

For **Blizzard Bag 4**:

7th Grade:

Literature: Read the article about the 18,000-year-old frozen Siberian puppy, possibly the ancestor of the dog or wolf, and answer the questions that follow.

Writing: Imagine if you were to find a way to "awaken" this puppy, like Jesus "woke up" Lazarus. Write a short story--a few paragraphs--about the puppy's first experiences in today's world. What would this puppy act like? Think? Want to do?

Was this 18,000-year-old frozen puppy the ancestor of wolves, dogs or both?

By Jason Daley, Smithsonian.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.16.19

Word Count **696**

Level **MAX**



Image 1. Dogor, the 18,000-year-old puppy found in permafrost in the Russia's Far East, on display September 24, 2018, at the Yakutsk's Mammoth Museum, Russia. Russian scientists revealed the unique prehistoric canine to the public on December 2, 2019. Photo by: Sergei Fyodorov/Yakutsk Mammoth Museum via AP

Meet Dogor, an 18,000-year-old pup. Dogor was excavated in Siberian permafrost. "Dogor" means "friend" in the Yakut language. The remains of the prehistoric pup are puzzling researchers because genetic testing shows it's not a wolf or a dog. This means it could be an elusive ancestor of both.

Locals found the remains in the summer of 2018 in a frozen lump of ground near the Indigirka River, according to the North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk. Parts of the animal are incredibly well-preserved, including its head, nose, whiskers, eyelashes and mouth. The mouth revealed that it still had its milk teeth when it died. Researchers suggest the animal was just 2 months old when it died. They do not know the cause of death.

The pup is so well-preserved that researchers at the Centre for Palaeogenetics in Sweden were able to sequence the animal's DNA. They used a piece of rib bone. The results found that Dogor was

male. Even after two rounds of analysis though, the team could not determine whether he was a dog or a wolf.

"It's normally relatively easy to tell the difference between the two," David Stanton said. He is a research fellow at the Centre for Palaeogenetics. "We have a lot of data from it already, and with that amount of data, you'd expect to tell if it was one or the other. The fact that we can't, might suggest that it's from a population that was ancestral to both — to dogs and wolves."

The find is exciting, regardless of whether Dogor turns out to be a common canine ancestor, an early dog or an early wolf. Hannah Knowles at The Washington Post reports that Dogor comes from an interesting time in canine evolution. At this time, wolf species were dying out and early dogs were beginning to emerge.

"As you go back in time, as you get closer to the point that dogs and wolves converge, [it becomes] harder to tell between the two," Stanton tells Knowles.

The history of just how and when dogs split from wolves is unresolved. There's a general agreement among scientists that modern gray wolves and dogs split from a common ancestor 15,000 to 40,000 years ago, explains Brian Handwerk. Handwerk previously worked for Smithsonian.com. How dogs became dogs, however, is contested. Some research suggests that dogs were domesticated by humans once. Other

studies have found dogs were domesticated multiple times. Exactly where in the world wild canines became man's best friend is also disputed. The origin of the human-animal bond has been traced to Mongolia, China and Europe.

Scientists disagree about how dogs ended up paired with people, too. Some suspect humans captured wolf pups and actively domesticated them. Others suggest that a strain of "friendly," less aggressive wolves more or less domesticated themselves by hanging out near humans, eating their leftover food.

Dogor's DNA could help unravel these mysteries. The team plans to do a third round of DNA testing. This round may help definitively place Dogor in the canine family tree, report Daria Litvinova and Roman Kutuko at the Associated Press.

It's also possible that researchers may soon have more samples to work with. Sergei Fyodorov is a researcher at North-Eastern Federal University. Fyodorov said that climate change is affecting the Siberian permafrost. This means people are finding more and more ancient creatures as the permafrost thaws. Demand for mammoth tusks in China, where it is used in place of elephant ivory, has also led to more rare finds in Siberia. In 2016, a 12,400-year-old puppy that still had its brain, heart, lungs and stomach intact was found near the same region as Dogor in the village of Tumat.

If Dogor is indeed a dog, that would make him the oldest ever found, reports George Dvorsky at Gizmodo. Currently, the oldest known dog is the Bonn-Oberkassel puppy. The puppy's 14,200-



year-old remains were found in a quarry in Germany in 1910 next to what researchers suspect were its human companions.

Quiz

1 Read the conclusion below.

Some scientists believe that Dogor is an earlier ancestor of dogs.

Which sentence from the article provides the BEST support to the statement above?

- (A) The remains of the prehistoric pup are puzzling researchers because genetic testing shows it's not a wolf or a dog.
- (B) Others suggest that a strain of "friendly," less aggressive wolves more or less domesticated themselves by hanging out near humans, eating their leftover food.
- (C) This round may help definitively place Dogor in the canine family tree, report Daria Litvinova and Roman Kutuko at the Associated Press.
- (D) In 2016, a 12,400-year-old puppy that still had its brain, heart, lungs and stomach intact was found near the same region as Dogor in the village of Tumat.

2 One conclusion a reader could make after reading the article is that more frozen animals like Dogor might be uncovered soon.

Which of the following statements accurately paraphrases evidence from the article to support the conclusion?

- (A) Climate change has caused the Siberian permafrost to thaw, revealing ancient creatures that were hidden before.
- (B) Scientists think that Dogor will beat the Bonn-Oberkassel puppy to become the oldest dog that has ever been found.
- (C) Demand for mammoth tusks in China, where it is used in place of elephant ivory, has led to more accidental finds.
- (D) The puppy's remains were found in a quarry in Germany next to what researchers suspect were its human companions.

3 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?

- (A) "Dogor" means "friend" in the Yakut language.
- (B) The remains of the prehistoric pup are puzzling researchers because genetic testing shows it's not a wolf or a dog.
- (C) Locals found the remains in the summer of 2018 in a frozen lump of ground near the Indigirka River, according to the North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk.
- (D) Parts of the animal are incredibly well-preserved, including its head, nose, whiskers, eyelashes and mouth.

4 Read the following sentence from the article

"The fact that we can't, might suggest that it's from a population that was ancestral to both — to dogs and wolves."

How does this sentence develop the article's CENTRAL idea?

- (A) by explaining what type of testing was done on Dogor
- (B) by explaining why Dogor's discovery might be significant
- (C) by highlighting the reasons why Dogor died at 2 months old
- (D) by highlighting a dispute scientists have about wolves and dogs