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# Togo



## Synopsis

Togo wasn't meant to be a sled dog. He was too feisty and independent to make a good team member, let alone a leader. But Togo is determined, and when his trainer, Leonhard Seppala, gives him a chance, he soon becomes one of the fastest sled dogs in history! His skills are put to the ultimate test, though, when Seppala and his team are called on to make the now-famous run across the frozen Arctic to deliver the serum that will save Alaska from a life-threatening outbreak of diphtheria. In the style of *Akiak*, winner of the Irma S. and James H. Black Award for Excellence in Children's Literature, along with five state awards, Robert J. Blake's detailed, carefully researched oil paintings complete the story of the adventure that inspired the internationally famous Iditarod race.

## Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #343,164 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Polar Regions](#) #276 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s](#) #426 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s](#)

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Kindergarten-Grade 5-Togo is a spirited puppy, determined to be a sled dog even though his owner, Leonhard Seppala, does not think he has what it takes. He's small for a Siberian husky, and much too independent. When he is only eight months old, he breaks through a fence and finds his owner's team on a supply run; it takes only a day for him to prove himself as a musher. Soon the young dog is leading his team in races, and breaking speed records every time. When Togo is eight years old,

Seppala is asked to make an emergency relay run to pick up a serum that can stop the diphtheria epidemic threatening the entire population of Nome, AK. Togo leads his team over 350 miles through storms, suffering terribly, and with almost no rest. While it is another dog, Balto, that became famous for the serum run of 1925, he actually led the final team in the relay, running 53 miles. Many people feel that Togo is an unsung hero, and so will readers, who will feel the terrible cold depicted chillingly in Blake's paintings. The urgency and desperation come across clearly in both the dramatic text and the full-page impressionistic paintings. The dogs are not anthropomorphized, but their expressions are haunting. Pair this first-rate historical adventure with Natalie Standiford's *The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto* (Random, 1989) or with Blake's *Akiak: A Tale from the Iditarod* (Philomel, 1997). Susan Oliver, Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library System, FL Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Robert J. Blake was born and raised in New Jersey. As a boy he made "tons of drawings" and used up thousands of crayons. He says, "I even did a huge crayon mural on our hallway that was not artistically appreciated by my parents." Sharing one large room with two older brothers was "total chaos," he recalls. "We had lots of animals - dogs, ducks, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, lizards, turtles, snakes, birds, fish, and even two flying squirrels. And, oh yes, a tarantula. I think my parents were afraid to come up to our room." Mr. Blake now resides in New Jersey with his wife and son. He works in his studio, a renovated barn on his property. Mr. Blake says, "I would like to paint in every state in the United States and in every country in the world." "I hope my books lend the reader a feeling, and emotion, a new point of view, a new way to look at something that they might not have experienced otherwise." Robert J. Blake was born and raised in New Jersey. As a boy he made "tons of drawings" and used up thousands of crayons. He says, "I even did a huge crayon mural on our hallway that was not artistically appreciated by my parents." Sharing one large room with two older brothers was "total chaos," he recalls. "We had lots of animals - dogs, ducks, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, lizards, turtles, snakes, birds, fish, and even two flying squirrels. And, oh yes, a tarantula. I think my parents were afraid to come up to our room." Mr. Blake now resides in New Jersey with his wife and son. He works in his studio, a renovated barn on his property. Mr. Blake says, "I would like to paint in every state in the United States and in every country in the world." "I hope my books lend the reader a feeling, and emotion, a new point of view, a new way to look at something that they might not have experienced otherwise."

Here, a real Hero Dog has his story told. Togo was a brave dog. He ran the Serum Run when he

was 12 years old and lost a toe in the process. He was retired to Connecticut and became the ancestor of almost every AKC-registered Siberian Husky in America today. For years his taxidermied remains were at Yale University. We can't forget Balto, either. Sepala thought Togo was his great dog, and that Balto was inferior stock, so he neutered him. Ballot's trainer had faith in him, though, and when he should have passed the serum off to Sepala and Togo, he passed them by. Balto did finish the run and deliver the serum. Here is where shame comes in. Sepala was angry, and eventually sold Balto. While Togo was retired to be a stud in Connecticut, poor Balto was used as a road-side attraction. He eventually ended his life at the Cleveland Zoo, where his Taxidermied remains are kept. Togo is a real dog hero, and did not bear Balto any ill-will (as was depicted in the Spielberg animated film), but the rivalry of the humans involved caused a lot of pain for an innocent animal. Ultimately, Balto became the more famous of these two hero dogs because his statue was erected in Central Park. More people need to know about Togo because his contributions were great, and he ran more of the Serum Run as a lead dog than any other dog, over terrain so rough he lost a toe, and he was 12-years-old, which is quite elderly as far as dogs go. Togo deserved his retirement in cushy, upperclass style and his status as progenitor of almost every AKC Siberian Husky alive today.

If you love Balto, you have to love Togo. The story of the mushers and their dogs--especially lead dogs-- and the race to get diphtheria vaccine to stricken Nome, Alaska is always breathtaking in its heroism and sense of community and commitment. Togo may not have a statute in central park, but he should have, right beside Balto. My grand-kids love this story. And attached to its excellence is another great book on the same epic heroism: *The Cruellest Miles*...best non-fiction I've read in five years.

Great book with great artwork. Great for 3rd-4th grade reading level.

I bought this book after borrowing it from the library and reading it with my children. It has a great message about those unspoken heroes and about commitment and focus. There's not too many truly inspiring children's books out there, today. It seems we're always trying to entertain our kids, but this, in my view, is a drug of another kind. This book illustrates a real hero, one that was a dog, but like some people, had an indomitable spirit.

I bought this and read it to my elementary students. They loved the heart wrenching story and were

so engaged. It got them excited about dogs and winter and the Iditarod and Alaska. They were able to make connections and relate to certain aspects in the story. It was great.

The Husky is my favorite dog breed and this story describes their spirit and determination. I love this book and best suited for the older picture book reader. Illustrations are wonderful. It's been around a while and I have shared it often with my grands.

A true story every person should read/know. Togo was a magnificent dog who ran the most miles during the Serum Run that saved the lives of all the children in the village almost 100 years ago. We don't hear enough these days about this HERO dog.

My neighbor told me she had all her friends trying to find this book for her 8year old grandson. I found it immediately on ! We all love this story and anything Robert Blake has written. Thanks !!!

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