Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day, observed on February 2 each year, is a popular tradition in the United States with European roots that go back centuries. On February 2, it is said that the groundhog emerges from its burrow after hibernating all winter to see if spring is near. The legend says if the groundhog sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter, and the groundhog returns to its sleep. If it is cloudy and the groundhog doesn’t see its shadow, that is a sign that spring is near and the groundhog does not return to its burrow. Punxsutawney Phil, the world’s most famous groundhog, takes part in Groundhog Day festivities each February 2 at Gobbler’s Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

Essential Vocabulary

- **groundhog** – also known as a woodchuck, this burrowing rodent lives in northern and eastern North America. This mammal has short legs, a heavyset body and course, brown fur.

- **legend** – a traditional story passed on over the years. While some people believe a legend is historical fact, its truth has not been verified.

- **hibernate** – to spend the winter sleeping or in a dormant state. Hibernation is a common survival strategy used by animals in colder regions.

- **burrow** – a hole or tunnel dug by a small animal and used as a home.

- **prediction** – a statement about what will or might happen in the future.

Lesson Starters

**Hold Your Own Classroom Festivities**

Have students bring in their own favorite stuffed animals (or use a stuffed class mascot) and have them give the animals a fun name in the style of Punxsutawney Phil. On February 2, take students outdoors to see if their animal can ‘see’ its shadow. Follow up with a writing activity about the event from their stuffed animal’s point of view.

**Weather Related Legends**

Share weather related folktales and legends with your class. Work with your class to break apart the science behind each tale that could prove or disprove the legend.

Make Predictions

This is the perfect time of year to make predictions, not only about the groundhog’s shadow, but all sorts of environmental occurrences. Predict, collect data and graph student predictions and results.

Resource Connection

**Teaching Resources**

Groundhog Day: 15 Fun Teaching Resources

**Book List**

Grades PreK-5

**Storia Teaching Guide—Nonfiction Text**

Hibernation

**Printable**

Legend and Activity Ideas

**Compound Word Games**

Groundhog and Other Compound Words

**Crafts**

Groundhog Day Crafts

**Blog Post**

Will He See His Shadow? Groundhog Day Activities

**Non-fiction News Article from Scholastic News**

Phil and His Shadow

**Web Link**

Visit www.groundhog.org to learn fun facts about Punxsutawney Phil. See all of his predictions dating back to 1887!

**Pinterest Board**

Groundhog Day Activities