

Talk About It

What do you know about sled dogs? How could a sled dog become a hero?



Find out more about dogs at www.macmillanmh.com

SLED DOGS AS HEROES

Vocabulary

pedestrians intercept
outskirts quarantine
unbearable epidemic
rendezvous plight

Thesaurus

A thesaurus lists **Synonyms**, words that have the same or nearly the same meaning.

intercept = *catch; stop; block; take away*



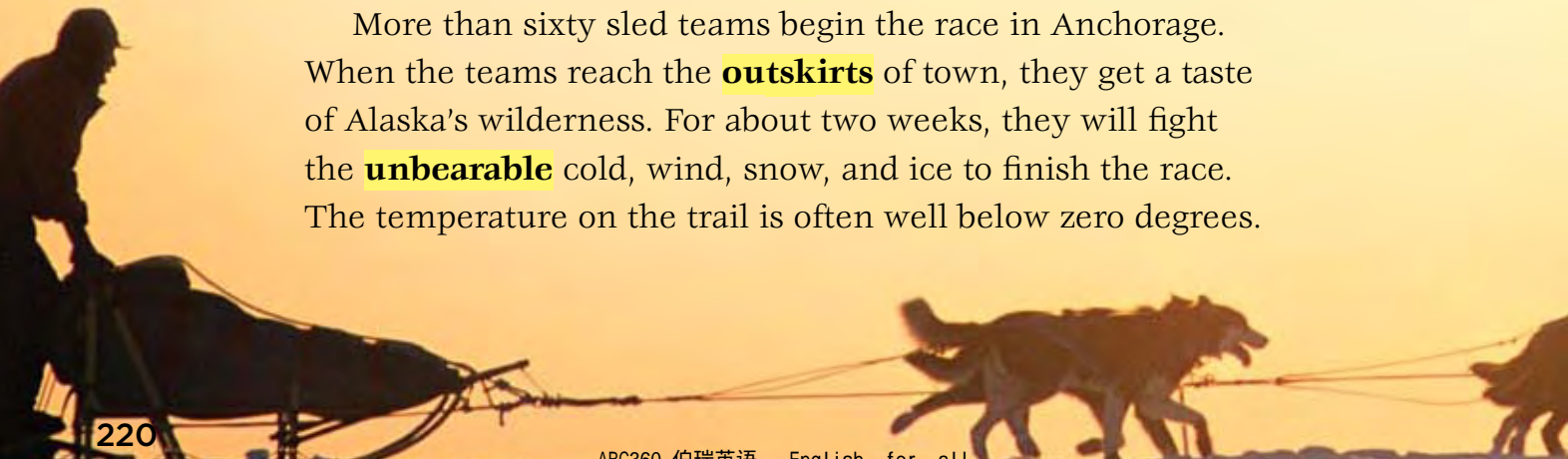
THE LAST GREAT RACE ON EARTH

by David Goldberg

Life is different in Anchorage, Alaska, at the beginning of March. Every year at this time, the downtown streets become crowded with people. But these are not just regular **pedestrians**. In addition to the people walking through the streets, there are hundreds of dogs. It is time for the Iditarod—the famous dogsled race of Alaska.

The name of the race comes from the name of an Alaska gold rush town, Iditarod. It means “distant” or “distant place.” It comes from one of the languages of native Alaskans.

More than sixty sled teams begin the race in Anchorage. When the teams reach the **outskirts** of town, they get a taste of Alaska’s wilderness. For about two weeks, they will fight the **unbearable** cold, wind, snow, and ice to finish the race. The temperature on the trail is often well below zero degrees.



The Iditarod trail stretches for about a thousand miles. It has many **rendezvous** points. At these meeting places, race teams “check in” to let officials know how they are doing. Some teams get into trouble along the way. Officials will **intercept** them on the trail and give them the help they need. For example, officials might stop a team’s progress to give first aid or to collect an injured or tired dog. These dogs are cared for and reunited with their owners after the race.

The Iditarod trail is an important part of Alaska’s history. A part of the trail was used by some heroic dogs and humans in 1925. In Nome, Alaska, many people were catching the deadly disease diphtheria. The whole town was in **quarantine**, or isolation, in order to stop this **epidemic**. The only way to get medicine to Nome was by dogsled. About twenty “mushers,” or dogsled drivers, offered to help. They wanted to save the people of Nome from this terrible **plight**.

Today the Iditarod race honors this heroic journey and all of the journeys on the famous trail. As the race organizers say, the Iditarod is “the last great race on Earth.”

Reread for Comprehension



Summarize

Sequence

A Sequence Chart can help you summarize the events in a selection. Understanding the sequence will help you better understand what you read.

A flow chart can help you organize the events in a selection or the steps in a process. Use a Sequence Chart as you reread “The Last Great Race on Earth.”

