

• Reading Comprehension 1 Level 9

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

In the early 1920's, settlers came to Alaska looking for gold. They traveled by boat to the coastal towns of Seward and Knik, and from there by land into the gold fields. The trail they used to travel inland is known today as the Iditarod Trail, one of the National Historic Trails designated by the Congress of the United States. The Iditarod Trail quickly became a major thoroughfare in Alaska, as the mail and supplies were carried across this trail. People also used it to get from place to place, including the priests, ministers, and judges who had to travel between villages. In the winter, the settlers' only means of travel down this trail was via dog sled.

Once the gold rush ended, many gold-seekers went back to where they had come from, and suddenly there was much less travel on the Iditarod Trail. The introduction of the airplane in the late 1920's meant dog teams were no longer the standard **mode** of transportation, and of course with the airplane carrying the mail and supplies, there was less need for land travel in general. The final blow to the use of the dog teams was the appearance of snowmobiles.

By the mid 1960's, most Alaskans didn't even know the Iditarod Trail existed, or that dog teams had played a crucial role in Alaska's early settlements. Dorothy G. Page, a **self-made historian**, recognized how few people knew about the former use of sled dogs as working animals and about the Iditarod Trail's role in Alaska's colorful history. To raise awareness about this aspect of Alaskan history, she came up with the idea to have a dog sled race over the Iditarod Trail. She presented her idea to an enthusiastic musher, as dog sled drivers are known, named Joe Redington, Sr. Soon the Pages and the Redingtons were working together to promote the idea of the Iditarod race.

Many people worked to make the first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race a reality in 1967. The Aurora Dog Musher's Club, along with men from the Adult Camp in Sutton, helped clear years of overgrowth from the first nine miles of the Iditarod Trail. To raise interest in the race, a \$25,000 purse was offered, with Joe Redington donating one acre of his land to help raise the funds. The short race, approximately 27 miles long, was put on a second time in 1969.

After these first two successful races, the goal was to lengthen the race a little further to the ghost town of Iditarod by 1973. However in 1972, the U.S. Army reopened the trail as a winter exercise, and so in 1973, the decision was made to take the race all the way to the city of Nome—over 1,000 miles. There were many who believed it could not be done and that it was crazy to send a bunch of mushers out into the vast, uninhabited Alaskan wilderness. But the race went! 22 mushers finished that year, and to date over 400 people have completed it.

Questions

- 1) The primary purpose of this passage is to
- A. recount the history of the Iditarod trail and the race that memorializes it
 - B. describe the obstacles involved in founding the Iditarod race
 - C. outline the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Iditarod Trail
 - D. reestablish the important place of the Iditarod Trail in Alaska's history

- 2) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that all of the following contributed to the disuse of the Iditarod Trail except
- A. more modern forms of transportation
 - B. depleted gold mines
 - C. highway routes to ghost towns
 - D. reduced demand for land travel
- 3) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best definition for **mode**?
- A. formula
 - B. way
 - C. preference
 - D. option
- 4) According to the passage, the initial Iditarod race
- A. was funded through the sale of musher entrance fees
 - B. was founded by an advocate for Alaskan history
 - C. ended at the ghost town of Iditarod
 - D. boasted a total of 400 entrants
- 5) As used in paragraph 3, the phrase “self-made historian” implies that Dorothy G. Page
- A. was employed by the state to keep its dog sled history alive
 - B. was determined to honor the glories of the gold rush in spite of her questionable credentials
 - C. had pursued the study of Alaska’s history out of her own interest
 - D. had personally educated others about Alaska’s history
- 6) In 1925, when a diphtheria outbreak threatened the lives of people in the remote town of Nome, the government used the Iditarod Trail to transport medicine nearly 700 miles to the town. If the author chose to include this fact in the passage, it would best fit in
- A. paragraph 1
 - B. paragraph 2
 - C. paragraph 3
 - D. paragraph 5
- 7) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that because the U.S. Army reopened the Iditarod Trail in 1972,
- A. more people could compete in the Iditarod race
 - B. the mushers had to get permission from the U.S. Army to hold the race
 - C. the trail was cleared all the way to Nome
 - D. the Iditarod race became a seasonal Army competition

Answers and Explanations

1) **A**

An author's purpose is directly related to the content of the passage. In paragraph 1, the author gives a brief history of the Iditarod Trail. Paragraph 2 identifies the reasons why the trail fell out of use. Paragraph 3 describes the inspiration behind the Iditarod race. Paragraph 4 explains the efforts that made the race a reality. Paragraph 5 describes how the race was lengthened and changed over the years. From this overview, we can understand that the content of the passage discusses the history of the Iditarod Trail and the race that memorializes it. This means the author's primary purpose is to recount this history. Therefore **(A)** is correct. Although paragraph 4 identifies the efforts that made the race a reality, the passage does not overtly discuss the obstacles to founding the race. This makes **(B)** incorrect. Paragraph 1 outlines the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Iditarod Trail, but the rest of the passage goes on to describe how the trail fell into disuse and was eventually memorialized with a race. Because it is too narrow in scope, **(C)** is incorrect. Dorothy G. Page's purpose was to reestablish the important place of the Iditarod Trail in Alaska's history, as the author explains in paragraph 3. Yet the author's purpose is different from Page's purpose. The author merely tells the story of this history; he or she does not seek to reestablish the important place of the trail in history. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **C**

In paragraph 2, the author identifies the factors that contributed to the disuse of the Iditarod Trail. The author does not mention highway routes to ghost towns, so **(C)** is correct. In paragraph 2, the author states, "The introduction of the airplane in the late 1920's meant dog teams were no longer the standard mode of transportation...The final blow to the use of the dog teams was the appearance of snowmobiles." From this we can infer that more modern forms of transportation, like airplanes and snowmobiles, contributed to the disuse of the trail. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "Once the gold rush ended, many gold-seekers went back to where they had come from, and suddenly there was much less travel on the Iditarod Trail." From this we can infer that depleted gold mines reduced the amount of travel on the trail, so **(B)** is incorrect. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "With the airplane carrying the mail and supplies, there was less need for land travel in general." From this we can infer that a reduced demand for land travel contributed to the disuse of the trail. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

3) **B**

mode (*noun*): a way or manner in which something is done.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, "The introduction of the airplane in the late 1920's meant dog teams were no longer the standard mode of transportation." In paragraph 1, the author tells us that in the past, "in the winter, the settlers' only means of travel down this trail was via dog sled." From this we can understand that previously the only means of travel in the winter was by dog sled, but once airplanes were introduced, dog sleds were not the standard *mode* of transportation, or not the only means of travel. *Way* is a good definition for mode or means in this context, so **(B)** is correct. *Formula* means a recipe or prescription for doing something, often with more than one step. Since using dog sleds is not a formula for transportation, **(A)** is incorrect. *Preference* means something that is chosen over something else. Since the dog sleds were the "only" means of travel, it was not a preference. This makes **(C)** incorrect. *Option* means choice, but because the dog sleds were the "only" means of travel, people did not have a choice to use something else. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

4) **B**

In paragraph 3, the author tells us that "Dorothy G. Page, a self-made historian, recognized how few people knew about the former use of sled dogs as working animals and about the Iditarod Trail's role in Alaska's colorful history. To raise awareness about this aspect of Alaskan history, she came up with the idea to have a dog sled race over the Iditarod Trail." From this we know that the founder of the initial Iditarod race was a "historian" who wanted to "raise awareness about...Alaskan history." Another way to say this is that Dorothy G. Page was an advocate for Alaskan history. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The passage does not contain information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

5) **C**

In paragraph 3, we learn that "Dorothy G. Page, a self-made historian, recognized how few people knew about the former use of sled dogs as working animals and about the Iditarod Trail's role in Alaska's colorful history." To describe Page as "self-made" implies that she did not hold formal credentials as a historian, but rather had pursued the study of Alaska's history out of her own interest. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The passage does not contain information to support choice **(A)**. Therefore it is incorrect. The passage tells us that Page wanted people to remember the Iditarod Trail as well as the history of dog sledding in Alaska. This is not the same thing as honoring the glories of the gold rush. This means **(B)** is incorrect. The passage tells us that Page wanted people to remember Alaska's history, and we can infer that she likely did educate others about Alaska's history through the creation of the Iditarod race. However, the phrase "self-made historian" does not imply anything about educating others. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

6) **A**

This is a fact about the history of the Iditarod Trail. Since paragraph 1 is devoted to the history of the trail, and particularly its historical uses, this fact would fit in well there. Also, paragraph 1 discusses the early 1920's, whereas paragraph 2 discusses the late 1920's and beyond. This means that a fact about the 1925 medicine run best fits in paragraph 1 chronologically as well. Therefore **(A)** is correct. Paragraph 2 identifies the reasons why the trail fell out of use, so this fact would not fit in well. This means **(B)** is incorrect. Paragraph 3 describes the inspiration behind the Iditarod race, so this fact would not fit in well. This means **(C)** is incorrect. Paragraph 5 describes how the race was lengthened and changed over the years, so this fact would not fit in well. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

7) **C**

In paragraph 4, we learn that in order to put on the first race, men had to "clear years of overgrowth from the first nine miles of the Iditarod Trail." In the same paragraph, we learn that the original two races were only "27 miles long." Then, in paragraph 5, the

author states, "After these first two successful races, the goal was to lengthen the race a little further to the ghost town of Iditarod by 1973. However in 1972, the U.S. Army reopened the trail as a winter exercise, and so in 1973, the decision was made to take the race all the way to the city of Nome—over 1,000 miles." From this we can infer that originally the creators of the race planned to lengthen the 1973 race only to the ghost town of Iditarod. Based on the fact that men had to clear the first nine miles of the trail, we can assume they would have to clear the trail further to make it suitable for a longer race. However, the U.S. Army reopened the trail, "and so...the decision was made to take the race all the way to the city of Nome—over 1,000 miles." The words "and so" tell us that taking the race all the way to Nome was a result of the U.S. Army reopening the trail. Because the U.S. Army reopened the trail, we can infer that the trail was cleared all the way to Nome, and therefore making the race go all the way to Nome was a possibility for the first time. This means **(C)** is correct. In paragraph 5, we learn that 22 people finished the race in 1973. However, we do not know whether this is more or fewer people than in the previous years. This means **(A)** is incorrect. The passage does not contain information to support choices **(B)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.