

A Treacherous Journey Across the Ice

A group of sled dogs and their drivers are put to the ultimate test

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 1120L (captions only)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to analyze the key ideas and details in a historical play

Featured Skill: key ideas and details

Additional skills covered in this lesson plan: setting, conflict, character, inference, critical thinking, comparing

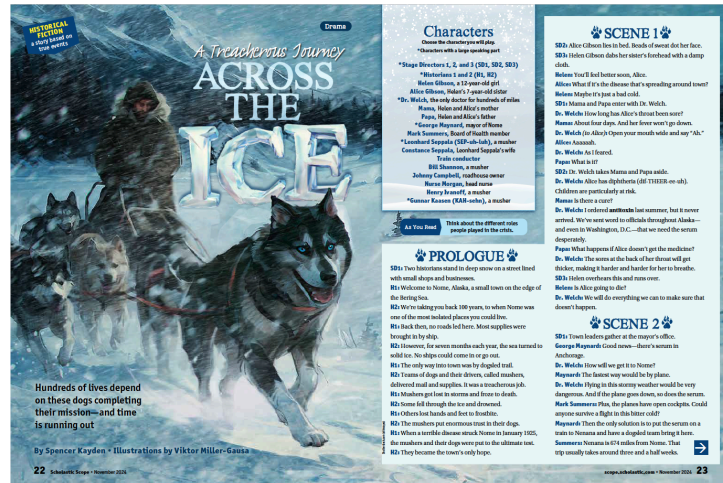
Essential Question:

- What is the relationship between humans and dogs?
- How do we make good decisions?
- What determines who is recognized for their accomplishments and who is not?

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, SL.1

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Video:

- Beyond the Story

Connected reading from the Scope archives:

- "The Race Against Death"

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Discussion Questions
- Core Skills Workout: Inference
- Featured Skill: Key Ideas and Details
- Optional Extension: Compare Two Texts
- Choice Board
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz*

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Prepare to Read (20 minutes)

Do Now: Journal About Heroic Animals (10 minutes)

- Have students respond to the following prompt in their journals: *In what ways can animals be heroes?*

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *antitoxin, intact, roadhouses, terrain*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

2. Read and Discuss (55 minutes)

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud the As You Read box on page 23 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class.
- Divide students into groups to discuss the following **Discussion Questions**, which are also located in the Resources tab.

Discussion Questions

(30 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What important details about the setting do we learn in the prologue? Why are these details important?** (setting) *The Prologue establishes that during the time of the story, Nome was extremely isolated. There were no roads that led to Nome, so most supplies had to be delivered by ship. But for seven months a year, the sea froze and was not accessible by ship. During this time, the town was solely dependent on teams of dogs and mushers. These teams had*

to navigate the treacherous terrain and risk getting lost in storms, losing limbs to frostbite, and falling through the ice. These details are important because they help readers understand why, when there was a diphtheria outbreak in Nome and no medicine there to treat it, getting the medicine to Nome quickly was such an enormous challenge. In other words, the details about the setting help set up the main conflict of the play.

2. **What conflict do town leaders attempt to solve in Scene 2? What plan is put in place?** (conflict) *In Scene 2, town leaders try to find a way to get serum needed to treat diphtheria, a life-threatening disease that is affecting many of the town's children, from Anchorage to Nome as quickly as possible. Because it is too cold and stormy to have a plane deliver the serum, town leaders come up with a plan to have the serum brought to the town of Nenana by train and then have a relay of dogsled teams pick up the serum and bring it to Nome.*
3. **At the end of Scene 3, Leonhard Seppala says, "This entire town is counting on me. I can't let them down." What do these statements and the previous conversation with his wife tell you about him?** (character) *These statements show that Seppala is willing to take risks in order to save as much time, and as many lives, as he possibly can, even if it means putting himself in risky situations. He takes his responsibility very seriously and he will do whatever it takes to get the job done.*
4. **In Scene 9, Dr. Welch and Mayor Maynard decide to tell the mushers to wait for the storm to pass. Do you think they made the right decision? Why doesn't musher Gunnar Kaasen end up waiting?** (inference, critical thinking) *Answers may vary. Some students might say yes, Dr. Welch and the mayor made the right call. It was extremely risky to travel during the blizzard and if one of the mushers had died or gotten lost on the journey, many people would have suffered. Other students might say no, Dr. Welch and the mayor did not make the right call. Too many children and families were depending on the serum, and lives were put at risk by delaying the delivery of the serum. Kaasen did not wait for the storm to pass because he never received the message to wait—although he admits that he probably wouldn't have waited anyway.*
5. **According to the caption "Hero Dogs," which dog and musher received the most recognition? Do you think this recognition was deserved?** (critical thinking) *According to the caption, Balto and Kaasen received the most recognition. As to whether they deserved that recognition, some students might say yes: Balto and Kaasen pushed through a blizzard and delivered the serum much sooner than expected. Others might say no: Delivering the serum was a team effort by all the mushers and dogsled teams, who completed a 25-day journey in just 5 and a half days. Also, Seppala's team, led by his dog Togo, covered a longer and more difficult route than any other team—so, students might argue, if anyone deserved special recognition, it was Togo and Seppala.*

3. Write About It: Key Ideas and Details (45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Key Ideas and Details**. This activity will prepare them to respond to the writing prompt on page 27 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

Create a news program in which characters from A Treacherous Journey Across the Ice are interviewed about what happened. You can create a transcript (a written copy) or make a video with actors.

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or article.

4. Optional Extension: Compare Two Texts (45 minutes)

- Optionally, share from the *Scope* archives the narrative nonfiction article “The Race Against Death,” which is also about the 1925 serum run to Nome. Read the article as a class or assign it as homework.
- After reading, discuss the different approaches to the story taken by the nonfiction authors Gay and Laney Salisbury and the playwright Spencer Kayden. Ask the following questions.

Discussion Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. In a few sentences, describe the main differences between how the story is told in the nonfiction article and how it is told in the play. *In the nonfiction, the authors are able to simply explain to readers what happened, providing background information and details as needed. In the play, what happened is revealed mostly through dialogue and action.*
2. What challenges do you think Kayden might have faced in telling the story of the serum run in the form of a play? *Students might suggest that Kayden had to communicate a lot of complex information and logistics of the relay through dialogue while making sure that characters’*

conversations sound natural. She couldn't just have characters rattle off long passages of expository information that people wouldn't have really said to one another.

3. Which version of the story did you prefer, the nonfiction or the play? Why? Answers will vary.

Connected reading from the Scope archives:

- Nonfiction: [“The Race Against Death”](#)