The Race Across Alaska

The Iditarod race is one of a kind! Teams come from all over the world to participate in this legendary race. It is more than 1,000 miles long, and it is run in bitterly cold weather across ice and snow. It takes at least nine days to finish, and the real stars of the race are dogs.

The first Iditarod race was run in 1973. It got its name from the Iditarod Trail, an old mail road in Alaska. Long before there were telegraphs or phones, people used dogs to pull sleds that carried mail and supplies across the long trail. The people who drove the sleds were called mushers.

In the race, mushers use teams of twelve to sixteen dogs to pull sleds. The sleds are very light, and the mushers do not carry anything that they may not need. The lighter the sled, the faster the dogs can go.

The dogs that run this race are amazingly strong. One dog can pull nearly 1,000 pounds. They are also swift. They can cover eight to twelve miles in one hour.

Mushers take good care of their dogs. They make sure that the dogs get plenty of food. They put booties on the dogs to keep splinters of ice from cutting their paws.

The Iditarod Trail goes through cities and towns. The dog teams climb mountains. They race on frozen rivers and they run through deep drifts of snow. After the race, it is time for the mushers and dogs to rest.
Answer the questions. You may reread parts of the passage to help you.

1. What is the Iditarod race named after?
   - a dog
   - a river
   - a mail road
   - a famous racer

2. What is the meaning of *swift* as used in the sentence below?
   - They are also swift. They can cover eight to twelve miles in one hour.
   - big
   - fast
   - strong
   - thick

3. What helps the dogs go faster?
   - a long sled
   - a light sled
   - a short sled
   - a wide sled

4. Which statement would the author MOST LIKELY agree with?
   - The race is too dangerous.
   - The mushers need more dogs.
   - The racing dogs are special dogs.
   - The old mail trail has been forgotten.

5. Why is it a good idea for mushers to take good care of their dogs? Support your answer with details from the passage. Write your response on another sheet of paper.