Piggy banks have been around for a long time, but did you ever wonder why people thought to make their banks in the shape of a pig?

Pigs have nothing to do with money. They don’t store food like a camel or a squirrel. So how did we end up using a pig as the style of a bank? Believe it or not, it happened by mistake.

During the fifteenth century, metal was very expensive. Dishes and pots were made of a type of inexpensive orange clay called pygg, which was pronounced just like pig. At this time, there weren’t banks like we have today, so people would store their money at home. When people had extra coins to save, they would place them in clay jars or pots. Since the type of clay was called pygg, people referred to the jars as pygg banks. Over time this evolved into piggy banks.

After a few hundred years, people forgot that the word pygg referred to the clay the banks were made from. The English language was also changing and the word pig was more commonly used. So in the nineteenth century, when English potters began to get requests for piggy banks, they assumed their customers were asking for banks in the shape of pigs, not banks made from pygg.

Today piggy banks are made from all kinds of materials, and they also come in a variety of shapes and animals. But the term piggy bank is still used to refer to these adorable containers for loose change.
THE PIGGY BANK:
CLEVER DESIGN OR MISUNDERSTANDING?
by Kelly Hashway

1. What is pygg?
   a. a type of metal that was used to make banks
   b. a type of clay that was used to make dishes and pots
   c. a place to store money
   d. a pink farm animal with a snout

2. Before piggy banks were invented, where did people usually store their money at home?

___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

3. List two ways that piggy banks today are different from the ones that were made a few hundred years ago?

___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

4. Who is most responsible for making banks in the shape of pigs?
   a. pottery makers who worked with orange clay
   b. pottery makers who didn't know what pygg was
   c. customers who wanted banks with cute animal shapes
   d. bankers who wanted something to keep people’s money in

5. What type of passage is this?
   a. non-fiction
   b. fiction
   c. science fiction
   d. fable

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THE PIGGY BANK: CLEVER DESIGN OR MISUNDERSTANDING?

Vocabulary Activity

Fill in the missing letters to create a word from the article. Then, write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ___ a ___
   
   clue: a type of soil that can be molded into different shapes when it is wet

2. ___ ___ o u ___ e d
   
   clue: said in a certain way; spoken correctly

3. ___ l ___ ___ ___
   
   clue: language spoken by people in Great Britain

4. ___ a ___ ___ ___
   
   clue: a desert animal that can live for long periods of time without drinking water

5. ___ e ___ ___ t s
   
   clue: when people ask for things

6. ___ r ___ b ___ __
   
   clue: delightful; charming

7. ___ ___ e t ___
   
   clue: assortment; different types
THE PIGGY BANK: CLEVER DESIGN OR MISUNDERSTANDING?
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1. What is pygg?  b
   a. a type of metal that was used to make banks

2. Before piggy banks were invented, where did people usually store their money at home?
   They stored money in clay pots or jars.

3. List two ways that piggy banks today are different from the ones that were made a few hundred years ago?
   Today, piggy banks come in a variety of shapes and they are made of many different materials.

4. Who is most responsible for making banks in the shape of pigs?
   b
   a. pottery makers who worked with orange clay
   b. pottery makers who didn't know what pygg was
   c. customers who wanted banks with cute animal shapes
   d. bankers who wanted something to keep people's money in

5. What type of passage is this?
   a. non-fiction

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THE PIGGY BANK: CLEVER DESIGN OR MISUNDERSTANDING?

Vocabulary Activity

Fill in the missing letters to create a word from the article. Then, write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. c l a y
   - clay

   clue: a type of soil that can be molded into different shapes when it is wet

2. p r o n o u n c e d
   - pronounced

   clue: said in a certain way; spoken correctly

3. E n g l i s h
   - English

   clue: language spoken by people in Great Britain

4. c a m e l
   - camel

   clue: a desert animal that can live for long periods of time without drinking water

5. r e q u e s t s
   - requests

   clue: when people ask for things

6. a d o r a b l e
   - adorable

   clue: delightful; charming

7. v a r i e t y
   - variety

   clue: assortment; different types

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