

Battle against the elements

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“ Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get.” – Mark Twain. In the frigid climate of South Dakota, snow is an obstacle that can't be resolved, only dealt with. Brutal snowstorms and blizzards devastate the North, completely covering the ground and providing difficult ways to survive. In the winter of 1917, Will Stoneman, from the adventure story Iron Will by John Hayes, must endure this harsh weather while on the trail of the famous dog sled race: the Iditarod.

Enlisting himself in the race that has killed many, Will must decide between the cause of his father's death or victory, manage in an unbearable environment, and face the demanding challenges of an Iditarod participant. What began as a mere father-son dog sled into the forest, morphed into the untimely death of Will's father when his sled cut a sharp turn and he slid into the murky depths of a lake. Since this traumatizing incident, Will turns down any attempt at crossing a frozen lake, causing him to fall behind in the race. But when Bjorg Guillarson, a competitor who loathes Will, maliciously suggests for him to use the frozen lake as a shortcut, Will takes the risk, listens to his dogs, and overcomes his fear to help him win. The horrendous weather that pounds the North is almost unbearable, especially while in the forests alone. Struggling to win and stay alive, Will faces frostbite and the possibility of death.

He spends countless days in the wilderness, adapting to the cold environment only to finish in first. The Iditarod calls upon mushers of all nationalities throughout northern North America to compete for \$10, 000. They spend years attending and learning from experience, and realizing that this is more than a battle against others, but rather the elements of nature.

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Upon Will's decision to join the Iditarod, Ned Dodd, a family friend, helps him train ruthlessly, preparing him for the harsh conditions he'll face. His strategy: sleep less and run faster.

So, waking up after only two hours of sleep the day before the finish, Will struggles to get up due to frostbite and fatigue. Later on, only a couple hundred feet from the finish line, Will collapses from exhaustion and can't push himself back up as another competitor races past him. But Will fights against his deteriorating strength and surges forward to grab at the finish line. Mother Nature can prove to be a tough opponent when faced with the concept of survival, and can slowly wear down one's mental and physical health. Despite the knowledge that one simple decision could end his life, Will Stoneman followed through with a challenge in the most selfless of ways.

He proved that he can manage in brutal of weather conditions, overcome fears, and master the ways of survival in the climate he endured, only to, in the end, defeat all odds and conquer the competition.