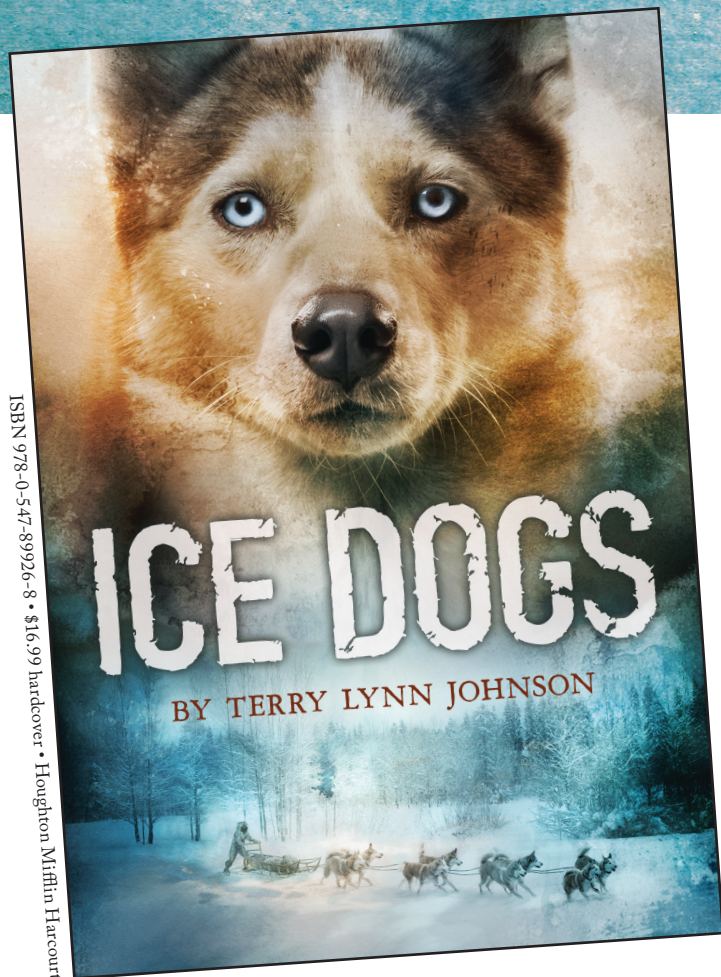


# DISCUSSION GUIDE




## ICE DOGS

by  
**Terry Lynn Johnson**

A Junior Library Guild Selection

*Lost.* That's how fourteen-year-old dogsledder Victoria Secord has felt ever since her father died. A champion musher, Victoria is independent, self-reliant, and, thanks to her dad, an expert in surviving the unforgiving Alaskan bush. When an injured "city boy" and a freak snowstorm catch Victoria and her dog team by surprise, however, a routine trip becomes a life-or-death trek through the frozen wilderness.

Readers will be spellbound by this high-stakes, high-adventure novel of endurance, hope, and finding your way back home.



"A top junior dog sled racer loses her way in this thoroughly engaging and incredibly suspenseful survival story. . . . Well-crafted, moving and gripping."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A page-turner full of white-knuckle action. . . . Readers will be riveted until the end."













—*Publishers Weekly*

"*Ice Dogs* is both a great sled dog story and a suspenseful tale of winter survival. The story's emotional depth is interwoven with the action. I found it authentic to the North, and read it in one gulp."

—Will Hobbs, author of *Far North* and *Never Say Die*



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

-  The novel begins with the excitement of a dog sled race. One racer, Victoria Secord, is described as a hometown girl. Amidst the high energy of the race, Victoria's focus is pierced by the thought that there is no one there to cheer for her. How does this initial scene set the mood for the rest of the novel and what does it reveal about the main character, Victoria? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3)**
-  Re-read pages four and five of the novel. Discuss the author's rich use of sensory detail and how the inclusion of vivid details adds to the reader's understanding of the dog sled race. **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4)**
-  The author often shares events or mentions details that become important later on in the story. What might seem like a small detail or event becomes important as the narrative progresses. For example, Victoria shares that her conversations with her mother have "stuttered like this since the coffee shop incident." Discuss how the author's style of dropping interesting clues helps the reader follow the story. **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3)**
-  Victoria has a powerful connection to the wilderness. During the dog sled race that opens the story Victoria thinks, "Some mushers wear ski goggles, but I don't like how looking through goggles separates me from my environment. I like to see things clearly." How does this statement offer insight into Victoria's personality and to her relationship with the wild? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3)**
-  Victoria's relationship with her mother has been strained since the death of Victoria's father. What led to the tension between mother and daughter and how did this friction affect Victoria's decision to head out alone with her team of dogs? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1)**
-  Victoria's dogs are of paramount importance to her. Beyond the dogs' usefulness in sled races, what do they represent in Victoria's life? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1)**
-  Victoria comes across an injured snowmobile rider as she and her team of dogs are on their way to Cook's. How does this adventure story change with the addition of another character? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6)**
-  Victoria and Chris face dangerous wildlife as they try to find their way home. What animals do they meet along the way and how does each animal present danger and hope for the two lost teenagers?
-  Victoria is experienced in the wild and understands many elements necessary to survive in the snow and the cold. Chris is far less experienced than Victoria and yet he does offer some important contributions to their survival. What skills does Chris share with Victoria and her team of dogs? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3)**
-  Starvation and impending hypothermia shadow every step that Victoria and Chris make toward the end of their journey. How does the team of dogs play an important role in Victoria and Chris' survival once the two reach the yurt?
-  Why do you think the author includes a climactic scene of survival that occurs on the water? **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2)**
-  What is the significance of Victoria sharing the family portrait with Chris at the party that ends the story?

# ACTIVITIES



## Survival Skills

Meet in a group of four to five students. Discuss how your group might fare in a situation similar to the one Victoria and Chris faced. Which personal qualities and skills would each of the group members have to offer in a struggle to survive adversity in the wilderness?

## Alaskan Animals

Research to learn more about one of the animals that Victoria and Chris encountered in the wild (wolf, snowshoe hare, beaver, etc.). Discover how each is suited to living in the wilds of Alaska. Present your findings in the form of a poster report that details the animal's size and other physical characteristics, what the animal eats, how it is adapted to be a carnivore or herbivore, its predators and prey, and any other interesting facts about the animal.


## Wilderness 101

Create an illustrated book of wilderness survival tips drawn from information included in the story. Make sure to include not only the knowledge Victoria possessed about how to survive in the wild but also the tips Victoria's father shared with her.

## P.O.V.

*Ice Dogs* is told solely from Victoria's point of view. Re-read the scene when Chris is newly injured, it's snowing heavily, and he and Victoria are facing spending their first night in the wilderness. Rewrite that scene from Chris' point of view.

**(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6)**



**Terry Lynn Johnson** lives in Whitefish Falls, Ontario where for ten years she owned a team of eighteen Alaskan Huskies. When she's not writing, Terry enjoys hiking, snowshoeing, and kayaking. As one of only nine female Conservation Officers in Ontario, Terry works outdoors, often alone, enforcing game and fish laws. She patrols via boat, ATV, and snow machine. *Ice Dogs* was inspired by Terry's own team of huskies. Learn more about her and see pictures of her dogs at [www.TerryLynnJohnson.com](http://www.TerryLynnJohnson.com).

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, PhD. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

# CHARACTER ANALYSIS: CHRIS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Chris goes through significant changes as he endures the hardships of being lost in a snowy wilderness with Victoria. Think of five adjectives that describe Chris over the course of the story: from the beginning of the novel, to events in the wilderness, through the end of the story after he and Victoria are rescued. Create a timeline of Chris' character using the adjectives you have selected to describe him. On the timeline below write an adjective above the line and an event that exemplifies this characteristic below the line. Make sure the story events are arranged in the correct sequence.

**(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3)**

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

# CAUSE AND EFFECT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Victoria and Chris seem to meet one disaster after another as they try to find their way out of the wilderness. Each struggle they face causes something else to happen. Locate story details that show the cause and effect relationship of key events in the story. For example: CAUSE: Chris accidentally burns the map. EFFECT: The two no longer have a resource to find the trail. **(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1)**

CAUSE	EFFECT