

## Quiz A: RI.8.5

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

“Is a Sloth Really Slothful?”

- 1 Calling someone a “beast” is no compliment, right? Zoomorphs are words that use animals to represent human behavior. In Western culture, most zoomorphs are negative. On the other hand, the Chinese zodiac is composed of 12 animals. People born in a year influenced by one of those 12 animals are assumed to share personality traits associated with that animal. Most of those traits are positive.

Skittering and Slithering

- 2 All sorts of figurative language, including similes and metaphors, use zoomorphs. Some include animals that get a bad rap in the West. A person from a Western culture who is called a “rat” is sneaky and cunning. To “rat” on a friend is to tattle about bad behavior. A “ratty” coat is old and torn. Why does the rat deserve such a bad reputation? No one knows for sure, but perhaps it’s because rats were associated with the fleas in the 14th century that caused the Black Death plague, which killed millions of people throughout Europe.
- 3 The Chinese zodiac is much kinder to the rat. Those born under the sign of the rat are assumed to be clever, charming, and funny. Chinese zodiac rats are generous and make good friends. They are loyal. Keep a careful eye on someone born in a rat year, though. They might be greedy.
- 4 Rat’s smaller relative, the mouse, hardly fares better in Western culture. Mice are considered quiet, shy, plain, and dull. Someone may be as “quiet as a mouse,” which means he or she rarely speaks out or expresses an opinion. A mousy character takes a backseat to someone beautiful and outspoken. Perhaps the mouse’s dull reputation comes from its plain coloring and its tendency to skitter away and hide behind a wall.
- 5 Woe to someone called a “snake” in the West! Snakes, both man and beast, slowly slink toward their victims, quiet and unnoticed, until they strike their deadly blows. Snakes have not always suffered such lopsided reputations. In ancient Egypt, snakes were worshipped as gods, although they were also used as weapons to murder enemies. The Chinese zodiac both celebrates snakes and advises caution toward those born under the snake sign. People born in a snake year are charming, hardworking, and generous. However, they may also be jealous and insecure.

Up in the Air

- 6 All sorts of flying animals play a part in zoomorphs. Some people claim to be as “blind as a bat” without their glasses. The truth is that bats are not blind at all. Bats, in fact, see extremely well.
- 7 Another common zoomorph is that of the wise old owl. Are owls really wise? Whooooo knows?

