

And the Story Goes...

Objective: The students will create a story and illustration relevant to sled dog racing.

Materials: Story Starters (included), Writing and Drawing Paper and Gary Paulsen's *Woodson* (optional)

Time: Two 15 minute sessions

MN Standard: **Language Arts—Writing:** *Types of Writing*

The student will compose various pieces of writing.

- Write in a variety of styles to express meaning, including:
 - a. descriptive
 - b. narrative
 - c. informative

Language Arts—Writing: *Spelling, Grammar and Usage*

The student will apply standard English conventions when writing.

- Compose complete sentences when writing.
- Identify and correct spelling of frequently used words and common homophones.
- Spell roots, suffixes, prefixes, and syllable constructions correctly.
- Apply grammar conventions correctly in writing, including:
 - a. verb tense
 - b. adverbs
 - c. prepositions
 - d. subject and verb agreement
 - e. possessive pronouns.
- Apply punctuation conventions correctly in writing, including:
 - a. apostrophes
 - b. capitalization of proper nouns
 - c. abbreviations
 - d. sentence beginnings
 - e. commas in a series
 - f. quotation marks.

Set Up: Photocopy the included Story Starters and cut them out—one per student. Several students can have the same Story Starter, as it makes for an interesting comparison. Provide each student with a piece of writing and drawing paper (the same paper could be used for both). The Story Starters are taken from Gary Paulsen's personal account of running the Iditarod in his book *Woodson*.

Process: Set the scene, the students will be creating a story about the Iditarod based on one musher's actual accounts. Each student will create a story and an illustration based on the Story Starter. Give the students the Story Starter and have them create the additional narrative (decide on an appropriate length of time for writing). Have the students copy the Story Starter on their paper using this as their first sentence. In addition, the students will create an illustration to go along with their story. Break this activity into two sessions. One session can be designated for the narrative and one for the illustration. The teacher may decide how this time is divided or the students could be given an option.

Extension: Have the students share their stories and illustrations with the entire class, in small groups or with a partner. It may be interesting to pair the students with the same Story Starters to see the similarities and differences in their stories.

Story Starters

- 🐾 Out of Anchorage. Just madness. There is no sleep the night before, two nights before, trying to get everything ready, no sleep or rest.
- 🐾 I find Cookie, the lead dog, with his head between the back legs of a moose, frozen with terror. The moose, a large cow, turns to look at me when my headlight comes across her.
- 🐾 In the confusion, my leader gets lost and takes a wrong turn while I am looking down into the sled bag and we go forty, fifty miles in the wrong direction.
- 🐾 Noise and pandemonium. Dog teams coming and going, judges and spectators all around. Small planes landing on the ice and taking off. The dogs cannot rest because of the noise.
- 🐾 My team is very slow, much slower than most other teams and I realize on this day that I will be very lucky to finish the race, let alone do well.
- 🐾 In a moment of sheer stupidity, worried that I will lose my team, I tie my left arm to the sled. Seconds later I am knocked off the sled as the dogs careen through the gorge.

- ❦ I sleep on the ground with the dogs and when I awake I find that we are on a small island in a frozen river. It is the most beautiful spot I have ever seen.

- ❦ We are warned about the Burn. It is a ninety-mile-wide stretch of broken country where a forest fire took everything out. I look out across a vast expanse of rocks and dirt and dead grass and burned trees fallen across one another and no snow—not a flake—as far as I can see.

- ❦ It must be the same as going to the moon, crossing the interior of Alaska by dog team. After a time it seems the team isn't moving, that the country, the tundra, the endless grass and shallow snow are rolling by beneath us.

- ❦ I run fifty paces and ride fifty and run fifty and ride fifty the whole night and the running brings my body heat back up.

- ❦ The run up the Yukon River is horrific. A hundred and eighty miles straight north into the wind.

- ❦ I cannot stand the wind. I turn backward on the sled and hook my elbows and ride but it is still too cold. I put on all my extra clothes and it is still too cold.

- ❦ We come out to the coast at an Eskimo village and one of the villagers, an older man, takes me in for the night and feeds me while I sit in his small house.

- 🐾 We run through the day along the edge of the beach, running on the ice itself because the wind has blown all the snow off the beach sand. I can see the lights of the finish, of Nome, twenty miles ahead.

- 🐾 In Nome, I hug my wife and son and then the dogs, starting from front to back, hugging each dog.

- 🐾 Cookie, the lead dog, stopped before the arch and I had to drag her beneath it to finish—she was afraid of the crowd of people.