

Iditarod Trail History: How and Why the Trail and Race Started

Developed by: Lisa Wiley

Discipline / Subject: Language Arts/Social Studies/Science

Topic: Iditarod Trail History: How and Why the Trail and Race Started

Grade Level: 4-12

Resources / References / Materials Teacher Needs:

- *<http://www.chugachchildrensforest.org/programs/education/itrec> (itrec program that educates about the original Iditarod trail. Includes curriculum and ideas for service learning)
- *<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/nlcs/itarod.html> (Bureau of Land Management's website with educational links)
- *The Cruellest Miles by Gay Salisbury, the first chapters
- *<http://iditarod.com/about/history/> (summary of the trail history and the origins of the race, focus on the Redingtons and Dorothy Page)
- *<http://www.litsite.org/index.cfm?section=Digital-Archives&page=Land-Sea-Air&cat=Dog-Mushing&viewpost=2&ContentId=2559> (Alaska website, including an interactive, problem-solving game about the Serum Run)
- *<http://www.cdc.gov/features/Diphtheria/index.html> (Center for Disease Control info on the original serum run and diphtheria)
- *<http://www.alaskaweb.org/disease/1925serumrun.htm> (history of the original serum run)

Lesson Summary:

Students will learn about the history of the National Historic Iditarod Trail. Then, they will learn about the diphtheria epidemic in Nome and the decision to use sled dogs teams to get the serum. Finally, the history of the modern sled dog race will be taught. This lesson has enough material to cover multiple days.

Standard's Addressed: (Local, State, or National) Alaska uses Common Core Standards, which have not been created yet for science or social studies. The state is in the process of revising curriculum for science and social studies. I have included applicable Language Arts standards from the Common Core.

- 1.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–12 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- 7. Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
- 10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- 7. Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will learn about the Historical Iditarod Trail, its ties to the Gold Rush, its creation, the mail run, and the impacts of snow machines and airplanes on the trail.
2. Students will learn about the diphtheria epidemic, including the causes, symptoms and cure for the disease.
2. Students will learn why the dog team was the best method to get the serum to Nome.

3. Students will learn about the success of the serum relay despite the harsh conditions, and the successful halting of the epidemic.
4. Finally, students will learn about the development of the Iditarod race years after the original serum run.
5. Students can use technology to make the race alive with the Serum Run game.
6. Students may connect the diphtheria epidemic to modern disease epidemics.
7. Students may decide to become involved in local trail stewardship.

Procedural Activities

There is definitely enough information to use for a multi-day unit, or pick and chose smaller elements to utilize. Teachers can lecture, use readings as suggested, or media resources to deliver the following points.

1. The teacher will ask students to write a quick paragraph detailing what they know of the Iditarod Trail and its history.
2. The teacher, using the Bureau of Land Management’s website, will share the unique history of the Iditarod trail. Worksheet to emphasize main points attached.
3. The teacher will tell about the symptoms, spread of, and history of diphtheria. Worksheet to emphasize main points attached.
4. The teacher teaches how the serum cured the disease.
5. Learn about the debate to use dog teams vs. airplanes for the serum. Students who want an extra challenge can conduct a mock debate telling about the pros and cons of each style. (Assignment attached.)
6. Students will see how the dog teams and mushers relayed the serum successfully to Nome.
7. They can use the LiteSit website to see maps, learn about the villages, and problem-solve their way down the trail to Nome. Students can play the serum run game online at: <http://www.alaskakids.org/layouts/alaskakids/games/alaska/index.htm>
8. Students, using the iditarod.com website, will explore the history of the sled dog race.
9. Students will research to see where the closest National Historic Trails exist near their school.
10. Students may chose to develop a service learning plan to take stewardship of the trail. (Activity sheet attached.)

Assessments

This will depend upon what the teacher decides to integrate from the above plans.

Materials Students Need:

- *Chapters photocopied from The Cruellest Miles. (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 would be best.)
- *A computer with access to the websites listed. The teacher can use a projector to share a lot of the materials.

Technology Utilized to Enhance Learning:

See above resources section.

Other Information:

Information about dog sled racing in Nome prior to the Iditarod:

<https://northernlightmedia.wordpress.com/articles/sled-dog-history/all-alaska-sweepstakes/>

Modifications for Special Learners/ Enrichment Opportunities:

There is audio on the LitSite, as well as modifications for upper and lower end readers. Audio of the Serum Run history is on LitSite website for challenged readers.

Additional Information:

There is also opportunity to study the role of the famous lead dogs like Balto who helped guide the mushers safely through a raging storm to Nome. There was controversy with Leonard Seppala not feeling like his lead dog, Togo, was honored as much as Balto. Interested teachers may want to have students research both dogs and their miraculous runs, as well as why Balto became a household name while Togo did not. The teacher could modify the attached debate lesson plan to make it a debate on whether Togo or Balto deserves the fame and glory, or if it should have been given to both dogs. Link to prior Teacher on the Trail™ lesson plan about Togo:

<http://iditarod.com/teacher/giving-a-hero-his-due/>



Iditarod Trail History: How and Why the Trail and Race Started The National Historic Iditarod Trail

Your name _____

Date _____ Period _____ Due date _____

Did you realize that the National Historic Trail existed long before the Serum Run in 1925? The Alaska Road Commission utilized old trading/trapping trails from Native Alaskans, gold rush transport routes, mail runs, and Russian Fur Trapping trail networks to connect a trail all the way from Seward to Nome.

Use this website to research the original trail:

<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/nlcs/iditarod/history.html>

Answer the following questions completely on a separate sheet of paper after researching the history of the original trail.

1. Where does the National Historic Trail start and end?
2. How long is the trail? Tell the actual mileage.
3. How was the trail created?
4. What were the original uses of the trail?
5. What are some of the reasons that the trail use declined starting in 1920?

6. How was the Iditarod Trail used as part of the original serum run in 1925?
7. What areas of the original trail were not used in the Serum Run?
8. Who are the two main people that helped to recreate interest in the trail?
9. Why did these people think it was important to preserve the trail and dog sledding?

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The Original Serum Run

Use the following resources to help get you started learning about the background of the Serum Run.

The Cruellest Miles, by Gay Salisbury

<http://www.litsite.org/index.cfm?section=Digital-Archives&page=Land-Sea-Air&cat=Dog-Mushing&viewpost=2&ContentId=2559>

Answer the following questions completely on a separate sheet of paper..

1. What is diphtheria? What are the symptoms of the disease? What happens to the victims of the disease?
2. In 1925, what was the cure for diphtheria?
3. How did Doctor Curtis Welch find out about the spread of the disease? Who were the first victims?
4. What things did Dr. Welch do to try to stop the spread of the disease?
5. Why was it so difficult to get the serum to Nome?
6. How was the serum delivered to Nome?
7. Name at least three of the original dog mushers on the Serum Run.
8. Name at least two of the important lead dogs.
9. What extreme difficulties did the original serum run mushers encounter?
10. Was the serum run successful in stopping the diphtheria?
11. America became very wrapped up in the drama of the Serum Run. Listen to or read an original newspaper report about the Serum Run. Write down the source information.

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Extension Activities

Option 1: Debate.

Divide your class into two teams. Have one group research why dog mushing was considered a better option than using airplanes for the serum run. Have the other group research why airplanes were also considered a viable option. Both groups should pick 3 to 5 main reasons and be ready to back them up with research and data. Students can fill out this sheet to prepare.

Reason 1: _____

Data backing this up:

Source where you found the data:

Reason 2: _____

Data backing this up:

Source where you found the data:

Reason 3: _____

Data backing this up:

Source where you found the data:

Reason 4: _____

Data backing this up:

Source where you found the data:

Reason 5: _____

Data backing this up.

Source where you found the data:

Concession/Counterargument. Tell one or two positive arguments for your opposing teams. This makes help your argument sound more mature and balanced.

Opposing viewpoint

Reason 1: _____

Data backing this up:

Source where you found the data:

Reason 2: _____

Data backing this up:

Source where you found the data:

Debate! You should have enough material to debate when this worksheet is done. The teacher should have the students stand and deliver their main points. There should be time for cross examination, then each team should wrap up their main points and urge the class to vote for them.

Debate Ballot

Who won?

Why?



Option 2: Service Learning

Have your students identify national historic trails in your area.

If there are none, students can identify trails of local importance.

If there are several trails, students can research the trails in small groups and deliver a pitch to the class about why the class should choose that trail as a group.

1. Write down the trail's name.
2. Write down why it's an important trail to your community.
3. Find out who helps maintain the trail. Write down the organization and the main person in charge below.
4. Contact the person in charge, and ask how your class can help. Write down how below.
5. Adopt the trail as a class! Maintain and care for the trail by helping in any way possible.