

Groundhog Day - February 2nd!

The legend of the groundhog has been traced back many years to the folk stories of England and Germany. It was believed that hibernating animals would wake on this day, check the weather and then decide whether to go back to sleep for the rest of the winter or stay up for the coming of spring.

According to the legend, if the weather is cloudy and the groundhog cannot see its shadow, it will stay above ground. This signifies the early coming of spring. If it's sunny outside and the groundhog sees its shadow, it will be startled and quickly retreat to its burrow below ground, staying there six more weeks. This means that spring is a long way away and at least six more weeks of winter will remain.

The custom of groundhog watching on February 2nd was brought to the United States by immigrants. These immigrants settled in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. In recent years, the town of Punxsutawney has been crowded with tourists and news reporters waiting the news of whether or not Punxsutawney Phil (the world's most famous groundhog) will see his shadow.

If you wish to find out more about the Groundhog Day tradition and Punxsutawney Phil, write to his fan club. You can also subscribe to his fan club newsletter.

Your students can also investigate Punxsutawney Phil's web site at <http://www.groundhog.org>

Phil's Fan Club
Punxsutawney Groundhog Club
Chamber of Commerce
124 W. Mahoning Street
Punxsutawney, PA 15767



On February 2nd, ask your students to record the weather. Would the famous groundhog be able to see his shadow? Take a vote and record the results on the class board noting the students' guess of whether spring will come early or if there will be six more weeks of winter. Now, assign students to record the weather for the next six weeks. How did your students fare? Was Punxsutawney Phil prediction correct?