

*Ice Dogs*

Terry Lynn Johnson

Reviewed by: Annie, 23

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From beginning to end, Terry Lynn Johnson's *Ice Dogs* captivates, replicating the fast pace of an Alaskan sled-dog race. The protagonist, fourteen-year old Victoria Secord, has devoted her life to mushing, a passion she shared with her father, who recently passed away while on the trail with his dogs. Victoria insists on self-reliance and sparse social interaction until she is forced to collaborate with a new-to-the-wilderness city boy. The pair face do or die peril while trying to find their way through the frozen Alaskan tundra after Victoria finds Chris injured next to his crashed snowmobile. They are lost for days, nearly freezing and starving to death, before they finally reach safety. The journey gives Victoria a newfound appreciation for her mother and makes her realize that her father's death was not her fault.

The heroine's encyclopedic knowledge of mushing, paired with her intelligent, first person narrative, evokes the persona of a twenty-four year old rather than that of a fourteen year old, and is thus somewhat unconvincing. She is a character wise beyond her years, with more self-assurance than any fourteen year old I know. This does, however, give Victoria a sense of authority on the subject of mushing and makes the novel a great read for someone new to the dog-sled world.

Johnson's heavy focus on mushing technique and terminology is authentic, yet her character development left me wanting more. I found the novel very easy to read and interesting but also found myself wishing to know more about each character. But, although I wished for more about the characters, not having all the information made the plot seamless, like a continuous scene in a film.

I recommend this novel for girls and boys fourth grade and older. I would have loved to have read this book in elementary school and learned all about sled dog racing. For a Midwestern suburban girl like myself, this novel offers an exotic, adventurous, and educational experience, with an inspiring heroine.