

Quiz A: RI.4.8

Read the passage. Then answer the question.

Going Bananas

A Famous Fruit

- 1 How do you like your bananas? On top of cereal? In a smoothie? In banana bread or a banana split? Bananas are the most popular fruit in the world. They are also the world's most important crop after rice, wheat, and corn. Bananas are as common in our diet as apples and oranges. In fact, Americans eat more bananas than apples and oranges put together. Walk through the fruit aisle in any grocery store. You'll find a huge display set up just for bananas. Bananas taste good and are good for you. But the most interesting things about bananas may be less well known.
- 2 Bananas have no set growing season. They are available year round. And they are also the cheapest fruit in the store. But why are they cheaper than other fruits—such as apples—which are grown in the United States? Bananas are grown thousands of miles away, in the tropics! Where do bananas grow? And how do they make it to our grocery stores?

Banana Republics

- 3 Bananas are not native to the Americas. In fact, they were first grown in South Asia. Bananas have been an important crop in South Asia since at least 5000 B.C. The popular fruit did not arrive in the Americas until thousands of years later. Portuguese colonists first brought them to South and Central America in the 1500s. Around this time, colonists started “banana plantations” in Brazil and on some Caribbean islands. The Portuguese were the first to view the banana as a cash crop. A cash crop is grown mainly to sell and make a profit, rather than feed the population. (Coffee, tobacco, and cotton are other cash crops.)
- 4 North Americans did not enjoy bananas until hundreds of years later. After the American Civil War ended in 1865, bananas were brought to Boston, Massachusetts. They became widespread in the 1880s. Around this time, two U.S. companies, United Fruit (now Chiquita) and Standard Fruit (now Dole), saw a chance to make a great deal of money off the banana industry. These two companies built banana plantations in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. These companies gained from these small, poorer countries. They used the cheap labor found in these countries. They also took advantage of the often unstable governments there. In the end, these companies became a powerful political force in the region. They often took control of land illegally. They set unfair prices. And they used payouts to control elections and stop workers from organizing. Countries where this happened became known as “banana republics.”

An Unfair Trade?

- 5 These companies did not always have negative effects on the host countries. In fact, the large banana companies set up much-needed transportation and communication networks. The host countries were often thankful to the fruit giants for the advancements. That is, until they figured out what they'd given

