

## What's a 'Musher'?

It doesn't matter whether the person is a lawyer, a dentist, a fisherman or a teacher. It doesn't matter if they're from Russia, Canada, France or the United States. Any one of these people can be a musher. What's a musher? It's a hardworking, dedicated competitor who is the only human among a team of dogs.

The Iditarod race is the "super bowl" of dogsled racing, and there are some very tough rules as to who can compete. In order for a team to register for the race, the driver has had to finish at least two approved races that total at least 500 miles. So while some teams might have the title of "rookie," they have a lot of experience in racing dogsleds.

### Training

Months before the actual race, mushers start training themselves and their dogs. In July, they hook up their dogs to All-Terrain Vehicles and take them on short runs, up to five miles long. By mid-October, the dogs are up to runs of 10 to 15 miles.

As soon as there is snow on the ground, the dogs are hooked up to sleds, which are much easier for them to pull. The length of the runs has increased to 30 or 40 miles by now. By Christmas, a run of 50 miles is normal!

In January, the first races are held. These races can be anywhere from 200 to 500 miles in length. Most mushers enter a couple of these just for practice—but they wouldn't complain if they got the prize money!

### Team Dogs

Each team that is entered in the Iditarod can only have 16 dogs. They are hooked up in pairs and the team is longer than a semitruck when measured from the lead dog to the end of the sled! That's more than 80 feet long!

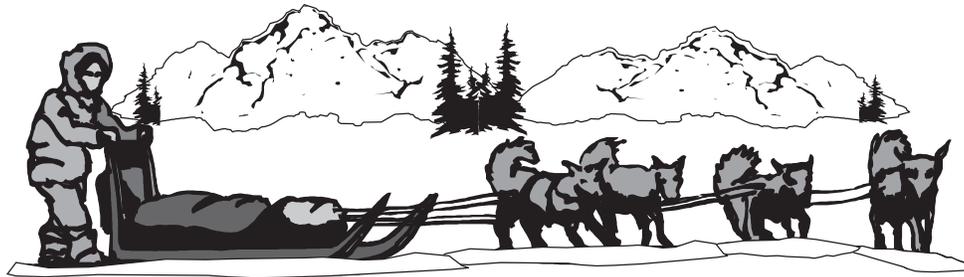
The musher will have several lead dogs in his pack. They are usually smarter and better at following commands than the other dogs. It doesn't matter which dog is the leader, because the pack will follow whatever dog is in the lead position. Mushers rotate the leader depending on what the trail conditions are. Some dogs are better on long, flat runs, while others excel in hilly terrain.

### Equipment

Other than the dogs, a musher's sled is a very important piece of equipment. Sleds usually weigh between 30 and 40 pounds and are either made of wood or plastic. The special plastic bottoms on the runners are made so that they can be easily replaced when they wear out.

The musher stands on the rear part of the runners and holds on to the handlebar. If the musher doesn't wrap a cord around his or her waist, and falls off the sled, the dogs could go on alone. That's the one thing a musher never wants to happen!

**10** Each musher has to have certain equipment with him or her when they start the race. A heavy sleeping bag is a must.

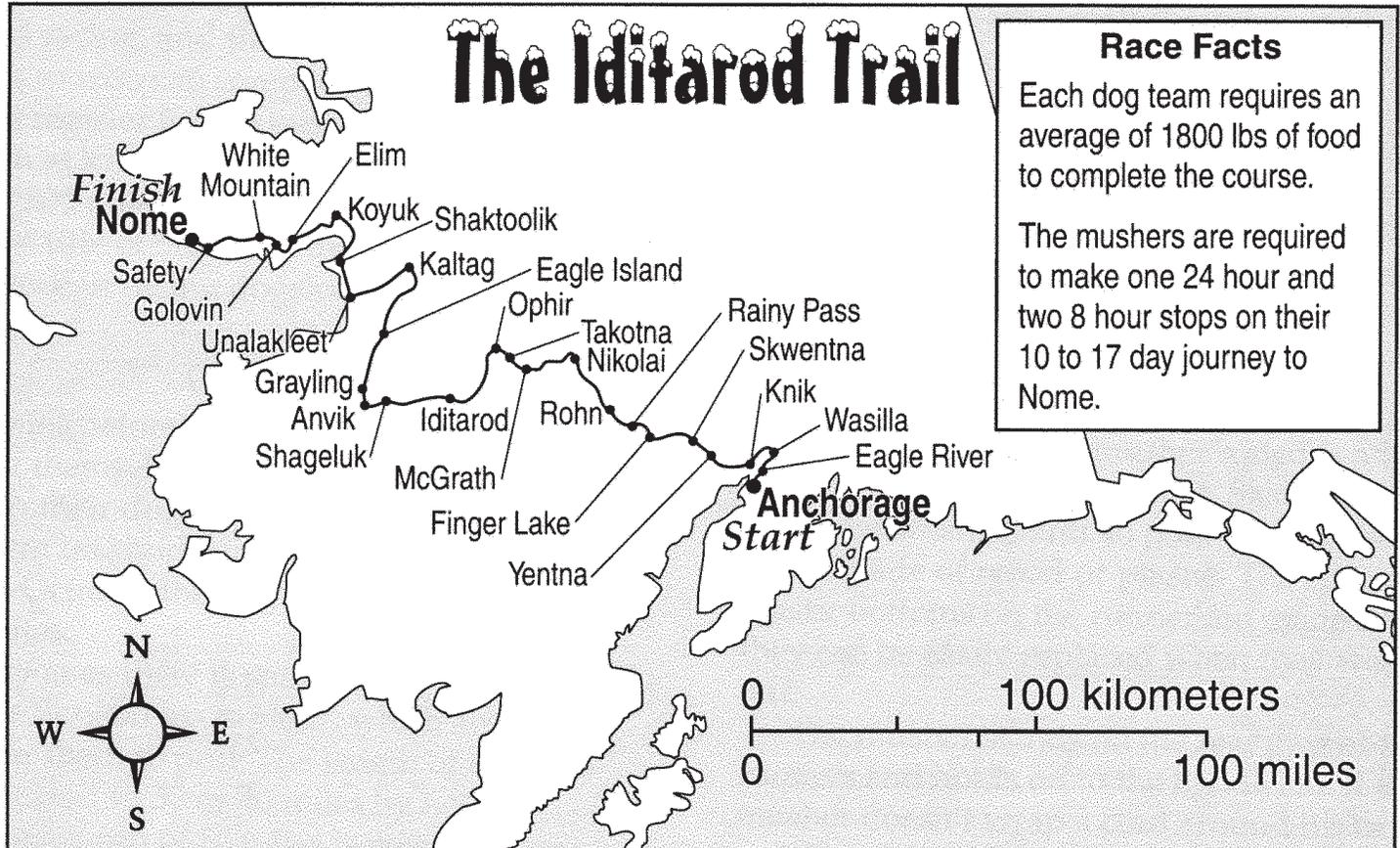


Each musher must also have an ax, snowshoes, an arctic parka, food for themselves, dog food and two sets of booties for each dog's feet. The booties protect the dogs from various snow related injuries. They must also carry an alcohol stove and a pot to melt snow.

With temperatures ranging from 60 degrees below zero to 40 degrees above zero Fahrenheit, most mushers take warm clothes for themselves as well as medicine for the dogs. They also pack spare lines and

snaps, sewing kits and tools. Plenty of drinking water is a must since dehydration can be a problem in the dry, cold climate of Alaska. In recent years, many of the mushers have taken cameras, radios or compact disc players to help with the boredom along the long stretches of the trail.

Each musher has one thing in mind at the start of the Iditarod: To finish the race. It would be great to win, but just finishing makes them all winners.



“What’s a Musher?” from [www.studentnewsnet.com](http://www.studentnewsnet.com). The Pencil Group Ltd., Toledo, Ohio. Reprinted with permission.

1. In the first paragraph, why is the lawyer mentioned?
- A to show that many lawyers are mushers
  - B to show that lawyers are needed to record the race
  - C to show that anyone can be a musher
  - D to show that mushers can be from any country
2. What type of mushers are encouraged to participate in the Iditarod?
- A mushers who have finished a 200-mile race
  - B mushers who have won prize money
  - C mushers with a lot of lead dogs
  - D mushers with a lot of experience
3. Which quality in a lead dog does the selection indicate is **most important**?
- A obedience
  - B speed
  - C strength
  - D confidence
4. Which statement about mushers is supported by the selection?
- A Mushers eat a high-protein diet.
  - B Mushers are professional athletes.
  - C Mushers want to cross the Iditarod finish line.
  - D Mushers feel they should be highly paid.
5. What is the **main** purpose of the equipment listed in paragraph 10?
- A to help the sleds go faster
  - B to maintain the sleds
  - C to keep the dogs warm
  - D to use for protection and survival
6. What is the **main** reason mushers must carry an alcohol stove and a pot on the Iditarod?
- A to cook food for the dogs if they get hungry
  - B to cook food for themselves if they get lost
  - C to keep warm if they get off the trail
  - D to use in case they run out of drinking water

7. Based on the selection, which is **most likely** true about being a musher?
- A It requires having a few affectionate dogs.
  - B It is a financially rewarding job to have.
  - C It is good training for all winter sports.
  - D It requires hard work to do well.
8. Which **best** explains the statement, “It would be great to win, but just finishing makes them all winners”?
- A Finishing the race is an amazing accomplishment.
  - B Winning is the most important accomplishment in the race.
  - C Everyone who enters the competition wins a prize.
  - D Every musher enjoys the competition and does not care if he or she wins.

9. Which checkpoint comes earliest in the Iditarod race?
- A Eagle Island
  - B Finger Lake
  - C Iditarod
  - D White Mountain

### End of Set

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## EOG Grade 5 Reading Sample Items

<b>Selection Title</b>	<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Correct Answer</b>	<b>Thinking Skill</b>	<b>Objective Number</b>
What's a 'Musher'?	1	C	Organizing	2.02
What's a 'Musher'?	2	D	Organizing	2.02
What's a 'Musher'?	3	A	Organizing	2.02
What's a 'Musher'?	4	C	Knowledge	2.05
What's a 'Musher'?	5	D	Analyzing	2.06
What's a 'Musher'?	6	D	Analyzing	2.08
What's a 'Musher'?	7	D	Generating	3.05
What's a 'Musher'?	8	A	Generating	2.05
What's a 'Musher'?	9	B	Organizing	2.08