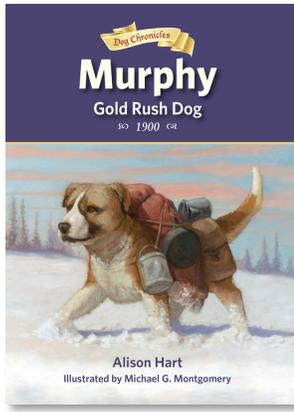


# TEACHER'S GUIDE



## Murphy, Gold Rush Dog

Written by Alison Hart | Illustrated by Michael Montgomery

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Ages 7–10 | Historical fiction | Series: Dog Chronicles

AR • RC • Lexile • GRL V; Gr 5

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Murphy is a sled dog owned by Ruston Carlick, a brutal man who starves and mistreats his sled team at every turn. But one evening Murphy escapes and finds a new, loving family in Sally and her mother, who are trying to build a new life in Nome. But life in the mining town is not easy, and when it seems they may have to return to San Francisco, Sally and Murphy strike out on their own, hoping to find gold to make a permanent home for themselves. But danger awaits them on the wild Alaskan tundra in the form of blizzards, bears, and Murphy's former owner, who will stop at nothing to get Murphy back. Will the intrepid pair survive their journey and outwit Carlick to find their fortune?

### THEMES

Survival | Working dogs | The Nome Gold Rush  
Gold mining in the 1900s | American History

### ACTIVITY WORKSHEETS

The following activity worksheets are included in this guide:

- Vocabulary Word Match
- Research and Writing Assignment

### AFTER YOU READ

Use the following excerpts from the book as post reading discussion questions.

- ***When I was young I had known a gentle touch, a heaping bowl, and a loving home. Then I'd been sold to Carlick who needed a new dog for his sled team. He'd driven us hard. We'd***

***traveled for days and days with no kind words, no warm straw bed, and not enough food to fill our stomachs. So far, this place called Nome was no better than the camps where we'd stayed on the way. And it was not home. (p. 5)***

- Why are Murphy and the other dogs on his team treated so terribly by Carlick?
- Compared to Murphy's previous "loving home," why does he not consider Nome "home"?
- ***Under the wood pilings of a dock, an Inupiaq family camped. [...] the largest one held out a sliver of meat. Food! I stepped toward him, but glanced up at his face. There was no smile, and I spotted a leather strap in his hand. I leaped away. (p. 10)***
  - Why does Murphy run away from the food the Inupiaq family offers?
  - Consider some reasons why the family, or anyone else in Nome, would want to catch Murphy.
- ***I crawled from behind the barrel, wagging my tail. Once it had been full and silky. Now it was dirty and thin. As I crept toward her, I lifted my lip in a grin, hoping she would see the dog I used to be. Sally's mouth dropped open and her eyes filled with wonder. She dropped to her knees and wrapped her arms around me. "Oh! You are the most handsome animal I have ever seen!" (p. 23)***
  - Explain why Murphy chooses to approach Sally

- and her mother instead of the other passengers.
- What reasons do Sally and her mother have for keeping Murphy that these men do not?
  - ***“We must be practical, Mama, if we are to thrive in Nome—and escape Grandmama’s grip.” She shuddered and I pressed my nose into her palm. She stroked my head. “Perhaps we will make our fortune with your typewriter. Perhaps we will find gold. I don’t care how we survive, but we will. Because I will never go back to Grandmama’s house. Never.”*** (p. 34)
    - Compare and contrast Sally’s reaction to Nome, and the hope of gold, with her mother’s. If you had arrived in Nome, which reaction would you have? Explain.
    - Discuss what might have pushed these women to leave Grandmama’s house.
  - ***“The only ones getting rich are the companies that are jumping claims that already yield gold, like McKenzie and Carlick. [...] They’ve been staking claims along the Snake, too, only the claims already belong to other men. Carlick and McKenzie pay off Judge Noyes, who stonewalls the real owners while he and his gang set up mining operations.”*** (p. 54–55)
    - Why would Judge Noyes be helping McKenzie and Carlick?
    - Consider the harsh living conditions in Nome, with little shelter and few provisions. If you were a miner would you work for Carlick and McKenzie or try to strike it rich on your own?
  - ***Since that day Mama had given Sally a shake, Sally often talked to me of “our claim” and “finding gold.” I wasn’t quite sure what she meant, but I did know one thing—she never talked again to Mama about this trip.*** (p. 69)
    - Why does Mama react the way she does when Sally brings up staking a claim?
    - Do you think Sally is doing the right thing by planning to go find gold by herself? Why or why not?
  - ***See-ya-yuk was a patient and quiet fisherman like me, but Sally was as noisy as the native dogs who crashed about on the shore yelping at hares. “See-ya-yuk!” She called. “I see gold in the water. Wouldn’t it be better to fish for gold instead of trout? Then you could buy a two-bedroom cabin for your mother. Isn’t that a nugget by that rock?”***
    - ***See-ya-yuk nodded but kept his eyes on the bobbing chunk of wood tied to his line. As the sun sank lower, he pulled in fish after fish.*** (p. 75–76)
      - Discuss why See-ya-yuk reacts differently to seeing gold. Consider how their different backgrounds influence their views about what is truly valuable.
      - What do you think is more important for Sally’s trip: learning how to catch fish or panning for gold? Why?
    - ***When we returned to the tent, Mama stood outside with a creased piece of paper in her hand. “I have written to your grandparents, Sally,” she said. “I have told them that we are booking passage on the Lucky Lady for home.”*** (p. 85)
      - Why does Mama want to return to San Francisco while Sally does not?
      - What situations and concerns could have influenced their decisions? What does this say about them?
    - ***As Sally gathered the wood strewn on the shore, she began to sing, the words filling the air with her happiness.***

***But as the sun dropped, my ears began to pick up the sounds of the night. Sally could not hear the distant howls, snorts and yips, but I did. My journey from Dawson City had taught me that the land was filled with wolves, bear, and fox.***

***I wasn’t a mighty hunter. But I hoped that I could keep Sally safe in the wilds of the tundra.*** (p. 98)

      - Why is Sally not worrying like Murphy about this “grand adventure?”
      - What tundra dangers has she not considered before leaving Nome?
    - ***“It doesn’t matter. Only you must never leave me again. Nothing is more important than you—and Mama—I realize that now.” Sally choked on her words and I could hear the sob in her voice. “It doesn’t matter if we don’t find that nugget. Tomorrow we’ll head back to Nome.”*** (p. 115–116)
      - What keeps Sally from returning to her mother?
      - Consider everything that has happened to her since she started panning on her own. Why does she decide to go back to Nome?
    - ***“Nobody can take away our claims,” Carlick***

*scoffed. "McKenzie has many powerful friends in Washington, D.C."*

*Judge Morrow cut his eyes to Mr. Beamer. "Fortunately we had a man inside your camp who has witnessed you beating and threatening miners reluctant to abandon their claims. His testimony will land you in jail long enough for Washington to learn the truth."* (p. 143)

- Why would Mr. Beamer contact Judge Morrow about Carlick's treatment of miners?
- What are some of the positive results of Mr. Beamer reporting Carlick to the authorities?

## REVIEWS

"Equal parts heart-wrenching and -warming...its message of the value of love over greed is as subtle as it is powerful. An adventure-filled tale set within a fascinating period of history." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Give this one to sensitive readers who love dog stories but aren't ready for the heartache of books like Fred Gibson's *Old Yeller* (HarperCollins, 1995) and Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Yearling, 1996)." —*School Library Journal*

"Readers will be quickly hooked by how Murphy tells his own story, sharing his fears, excitement, and joys. Montgomery's childlike pencil-and-ink drawings add a nice touch." —*Booklist*

## AWARDS

- Kansas State Reading Circle Recommended Reading List (Intermediate) —Kansas National Education Association, 2015
- Great Stone Face Children's Book Award (Nominee) —Children's Librarians of New Hampshire, 2015–2016

### Alison Hart's Dog Chronicles series:

*Darling, Mercy Dog of World War I*  
*Finder, Coal Mine Dog*  
*Leo, Dog of the Sea*  
*Murphy, Gold Rush Dog*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Hart is the author of more than forty books for young readers, including *Emma's River*, *Anna's Blizzard*, and the *Racing to Freedom* trilogy. Hart is a teacher at Blue Ridge Community College and lives in Virginia.

[www.alisonhartbooks.com](http://www.alisonhartbooks.com)

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Michael G. Montgomery has illustrated numerous children's books. He attended Georgia Southern University and the University of Georgia. Montgomery lives in Georgia.

[www.michaelgmontgomery.com](http://www.michaelgmontgomery.com)

Peachtree Teacher's Guide for  
**MURPHY, GOLD RUSH DOG**  
prepared by Joanna Toso

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

## VOCABULARY WORD MATCH

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| _____ <b>Gee</b>                            | A. A person who illegally takes over others' mining areas  |
| _____ <b>Tundra</b>                         | B. The term for gold dust  |
| _____ <b>Sluice box</b>                     | C. The Inupiaq word for "fishing"  |
| _____ <b>Claim</b>                          | D. A vehicle on runners that travels over snow or ice, often pulled by dogs  |
| _____ <b>Mukluks</b>                        | E. The judge who helps Carlick and McKenzie "jump" claims along the Snake River  |
| _____ <b>Claim jumper</b>                   | F. Fabric treated on one side with oil to make it waterproof   |
| _____ <b>Sledge</b>                         | G. White gamebirds common to Arctic regions and which Sally looks forward to seeing                                      |
| _____ <b>Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals</b> | H. A vast, flat, treeless region in which the subsoil is permanently frozen  |
| _____ <b>Inupiaq</b>                        | I. A group of Eskimo people that inhabit northwestern Alaska   |
| _____ <b>Oilcloth</b>                       | J. When a miner chooses a specific piece of land, often with a deed of ownership granted by a court                      |
| _____ <b>Flour</b>                          | K. A branch of the U.S. Federal court that hears appeals of cases decided by federal trial courts in nine western states |
| _____ <b>Nome</b>                           | L. A Californian judge who exposes corruption in the Alaskan Gold Mining company   |
| _____ <b>Judge William Morrow</b>           | M. The mining town on the coast of the Bering Sea in Alaska  |
| _____ <b>Tacoma</b>                         | N. A sledding command for right turn   |
| _____ <b>Judge Noyes</b>                    | O. A high, soft boot that is worn in the American Arctic and is traditionally made from sealskin                         |
| _____ <b>Aqalugniaqtuq</b>                  | P. The name of the barge on which Sally and Mama arrive  |
| _____ <b>Ptarmigan</b>                      | Q. A long wooden channel with grooves on the bottom, used to separate gold from gravel or sand in the water              |

## VOCABULARY WORD MATCH ANSWERS

  N   **Gee**

  H   **Tundra**

  R   **Sluice box**

  J   **Claim**

  O   **Mukluks**

  A   **Claim jumper**

  D   **Sledge**

  K   **Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals**

  I   **Inupiaq**

  F   **Oilcloth**

  B   **Flour**

  M   **Nome**

  L   **Judge William Morrow**

  P   **Tacoma**

  E   **Judge Noyes**

  C   **Aqalugniaqtuq**

  G   **Ptarmigan**

- A. A person who illegally takes over others' mining areas
- B. The term for gold dust
- C. The Inupiaq word for "fishing"
- D. A vehicle on runners that travels over snow or ice, often pulled by dogs
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- F. Fabric treated on one side with oil to make it waterproof
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## RESEARCH and WRITING ASSIGNMENT

**RESEARCH** one or more of the topics below and write an informative essay examining the chosen subject. Use citations, developed facts, and details in the piece. Report on the topic by presenting original ideas, opinions, and how the topic enhanced the plot.

### TOPIC LIST:

- Nome, Alaska
- Alaskan climate and weather
- Wildlife in Alaska
- Women in the Gold Rush
- Panning for gold
- Alaskan Gold Mining Company
- Inupiaq Eskimos
- Alaskan Gold Rush
- Sled Dogs
- Life in the 1900s
- Life in Nome
- Tundra

**DISCUSS** *Murphy, Gold Rush Dog* was written from the point of view of Murphy, a dog. Notice how the setting, physical details, emotional responses, and overall theme are presented from a dog's perspective—more specifically—a sled dog turned beloved pet. Consider the research required to create a believable tale, such as *Murphy, Gold Rush Dog*, as seen and experienced from a dog's point of view.

**WRITE** a narrative piece from Mama, Sally, or Carlick's point of view. Choose a scene from the book in which the person is featured. Include other characters in the scene. Use dialogue and description revealing the person's character and role in the scene, making certain to keep the perspective close to the person's experience. Illustrate the scene. Share the piece with the class.

**COMPOSE** a list of supplies you would take on a tundra trek. But, because you and your dog can only carry so much, you can only choose ten supplies to pack. Review what kind of provisions Sally brought on her expedition for some inspiration. Provide reasons for your choices and share your list with the class.