

The Iditarod

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.

The Painting

Once upon a time a famous art museum searched the world over for the best paintings it could find. After a long search, the museum found a beautiful Old Master painting depicting youths and maidens frolicking in a wood. The directors were only too glad to pay millions for this painting because they were captivated by its beauty and elegance. How delightfully the maidens' hair and mouths were drawn, how perfectly the hands and arms of the youths, how lifelike the bare feet on the forest floor. But the curator of the museum was the happiest one of all, for he had now become guardian and protector of a famous work by a famous painter.

"Every time I look at that painting," he would say, "I see new beauties and excellences. Just look at these leaves here, the sweep of the branches from this tree, capturing just the hint of a breeze and seeming to vibrate with the music from the dance of the youths and maidens in the clearing. My very soul resonates with the greatness of it all."

Needless to say, this wonderful painting was the most popular exhibit at the museum, providing instruction and delight for thousands of visitors. Everyone, from the young child who could barely walk to the old man who could barely walk, enjoyed its beauty frankly and openly or profited from studying its color and arrangement. Children loved to see the happy figures kicking up their feet with joy; the young people marveled at the freshness and beauty of the figures; those of mature years stood astonished at the excellent technique that could present such a convincing vision; the old remarked upon the feeling of cozy intimacy produced by the scene of innocent pleasure.

"This painting is almost too good to be true," remarked one visitor prophetically as he purchased a print of it.

One day a horrible discovery was made: the painting was not a genuine Old Master after all. It was a forgery. It had not been painted by the famous artist whose name was on it, and in fact it had been painted within the last ten years. The museum directors and the curator were horrified and consumed with shame. Immediately the painting was jerked from the walls of the museum and **ignominiously** relegated to a basement storeroom.

"We regret such an unfortunate imposition," the curator told the museum's patrons. "This painting is not art; it is a tawdry fake. This painting is a lie."

At first the public was saddened to lose sight of such a popular painting, and a few mild protests were raised, but eventually concern for the painting was pushed aside by other more pressing concerns, and it was forgotten (as are all things no longer directly in front of us in this busy world) and life continued.

Only the museum curator and an occasional junior staff member ever saw the painting now, hanging in the dim light of the basement well away from public view. All that was heard of it was the curator's occasional disparaging comment.

"Every day I see new defects and ugliness in this fraudulent outrage," he would say. "Just look how false the sun on the leaves looks, how phony is the wisp of that girl's hair, how ugly the clouds there, and how awkward that boy's position in the dance. How we were ever taken in by this obvious cheat is beyond me." And finally, shaking his head to show his regret, he concluded, "What we did was foolish and shameful."

The Octopus

Some people say that the best defense is a good offense; an octopus, however, would disagree. In addition to being one of the strangest and most beautiful creatures in nature, the octopus has some of the most inventive and effective defense mechanisms imaginable. While other animals have teeth, horns, or claws to help defend them from predators, the octopus concentrates its energy on hiding from and confusing its attackers. When it wants to get away, the octopus has an impressive arsenal of tricks at its disposal.

The most well-known of the octopus's defense mechanisms is its ability to squirt clouds of ink into the water. Some octopi use this cloud of ink as camouflage; after squirting the ink, the octopus retreats into the ink cloud where the predator cannot see it. Other octopi use the ink cloud as a decoy. If a large, intelligent predator such as a shark knows that octopi use ink clouds for camouflage, it might simply attack the ink cloud blindly, hoping to make contact with the octopus inside. However, some sneaky octopi will release the ink cloud in one direction and scurry away in another direction, leaving the predator with nothing but a mouthful of ink. In addition to confusing predators' sense of sight, these ink clouds also confuse their sense of smell. The ink is composed primarily of melanin (the same chemical that gives human skin its color), which can shut down a predator's sense of smell. If an octopus cannot be seen or smelled, it has a much higher chance of escaping an attack.

Another defense mechanism possessed by many octopi is the ability to change color, much like a chameleon. Most animals get their skin color from chemicals in the skin called chromatophores (melanin is one of these chromatophores). Chromatophores might contain yellow, orange, red, brown, or black pigments, and the amount of each pigment present in the skin determines an animal's color. While most animals are always the same color, some species of octopi can control the amount of each color pigment in their skin cells, allowing them to change color. Some poisonous octopi, when provoked, will change their skin to a bright, eye-catching color to warn predators that they are dangerous and ready to strike.

Other octopi use this ability to change their skin to the color and texture of seaweed or coral, allowing them to blend in with their environment. Finally, some octopi—such as the mimic octopus—use this colorchanging ability to masquerade as another type of animal. The body of an octopus is highly flexible, and some species can combine this flexibility with their color-changing skills to make themselves resemble more dangerous animals such as sea snakes or eels.

Yet another defense mechanism possessed by some octopi is the ability to perform an autotomy, or self-amputation, of one of their limbs and regrow it later. Many species of skink and lizard also possess this ability, which allows them to shed their tails when caught by a predator and therefore get away. When a predator catches a tentacle the octopus can amputate this tentacle, thereby unfettering itself, and regrow the tentacle later. Some octopi, however, are even cleverer. When threatened by a predator, these octopi will shed a tentacle before being attacked in the hope that the predator will go after the detached tentacle rather than the octopus itself.

While the octopus may not be the most vicious creature in the ocean, its numerous and clever defense mechanisms help it to survive in the dangerous undersea world.

The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew

First introduced in 1927, The Hardy Boys Mystery Stories are a series of books about the adventures of brothers Frank and Joe Hardy, teenaged detectives who solve one baffling mystery after another. The Hardy Boys were so popular among young boys that in 1930 a similar series was created for girls featuring a sixteen-year-old detective named Nancy Drew. The cover of each volume of The Hardy Boys states that the author of the series is Franklin W. Dixon; the Nancy Drew Mystery Stories are supposedly written by Carolyn Keene. Over the years, though, many fans of both series have been surprised to find out that Franklin W. Dixon and Carolyn Keene are not real people. If Franklin W. Dixon and Carolyn Keene never existed, then who wrote The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries?

The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew books were written through a process called ghostwriting. A ghostwriter writes a book according to a specific formula. While ghostwriters are paid for writing the books, their authorship is not acknowledged, and their names do not appear on the published books. Ghostwriters can write books for children or adults, the content of which is unspecific. Sometimes they work on book series with a lot of individual titles, such as The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series.

The initial idea for both The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series was developed by a man named Edward Stratemeyer, who owned a publishing company that specialized in children's books. Stratemeyer noticed the increasing popularity of mysteries among adults, and surmised that children would enjoy reading mysteries about younger detectives with whom they could identify. Stratemeyer first developed each book with an outline describing the plot and setting. Once he completed the outline, Stratemeyer then hired a ghostwriter to convert it into a book of slightly over 200 pages. After the ghostwriter had written a draft of a book, he or she would send it back to Stratemeyer, who would make a list of corrections and mail it back to the ghostwriter. The ghostwriter would revise the book according to Stratemeyer's instructions and then return it to him. Once Stratemeyer approved the book, it was ready for publication.

Because each series ran for so many years, Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys both had a number of different ghostwriters producing books; however, the first ghostwriter for each series proved to be the most influential. The initial ghostwriter for The Hardy Boys was a Canadian journalist named Leslie McFarlane. A few years later, Mildred A. Wirt, a young writer from Iowa, began writing the Nancy Drew books. Although they were using prepared outlines as guides, both McFarlane and Wirt developed the characters themselves. The personalities of Frank and Joe Hardy and Nancy Drew arose directly from McFarlane's and Wirt's imaginations. For example, Mildred Wirt had been a star college athlete and gave Nancy similar athletic abilities. The ghostwriters were also responsible for numerous plot and setting details. Leslie McFarlane used elements of his small Canadian town to create Bayport, the Hardy Boys' fictional hometown.

Regardless of the debates about their literary merit, each series of books has exerted an undeniable influence on American and even global culture. Most Americans have never heard of Edward Stratemeyer, Leslie McFarlane, or Mildred Wirt, but people throughout the world are familiar with Nancy Drew and Frank and Joe Hardy.

Atlas

According to Greek mythology, Atlas was a Titan of enormous strength. After being defeated by the god Zeus, Atlas was forced to carry the earth and the sky for an eternity. In depictions of Atlas, he is shown as a stooped figure carrying the globe on his shoulders. Because of his association with the globe, maps began to be decorated with this image of Atlas. Accordingly, the word “atlas” became a nickname for a collection of maps. Today, an atlas refers to any book that consists of a bound collection of maps. For example, an atlas can be made up of maps of the countries of the world or of the states of the United States. Sometimes an atlas will also contain graphs and charts with other statistical information about the culture, religion, climate, or government of the population of a given area.

Untitled

Just announced: existing home sales hit an annualized rate of 5.03 million units during August. That exceeds the 4.70 million unit rate that had been expected, on average, among economists polled by InstaPoll.com. The pace is also up from the rate of 4.67 million units recorded during the previous month. The broad market hasn't reacted strongly to the data. However, homebuilders Genix (GEN 14.32, +0.22), ND Home (NDH 6.59, +0.15), and Home Group (HMG 4.54, +0.03) are all up nicely as investors anticipate that a rise in existing home sales portends an acceleration of the rate of new home sales.

Elementary School and Middle School

What is it like to transition from elementary to middle school? That is a question many kids ask each year. Having experienced both, I can tell you that there are plenty of similarities as well as some very big differences between the two types of schools.

Elementary schools and middle schools have many traits in common. Typically, both are open five days a week for a set number of hours each day. Students sit at desks in classrooms and are expected to listen to and learn from their teachers. There is a set time for lunch. Each day, students are given homework assignments. Students take quizzes and tests. In all of these ways, middle school should feel somewhat familiar to new students.

However, there are some big changes that new middle school students should be aware of. In elementary school, students usually stay in the same classroom with one teacher for most of the day. That is not the case in middle school, where students typically have a different teacher for each subject. Students must move to a different classroom for each subject too. Since there is not one classroom in which to store supplies, middle schools often provide students with lockers. For many kids, getting a locker is a welcome rite of passage.

Making the move from elementary school to middle school may seem scary, but knowing what to expect can really help. Elementary school provides kids with the experiences they need to be ready for middle school. Even though moving on means adjusting to a new environment, some things, including many of the classmates who accompany you, will remain the same.

Money and Penny

Money Mark was born rich. He never had to work a day in his life and he got everything handed to him on a silver platter. When he was six, Money Mark wanted to go to a basketball game. His father paid the starting five of the Bulls and Celtics to play a private game of Nerf-ball in Money Mark's bedroom. When Money Mark turned thirteen, he wanted to start a band. His father hired the Rolling Stones to play with him every Saturday at the family's private concert hall, though his family was never there. By the time he was twenty-one, Money Mark was bored with life. He was surrounded by a bunch of possessions that he didn't appreciate and Money Mark could find nothing new or exciting in his life. Despite his vast wealth, Money Mark never found happiness.

Penny Petal was born poor. Her family hardly had anything to eat, but they loved each other. Penny Petal appreciated everything she got. When she was six, her father walked her around the United Center before the Bulls played the Celtics. She was excited by the crazy fans and feeling in the air. She looked forward to the day that she could see a real game. When she was thirteen, she learned to play the buckets. She was an extremely talented musician, a natural percussionist, and everyone on the block loved the rhythms that poured from her palms. By the time she was twenty-one, Penny was a successful businesswoman. Now she had everything that she had ever dreamed of and she truly loved to share her wealth and happiness with her family who supported her through all of the hard times.

If by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too:
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream---and not make dreams your master;
If you can think---and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same:.
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss:
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings---nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And---which is more---you'll be a Man, my son!

The Quarrel by Maxine Kumin

Said a lightning bug to a firefly,
"Look at the lightning bugs fly by!"
"Silly dunce!" said the fly. "What bug ever flew?
Those are fireflies. And so are you."
"Bug!" cried the bug. "Fly!" cried the fly.
"Wait!" said a glowworm happening by.
"I'm a worm," squirmed the worm. "I glimmer all night.
You are worms, both of you. I know that I'm right."
"Fly!" cried the fly. "Worm!" cried the worm.
"Bug!" cried the bug. "I'm standing firm!"
Back and forth through the dark each shouted his word
Till their quarrel awakened the early bird.
"You three noisy things, you are all related,"
She said to the worm, and promptly ate it.
With a snap of her bill she finished the fly,
And the lightning bug was the last to die.
All glowers and glimmerers, there's a MORAL:
_____."

Still I Rise

by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your
hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the
tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and
fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously
clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the
slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

William Ernest Henley