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Science

Science

Earth Science

Weather or Not



Genre	Comprehension Skills and Strategy	Text Features
Expository nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sequence• Author's Purpose• Prior Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captions• Glossary

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by Nancy Day





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How did people **predict** the weather in the past? They judged the coming weather by using clues around them. They made up sayings and tales from what they noticed. Over time, some of these sayings and tales about weather became **folklore**.



In the past, people used almanacs to find out about the weather. Today, we get weather information on the news report.

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People have looked at the sky, sun, and clouds to **forecast** the weather. Sailors have always needed to know how the weather might change. This old sailor's rhyme is often true:



*"Red sky by morning,
sailor take warning.
Red sky at night,
sailor's delight."*


Usually, a red sky in the morning means clouds are on the way. A red sky at night means the clouds have already passed by.



 *“The higher the clouds, the fairer the weather.”*

Water and snow do not usually fall from the kinds of clouds that are high in the sky. So looking at the sky can help make a weather prediction.




 However, not all weather sayings are about looking at the sky.


“Doors and drawers stick before the rain falls.”

Extra water in the air can make wood swell to a larger size. Then wooden doors and drawers can get stuck in place.



 People's bodies can sometimes predict rain. Curly hair may curl more. Some people say their joints hurt more before it rains.



 Some people use plants to get clues about rain too. Flowers have the strongest smell right before it rains. Tree leaves grow with their shiny side facing the sun. The wind that comes before a storm blows them so that you can see their lighter green backs.





A well-known animal forecaster is the groundhog. Groundhogs **hibernate** in winter. On February 2, a groundhog is said to wake up and pop out from underground. If he sees his shadow, winter will last six more weeks.



Groundhog Day is a fun tradition. But it is not a good weather predictor. It has been wrong almost twice as often as it has been right!



Groundhog Day celebration in Pennsylvania





Some people watch animals to guess the **temperature**. When each **season** changes, some people look at what animals do. Watching birds **migrate** south for the winter sometimes tells people it will be cold soon. What can people tell when the birds come back?



Some people believe that animals may act differently right before a storm. Here is some folklore about animals and weather:

"If a dog whines for no reason, look for a storm."

"Birds flying low, expect rain and a blow."

"Frogs croak before a rain, but in the sun are quiet again."





Now Try This

Crickets as Weather Forecasters

Weather folklore says you can tell the temperature outside by counting cricket chirps. This works because crickets chirp faster in warm weather.



A cricket



Here's How to Do It!

1. If you can hear crickets in the evening, ask an adult to take you outside.
2. Use a thermometer to find out the temperature and write it down.
3. Count how many chirps you hear in 15 seconds.
4. Add 40 to the number of chirps. The total should be close to what the thermometer says.



A stopwatch can help keep track of time.





Glossary

folklore *n.* beliefs, stories, legends, or customs of a people.

forecast *v.* to tell what is going to happen.

hibernate *v.* to spend all winter sleeping or resting.

migrate *v.* to move from one place to another.

predict *v.* to tell about something before it happens.

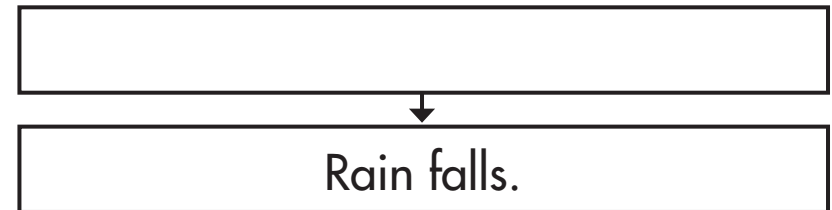
season *n.* one of the four parts of the year: winter, spring, summer, or autumn.

temperature *n.* how hot or cold something is.



Think and Share

1. What is one thing from folklore that might help people predict rain? Copy the chart onto your paper. Write down one thing you read in the book that happens before it rains.



2. What did you know about making weather predictions before you read this book? How did that help you understand the book?
3. What do birds do when they migrate?
4. Look at the weather sayings in this book. Write a weather saying of your own.

