

## Teacher's Notes & Answer Key

<b>Level</b>	Upper-intermediate +
<b>Lesson Aims</b>	Learners will develop and practice strategies for finding the meaning of unknown words from context
<b>Approximate Timing</b>	45-60 minutes
<b>Notes to the teacher</b>	<p>This lesson focuses on a different reading skill than the typical reading for gist and detail. The text itself is about Groundhog Day and its origin and meaning. The reading skill learners practice is finding the meaning of unknown words from context. This is designed to help learners become more independent readers, reduce dictionary and teacher dependence, and perhaps increase their tolerance of ambiguity.</p> <p>The article itself is fairly simple, so learners shouldn't be distracted by complex detailed comprehension issues. Several key words in the text have been changed to nonsense words so that learners can focus on decoding their meaning (and there's no risk that learners will know the words already or can look them up). Ideally, this should also build confidence when the learners realize they were able to figure out the meanings of words on their own-- even when the words have been totally changed!</p>
<b>Text Link</b>	<p>Article 1 adapted from: <i>Groundhog Day: The Adventures of Punxsutawney Phil, Wiarton Willie, and Pothole Pete</i>) <a href="http://www.infoplease.com/spot/groundhogday1.html">http://www.infoplease.com/spot/groundhogday1.html</a></p> <p>Article 2 adapted from: <i>How Wrong Was the Groundhog?</i> by <b>Stephen Busemeyer</b>, Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015 from The Hartford Courant:  <a href="http://www.courant.com/data-desk/hc-how-wrong-was-the-groundhog-20150202-htmlstory.html">http://www.courant.com/data-desk/hc-how-wrong-was-the-groundhog-20150202-htmlstory.html</a></p> <p>Picture from: <a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/wp/2015/02/02/groundhog-day-2015-punxsutawney-phil-sees-shadow-predicts-six-more-weeks-of-winter">http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/wp/2015/02/02/groundhog-day-2015-punxsutawney-phil-sees-shadow-predicts-six-more-weeks-of-winter</a></p>

## Teacher's Notes

### 1) LEAD-IN: Strange holidays

Begin the lesson by introducing the idea of strange or interesting holidays. Perhaps use St. Nicholas Day as example—a holiday celebrated in many countries on December 6th, when children leave their shoes out and find them filled with candy in the morning. Mention how this tradition is different than any holiday we have in the United States, so you find it unique and a little bit strange. Prompt students to discuss what they think the strangest American holiday/celebration is—or at least the one that's most different from anything celebrated in their cultures. Let students discuss in pairs for a few minutes. Elicit a few ideas in WCFB.

### 2) GIST READING: Groundhog Day

Show the picture of Groundhog Day and elicit the holiday:



Ask Ss what they know about the holiday—the date, what occurs, what the significance is, etc. Don't push *too* much for information and don't give the Ss information that they don't already know. The point here is to raise their interest in the holiday and find out what they think is strange or confusing about it. Tell Ss they're going to read a short article about this holiday and ask them what they hope to find out about it. You could use "Why a groundhog?" as a demo. Have Ss discuss this in pairs. Elicit answers in whole class and board their questions. Tell Ss to choose 2 questions from the list that they're hoping to have answered in their reading.

Hand out the article and have students skim read for 1-2 minutes to try and find the answers to their questions. Have Ss discuss in pairs whether they were able to find answers to their questions. Get feedback on this in whole class.

**\*Note:** while Ss are reading, note their reactions to the "unknown" words. If they ask you for definitions, say you'll go over these soon—but make sure they don't try to look up the words on their phones or in dictionaries.

### 3) FINDING MEANING FROM CONTEXT

Put Ss in pairs or groups of 3 and give them the Reflection Questions to talk about. Let them take their time on the last question and monitor to see if they're able to come up with some strategies on their own. Go through the questions in WCFB. For the last question, elicit what strategies the Ss came up with for finding the meaning of "zorbiton." Board the steps in the "WORDS" strategy as you elicit them, clarifying and adding detail as needed. Fill in gaps afterwards and clarify anything still necessary. Tell Ss they can use these steps to find the meaning of unknown words from context. Do "zorbiton" together in open class as a demo: elicit information about the word for each step from the students. For example, for the first step (Word) elicit information Ss can figure out about the word itself: the part of speech and how they figured this out. For Other Words, elicit information about the surrounding words and ask what clues this gives: any collocations? Synonyms? More clues about part of speech? Etc.

### 4) PRACTICE

Have Ss go through and use the strategies to try and figure out the meaning of the other "unknown" words. Do a paircheck. For WCFB, elicit what students came up with and prompt them to expand on how they reached those conclusions. Finally, tell them what the original words were and see how close they were able to get. Stress that even if the words weren't *exactly* the same, that's ok! Elicit: as long as you got the same *meaning* does it really matter exactly what the word was? No!

KEY (accept synonyms!)

<b><i>"Unknown" word</i></b>	<b><i>Original word</i></b>
zorbiton	weather
snolls	hibernates
flimp	insulate
parvidon	holiday
blerps	takes place

### 5) PRACTICE 2: Real words

**Gist Task for Article 2:** Tell Ss they're going to read another short article about Groundhog Day. Ask them if they think the Groundhog is usually right or not in his predictions. (This may be a still unanswered question from the previous gist task). Let them read for gist: Is the Groundhog usually right? Let Ss do a quick pair check, then elicit the answer in WCFB: He's not.

**Unknown Words in Article 2:** Have Ss go through on their own to try using the strategies they've learned to figure out the meanings of the words in bold. This time, the words are real words in the text that the students may not know. Monitor closely, helping Ss where needed by reminding them of the steps. Have them check in pairs. WCFB: Give out the definitions so Ss can check against them.

### **Definitions from Article 2: *How close did you get?***

**appalling:** (adj.) causing great disappointment; terrible

**premature:** (adj.) before the proper time; early

**lax:** (adj.) loose or relaxed; not strict

**parameters:** (n.) limits, boundaries or guidelines

**blew it:** (v.) made a big mistake

**remarkably:** (adv.) noticeably, unusually, or surprisingly





## Student Worksheet 1



# Groundhog Day

(Adapted from: *Groundhog Day: The Adventures of Punxsutawney Phil, Wiarton Willie, and Pothole Pete*) <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/groundhogday1.html>

By Holly Hartman

February 2<sup>nd</sup> brings the most-watched **zorbiton** forecast of the year—and the only one led by an animal. Legend has it that on this morning, if a groundhog can see its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it cannot see its shadow, spring is on the way.

### Why the Groundhog?

Since a groundhog **snolls** for the winter, its coming out of the ground is a natural sign of spring. In Europe centuries ago, people watched for other **snolling** animals, including badgers, bears, and hedgehogs, as signs of winter's end. Germans who immigrated to Pennsylvania in the mid-1800s began keeping an eye on the groundhog. The widespread population of the rodent made it a handy agent for this particular **zorbiton** superstition.

And a superstition it is. But there's a grain of truth: the winter days when you can see your shadow clearly are often especially cold, because there are no clouds overhead to **flimp** the earth.

### Why February 2nd?

Early February is midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Throughout history numerous **parvidons** have marked this seasonal crossroads. Among these is Candlemas Day, February 2, a Christian **parvidon** that celebrates Mary's ritual purification. Early Christians believed that if the sun came out on Candlemas Day, winter would last for six weeks more.

The ancient Romans observed a mid-season festival on February 5, and the pagan Irish celebrated one around February 1. In many parts of Europe early February might herald the start of spring, when crops could be planted.

### Punxsutawney Phil and Friends

In the 1880s some friends in Punxsutawney, Penn., went into the woods on Candlemas Day to look for groundhogs. This outing became a tradition, and a local newspaper editor nicknamed the seekers "the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club." Starting in 1887 the search became an official event centered on a groundhog called Punxsutawney Phil. A ceremony still **blerps** every year.

Today Punxsutawney Phil lives in a climate-controlled habitat adjoining the Punxsutawney Library. A local celebrity, he gained national fame in the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day* (which was shot in scenic Woodstock, Illinois). The **zorbiton**-watching groundhog's predictions are recorded in the Congressional Records of our National Archive. So far, Phil has seen his shadow about 85% of the time.



## Student Worksheet 2

*Answer these questions in your group.*

**You may have noticed that the text contained some very unfamiliar words.**

-How did you feel when you saw the unfamiliar words? What was your first reaction?  
(Ask for a definition? Wish you had a dictionary? Ignore them? Try to find the meaning?)

-What do you usually do when you come across an unknown word in class? What about when reading on your own?

-When is it necessary to find the meaning of an unknown word? How do you know?

-What are some ways you can find the meaning of an unknown word? How would you try to guess the meaning of "zorbiton," for example?

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## Student Worksheet 3

### ***Finding the Meaning of Unknown Words from Context***

If you see words in a text you don't know, here are some strategies to try to figure out what the words mean... *without* using your dictionary!

**Word:** Look at the individual unknown word. Do you recognize any *parts* of the word, like pre-fixes or suffixes? What part of speech is it (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? Is it singular or plural?

**Other words:** Look at the words around the unknown word. How are they related? If you weren't sure about the part of speech before, see if the surrounding words help you figure it out. Are there any other clues from the surrounding words? If the word is a noun, what is its verb? Is there an adjective that describes it?

**Rest of the text:** If you still aren't sure, look through the rest of the text. Does the word occur anywhere else? Is there a different form of the word later in the text? Is there an antonym or synonym of the word somewhere else? Are there other clues you can get from the overall topic or theme of the text?

**Does it fit?:** If you have an idea for what the word means, try it out! Replace the unknown word with your guess and see if it makes sense in the sentence. Also, ask yourself: does your guess make sense when you think about the overall topic of the article? Is it something you'd normally associate with that topic?

## Student Worksheet 4

### How Accurate Is The Groundhog?

Adapted from article by Stephen Busemeyer, Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015

<http://www.courant.com/data-desk/hc-how-wrong-was-the-groundhog-20150202-htm1story.html>

The groundhog said we should expect six more weeks of winter. But what does he know?



Punxsutawney Phil has been predicting spring weather since the late 1800s, and his accuracy over the years has been nothing short of **appalling**.

We have reliable temperature and snowfall readings for central Connecticut (at Bradley International Airport or nearby) since the winter of 1904-05. Since then, the groundhog has "not seen its shadow" and predicted an early spring 14 times.

But what's an early spring in New England? We can measure snowfall and/or temperature, but it makes sense that we'd need both relatively warm temperatures and a lack of snow to really call it a **premature** spring.

By that measure, Punxsutawney Phil's prediction of early spring has come true only three times: in the winters of 1989-90, 1994-95 and 1998-99, and then only with a very **lax** definition of "early spring."

With those **parameters**, Phil was totally right in 44 of the 94 times he predicted six more weeks of winter -- but that's still not even 47 percent. He was half-right (normal or greater snowfall, OR normal or colder temperatures) in 28 of the 94 and absolutely wrong in 22 of the 94 (about 23.4 percent).

That's better than his record in predicting early springs. He was solidly correct only once -- in the winter of 1989-90, when temperatures in both February and March were well above average and snowfall was nearly 7 inches below the historic average.

So Phil doesn't seem to be very good at his job.

Phil really **blew it** in most other years, when he predicted six more weeks of winter, but the temperatures were above average and the snowfall was well below average.

In 2011-12, for example, both February and March were **remarkably** less chilly than normal (March's temperature was about 47 degrees, nearly 10 degrees above normal), and there was less than 8 inches of snow during the entire two months. Despite Phil's warning of six more weeks of winter, it was clearly an early spring.

Perhaps we should find a more reliable animal to help us predict the weather.



## Student Worksheet 5

### Definitions from Article 2: *How close did you get?*

**appalling:** (adj.) causing great disappointment; terrible

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