

Quiz A: RI.5.5

Read the passage. Then answer the question.

Groundhog Day

- 1 On most calendars, February 2 is marked as Groundhog Day. On this day, a famous groundhog is said to be able to predict how much longer winter will last. The event takes place in the town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. Thousands of people attend. Newscasts across the country report the results. But how did this strange holiday begin?

Origins

- 2 The first American settlers brought an old tradition with them. On a certain day each year, called Candlemas, they used the weather to predict how long winter would last. An old English song explains the rule:

If Candlemas be fair and bright,

Come, winter, have another flight.

If Candlemas brings cold and rain,

Go, winter, and come not again.

- 3 The German people followed the custom, too. They believed that if the sun shone on Candlemas Day, the hedgehog would cast a shadow. This meant there would be another six weeks of winter. When German settlers arrived in Pennsylvania, they continued the tradition. Since hedgehogs were hard to find in the new land, they used the next best thing: a groundhog.

Current Tradition

- 4 The best-known groundhog today is Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil. Each year, this celebrated groundhog comes out of his burrow to make his prediction to the world. If he sees his shadow, legend has it there will be six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't see his shadow, spring is waiting right around the corner eager to make an appearance.
- 5 Punxsutawney Phil has been making predictions since 1887. But the groundhog was not always such a celebrity. The first official predictions were made to a small group of people. Today, the whole country watches to see if Phil sees his shadow.
- 6 Just how accurate is Punxsutawney Phil? Supporters claim he is accurate 75-90 percent of the time. However, more objective sources such as the National Climate Data Centers says that Phil shouldn't be relied on since, for the most part, his predictions are inaccurate. One weather almanac claims he is correct less than 40 percent of the time.

