make a book more interesting; use them to complete a worksheet
- identify types of context clues to understand content vocabulary

Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**