

Groundhog Day

February 2

On February 2nd, the groundhog is supposed to wake from his winter sleep and come out of his hole. If he sees his shadow, he will go back into his hole and go to sleep again and winter will last for another six weeks. If he does not see his shadow, he will stay up and winter will be over. In other words, one should hope that the day will be dark and overcast so the groundhog will not see his shadow!

This is a fun day because it is so relaxed. It isn't a deeply meaningful day. You don't have to buy gifts or prepare special food. All you have to do is look for a groundhog or just wait for the media to do it for you. There is an "official" groundhog in the eastern United States who is watched by TV, radio, and newspaper reporters. Check the news and find out what he decided.

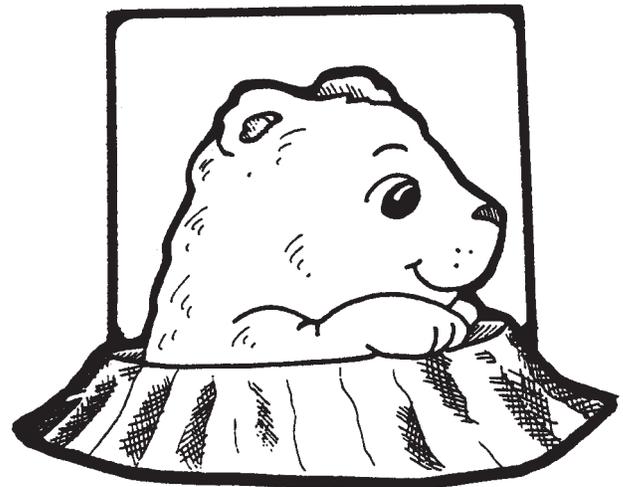
This holiday originally hails from Germany and Poland, although the Iroquois Indians have a belief that is very much the same. They watch for bears rather than groundhogs.

Making It Work

The groundhog has another name. Have students find out what else this animal is called.

What does the word "hibernation" mean? What animals beside the groundhog hibernate? What does "estivate" mean? Are there animals who estivate?

Write down the groundhog's weather forecast as reported in today's news. For the six weeks after Groundhog Day mark the weather (sunny, snowy, windy, rainy, cloudy) on the classroom calendar. When the six weeks are over, have students discuss the accuracy of the groundhog's weather forecast. (Meteorologists say that groundhogs are right only about 30 percent of the time.)



Place an outdoor thermometer near your classroom door. Have a student read the temperature at the same time everyday and record it on a graph.

Have students imagine the groundhog's underground house and draw a cut-away picture of the various rooms and furnishings.

Read some animal fables to students. "How The Bear Got His Stumpy Tail" and "Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears" are good ones that are easy to find. Discuss the stories. Then have students write stories explaining how the groundhog came to be afraid of his own shadow.