



Murder on the Iditarod Trail

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The winner of Alaska's world-famous Iditarod -- a grueling, eleven-hundred-mile dog sled race across a frigid Arctic wilderness---takes home a \$250,000 purse.

But this year, the prize is survival.

Only the toughest and the most able come to compete in this annual torturous test of endurance, skill, and courage. Now, suddenly and inexplicably, the top Iditarod contestants are dying one by one in bizarre and gruesome ways. Jessie Arnold, Alaska's premier female "musher," fears she may be the next intended victim, but nothing is going to prevent her from aggressively pursuing the glory and the rewards that victory brings.

Dedicated State Trooper Alex Jensen is determined to track down the murderer before more innocent blood stains the pristine Alaskan snow. But Jensen's hunt is leading him into the frozen heart of the perilous wild that Jessie Arnold knows so well -- a merciless place far from any vestige of civilization, where nature can kill as fast as a bullet...and only the Arctic night can hear your final screams.

Murder on the Iditarod Trail Details

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Author : Sue Henry

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From Reader Review Murder on the Iditarod Trail for online ebook

Joy says

Fully deserved the Anthony and MaCavity awards for Best First Mystery that it won in 1991. It has stayed in my memory as an awesome recreation of a deadly challenge and the mushers' responses. After watching the show on this year's heroic Iditarod race, I had to reread the book again.

See this description of the volunteers who open the trail:

"The snow machine drivers, dressed in layers of outerwear to repel the worst the Arctic can deliver, may cover the full thousand miles without a good night's sleep and with few hot meals. A bed becomes something they dreamed of once; a hot shower, only a memory. They develop shoulders the envy of linebackers. But when they try to explain the pale, empty nights on the ice of Norton Sound, or the northern lights so bright they reflect off the snow in the Farewell Burn, wistful looks come over their wind- and sunburned faces and they drift into silence or stammering attempts at description. Many come back year after year, addicted to the trail."

Gina says

I read this for a challenge only. It is definitely not my type of book. But the writing was good so 2 stars for the writing.

Donna Davis says

A lot of so-called "Cozy" mysteries leave me cold, not cozy. I can't stand really implausible scenarios or cutesy gimmicks. Sue Henry's books, however, are interesting and literate, but the pulse is not so heart-pounding and frantic that it keeps me from falling asleep at night.

This one's setting is self-evident, and the climax will keep you on the edge of your seat (or bed), though. Once you're about 60 percent finished, don't pick it up again till you're ready to finish it!

Sara says

The first of this series and set on the famous dogsled race. All the details make you feel as if you were at least watching a real race.

Erika says

I had to read this book for my job, and it wasn't the most entertaining thing to read. I've never read crime/mystery before this, so I didn't know if all books in this genre have major events (like many people

dying) within the first 40 pages, and then the rest of the book is pretty slow and cheesy as the characters talk about who the murder could be. Most of the dialogue felt fake/forced, and a lot of times it didn't even move the story along whatsoever. There were so many characters and they were referred to by first name, last name, and sometimes nickname, so it was very hard to keep everyone straight. To be honest, I just read to the end because I had to, and I didn't really pay attention to who any of the characters were because the author never took the time to give them an insightful backstory that I could even remotely connect to. The ending was very unsatisfying, as the consequences for the villain were summed up in a few quotes.

Tomi says

Excellent read. The story keeps you guessing until the end. I really enjoyed this book.

Wendy says

A good murder mystery with lots of suspense and adventure. You get to learn about dog racing and Alaskan wilderness too. Yet another US State Challenge book for me.

Marylyn says

I felt like I was on the Iditrod Trail along with Jess. This was a great read and I was intrigued with everything on the trail. (google was in over time) The touch of murder just added to it and you have to love the dogs and the damn hard slog it takes out of all the Mushers and everyone around them.

Spuddie says

I was very pleasantly surprised at how quickly this book went and how hard it was to put it down each time I had to. It was first and foremost a story, but it imparted a lot of information about the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, and Alaska in general, that I sort of knew in a vague way. The landscape itself was a character in the book, and far from being tiresome in its descriptions of the race, the mushers, the equipment and the racing strategy, the minute details actually made the story all the more interesting.

I've had this book on my 'to read' list for several years, passing it over many times, thinking it would be another boring cookie-cutter cozy type mystery transplanted to an interesting setting. It was far from that...it wasn't really a cozy at all, but neither was it super-edgy and grisly with details. The well-fleshed and interesting characters that I found myself caring about right from the beginning, and feeling like I had made some friends by the end were great. The mystery--someone is killing off mushers on the Iditarod trail in ways made to look like accidents--was fairly well hidden. As I often do, I had an inkling about the bad guy, but in this case, I didn't really know why.

Bravo, definitely looking forward to the next one.

Jean says

“I did, I did, I did the Iditarod Trail!” Sue Henry’s *Murder on the Iditarod Trail*, which was first published in 1991, is labeled as a cozy mystery, but to me it was much more intense than a cozy. Spread out over twelve days and one thousand miles, the famous Alaskan dog sled race provides an exciting backdrop for murder. When a musher is found dead on the trail, it appears to be an accident, but things begin to look more suspicious when more contestants die. In this ultra-competitive event, state trooper Alex Jensen wonders, are these deaths sabotage gone awry, or are they murder?

Ms. Henry is no stranger to Alaskan culture; she’s lived there for decades and teaches writing at the University of Alaska in Anchorage. She obviously did her research on this grueling, time-honored event, right down to the basics of mushing, trail checkpoints, and even the personalities of racers. I liked many of her characters, although I had trouble keeping some of them straight. There were three potential killers with very similar temperaments, and that added to the tension, as one of the female challengers, Jessie Arnold, was always in the thick of things and therefore, in need of watching. At least that’s what Trooper Jensen seemed to think. Jessie is determined to prove otherwise. The development of their relationship was fun too.

I would consider this to be mostly an adventure mystery, since the plot focuses so much on the race itself. Some readers might be put off by the details that the author uses to explain the history of the event and the particulars of life on the trail, but I found it quite fascinating. Perhaps it’s because I remember Libby Riddles and Susan Butcher breaking the gender barrier back in the mid-1980s when I first heard of this crazy endurance race. The name itself comes from the native word “Haiditarod, ‘the faraway place.’” If you like reading about tests of endurance with a tinge of mystery thrown in, this may tick those boxes for you. A word of caution: dog lovers will not love one particular part of this book early on. It’s not extremely graphic, and it’s over quickly. However, it cost a star in my rating.

I do have to say that I read this book in the midst of a brief July heat wave, and that made it even more enjoyable. I loved reading the weather reports at the beginning of each chapter that listed a high of something like minus 5 degrees Fahrenheit and a low of minus 22. Severe wind gusts with near-blizzard conditions. Lots of steaming hot coffee is consumed. Lots. I’m not ready for summer to end yet, but reading Sue Henry’s *Murder on the Iditarod Trail* was a pleasant way to chill out for a day.

4 stars

Melissa says

I really wanted to give this book 3.5 stars, but had to go with 3. It was good, but as others have mentioned, I had a lot of trouble keeping the characters straight. So many characters are introduced in a short space of

time without really defining characteristics for all of them. Plus, the author will refer to characters by first name at times and by last name at other times, increasing the confusion. Yet, despite the large number of characters, the number of suspects quickly narrows down and to me it was fairly obvious who the killer was mid-way through the book. I usually don't try very hard to figure out who the killer is, so when I figure it out early, it was fairly obvious.

Despite this it was a good read and fast moving. I enjoyed the descriptions of Alaska and Sue Henry has a good writing style. The main characters, Alex and Jessie, are likable. I haven't decided if I will read the next book in the series or not, I probably will but it's far down my priority list.

Miki says

I don't think this writer could decide if she was writing a mystery or a documentary on the Iditarod. Short paragraphs about the characters alternated with sections that read like the narrative of a PBS special. I could almost hear the voice of Morgan Freeman reading the script. And for Pete's sake, pick a tense already! Back and forth, back and forth between past and present, often in the same paragraph...I was, and am, and shall be, rather seasick.

Pamela McLaren says

This is the first book that I have read by Sue Henry and I have to say, I never would have thought of anyone coming up with a mystery happening on the Iditarod Trail. It was pretty good.

The book begins with the race and quickly some of the racers are either killed or injured. State Trooper Alex Jensen is sent out to find out what is happening but what he didn't expect is the attraction that he had for Jessie Arnold, a female musher who despite the incidents, continues her efforts on the race. From each race stop, the story moves quickly to a strong conclusion. Its not the most demanding or surprising of solutions but still a good read.

Heather L says

Note: My paperback version, published by Avon Twilight in 1993, actually only has 246 pages. This version is not listed at GR.

I wasn't sure I was going to like this one, especially based on comments from other members of the Cozy Mysteries group, but I did. I could not go to bed Friday night until I had finished--sprinting to the end almost as fast as the mushers the end of the race. I was sure of who the murderer was before I was halfway through the book, though a few well-placed red herrings sometimes had me wondering if I was right, or who else it could be if not the person suspected.

Other readers in the Cozy Mysteries group mentioned not liking all the intricate details of the Iditarod, but I found myself pulled in by the race with the same fascination that has non-bicyclists tuning in to the Tour de France every year, or the way people catch Olympic fever every two years. I liked learning about this unique event so few of us in the lower 48 understand, and the unraveling of the mystery kept me interested right up

to the end.

David Ellis says

If the villain hadn't wasted so many hours sabotaging the other racers he would have easily won the race by a long shot instead of being minutes behind the leader. It reminds me of Dr. Evil who has a legitimate businesses making billions but he just needs to be... well... evil.

Donna says

In *Murder on the Iditarod Trail*, the vicious weather of an Alaskan winter is not only the setting but also one the the main antagonists. The plot and characterization are competent, but what makes this a terrific, timeless book is the way the reader gets to go along vicariously on the grueling, two-week race.

With her expertise on the Alaskan wilderness in general and dog-sledding in particular, Sue Henry provides her readers with the gift of insight into a real world completely different from the one most of us inhabit.

Cyn says

As this was a debut novel, I cut it a bit of slack, there were some plot holes and the writing was occasionally inconsistent, that said, it was still pretty interesting! I knew nothing, or at least very little about the Iditarod other than it happens and where it starts and ends. I had no real idea of what an undertaking it is beyond the "whoa, that's crazy" reaction to the distance and the weather faced. The race itself really becomes a character and it is truly fascinating.

Clare O'Beara says

This is a cracking good idea for a murder mystery - it is set amid the long, tough Alaskan race contested each year by champion mushers. There is enough information about dog sledding to satisfy anyone and great care is taken of the dogs themselves. They wear boots to protect their feet, and are vetted and removed if too tired. The mushers have to carry guns in case of enraged wildlife and as these are tough, determined people, tempers can run hot. One after the other three mushers are killed in different ways and contender Jessie Arnold has to do all she can just to survive, never mind try to win. This is my favourite of the Arnold books so far. Readers may also enjoy *Murder on the Yukon Quest*.

The author has another series out about a senior lady who drives around in an RV. This is necessarily constrained by the character's being older.

Other Alaskan books are mysteries by Dana Stabenow - A Cold Day for Murder, Dead in The Water and so on, a very fine series about a female native PI Kate Shugak and her half-wolf dog Mutt. Start at the earlier ones. Another good wilderness mystery author is Nevada Barr who writes about a National Park Ranger called Anna Pigeon.

Shelley says

The setting is brilliant and that really makes this story. The mystery isn't as strong as the setting.

Dianne says

I really, really wanted to like this book. I have read other books in the series but had to wait for this to come out in Kindle form just yesterday. I just finished it and am sitting here scratching my head. I know that others loved this book, and I wonder if they read it when it first came out and it may have been more germane at the time? I did learn a LOT - somewhat more than I wanted to know about the Iditarod Race.

Unfortunately, this left little time to really search for clues as to who had been the murderer and why. this book left State trooper Alex Jensen , looking like a very weak character and Jessie Arnold, Alaska's premier female musher, seemed to not have even been needed in this book.

My biggest complaint -and I admit this may all be my fault- is that the author introduces so many characters in this book, uses first name's sometimes and last names other times, that I couldn't keep them straight.

I ended up not wanting to finish simply because I lost all interest in the murders...the murderer was fairly easy to figure out and the conclusion, while exciting for a brief moment, was all in all unsatisfactory.
