Name: Date: Score: / 5

The Iditarod: Reading Comprehension

Nonfiction: Places · about 320 words

Read the passage. Then answer each question. Circle the best answer or write your answer on the lines.

The Iditarod

Every March, dozens of dog sled teams line up in Anchorage, Alaska, for one of the toughest races on Earth: the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Each team includes a human driver, called a musher, and a team of a dozen or more dogs at the start. Together, they travel roughly 1,000 miles across frozen rivers, dense forests, mountain passes, and windswept coastline to the town of Nome.

The race honors an important event in Alaska's history. In the winter of 1925, a deadly disease called diphtheria broke out in Nome. The town desperately needed medicine, but no plane could fly in the brutal cold, and the sea was frozen. So teams of sled dogs carried the medicine in a relay, passing it from team to team across hundreds of miles. They delivered it in about five and a half days. One of the lead dogs, Balto, became famous, and a statue of him stands in New York City's Central Park. Another dog, Togo, ran the longest and most dangerous stretch.

Today's Iditarod usually takes mushers between eight and fifteen days. Temperatures can fall far below zero, and blizzards can make it impossible to see the trail. Mushers rest at checkpoints along the way, where volunteer veterinarians examine every dog. The dogs wear booties to protect their paws from sharp ice, and they eat thousands of calories a day to stay warm and strong.

Most Iditarod dogs are Alaskan huskies, which are bred for speed, endurance, and thick coats rather than for looks. Mushers often say the race is not about one champion. It is about the trust between a musher and the dogs.

Many fans follow the race online, cheering for their favorite teams. When the first musher reaches Nome, the town celebrates. A wooden arch marks the finish line, and a lantern called the Widow's Lamp stays lit there until the very last team arrives safely.

1. **Main idea:** What is this passage mostly about?

   A. the life of a veterinarian B. the Iditarod race and the history it honors C. how to train a puppy D. the city of Anchorage

2. **Detail:** Why did Nome need medicine in 1925?

   A. Its hospital burned down. B. A deadly disease called diphtheria broke out. C. A storm destroyed its stores. D. It had too many dogs.

3. **Inference:** Why did people use sled dogs instead of planes in 1925?

   A. The town did not allow planes. B. Planes had not been invented. C. Dogs were faster than planes. D. No plane could fly in the brutal cold, and the sea was frozen.

4. **Vocabulary:** A musher is...

   A. a lead dog B. the human driver of a dog sled team C. a kind of sled D. a checkpoint

5. **Detail:** What do volunteer veterinarians do at checkpoints?

ANSWER KEY

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