

# Groundhog Day

February 2

Groundhog Day is a celebration that takes place about halfway through the winter. It has its origins in an old European holiday called Candlemas. On Groundhog Day, a groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil emerges from his burrow in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania to predict the seasons. If Phil sees his shadow, it means that we will have six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't, it means that spring will arrive early. Groundhog Day is a fun and silly holiday that is rooted in a time when people relied on small changes in the environment to predict the weather and the changing of the seasons.



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## Summary of Activities

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### Reading: Literature

*The Underappreciated Groundhog*—fictional story with comprehension questions

### Reading: Informational Text

*Marmota Monax*—nonfiction passage with a main-idea activity

### Writing

*Critter Compare and Contrast*—activity in which students write a summary comparing and contrasting two animals

### Bonus

*Measuring Shadows*—Have students measure their shadows at different times throughout the day. Ask, “When are they the longest?” and “When are they the shortest?”

**Vocabulary:** burrow, *felidae*, hibernate, *marmota monax*, *sciuridae*, strewn



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Underappreciated Groundhog

**Directions:** Read the story below and on page 17. Then answer the questions on page 17.

There was a crisis in Gobbler's Nob, the hometown of the most famous groundhog in the country, Punxsutawney Phil. Phil had woken up on New Year's Day and had made a resolution. He decided that he no longer wanted to participate in Groundhog Day. *These people are so ungrateful, Phil thought. They just expect me to do the same old thing year in and year out without so much as a thank you. And I have nothing else to do the rest of the year. My life is boring!*

The mayor called a meeting of the town council.

"What are we going to do?" he asked the council members. "Phil brings in the tourists, and they bring in the money! We will go broke!"

"Calm down," said Mr. Schmidt. "If Phil doesn't want the job anymore, let's see who else does. We can post an ad for the position all around the forest and see who shows up for an interview."

On the appointed day, a squirrel, a chipmunk, a raccoon, and an opossum waited to be interviewed by the mayor and the town council. The squirrel was first. Mr. Schmidt instructed him to crawl down into Phil's burrow and then come out and look around for his shadow.

"Say what?" said the squirrel. "Crawl into a burrow? Not for all the nuts in the world. I am strictly trees. That burrow will dirty up the sheen on my fur." The squirrel hopped onto a low tree limb and was gone in 60 seconds.

The chipmunk was next. He crawled into the burrow with great enthusiasm. Then he scampered out.

"I see it! I see it!" he hopped and hollered. The others looked all around. They didn't see a thing.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Schmidt. "Your shadow is so tiny, no one will believe that you can see it." The chipmunk hung his head and walked slowly back into the forest. Up next was the raccoon. He cleared his throat.

"Now, before we begin," he said, "I am going to need to know how I will be paid for my effort should I get the job."

"What do you want?" asked Schmidt.

"Unlimited access to every trash can in town."

All of the council members immediately shook their heads. The mayor said, "If we allow that, this entire town will have chicken bones and chip bags strewn from one end of it to the other!" The raccoon was dismissed. Next, it was the opossum's turn.

Now this whole time, Phil was hiding behind a log watching the interviews. It bothered him that some other animal might get his job. He watched as the opossum wobbled down into his burrow.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Underappreciated Groundhog *(cont.)*

**Directions:** Read the story beginning on page 16. Then answer the questions.

"O.K.," Schmidt said to the opossum. "Ready, set, and go!"

The opossum poked his head up out of the burrow. Schmidt, the mayor, and the entire council gasped. They whispered under their breath, "Oh, brother! With that long, skinny snout and those beady eyes, he'll scare the entire town right out of their pants!"

"Thank you, opossum. That will be all," Schmidt said.

The opossum bared his pointy teeth and scampered away.

There was no one left to interview. The council was at a loss.

"What about the rabbits?" someone suggested, but then they all remembered that rabbits were afraid of everything, including their shadows.

"We should have been nicer to Phil," the mayor said. "We took him for granted."

"It's true," said Schmidt. "All he wanted was a little appreciation and something to do the rest of the year."

Suddenly, Phil popped up from behind the log he was hiding behind. Everyone cheered.

"Phil!" the mayor cried. "We are so sorry we were so ungrateful. Won't you reconsider? Please come back."

1. You probably noticed that this story does not have an ending. Write an ending for the story by adding details that tell what happens next.

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2. Based on the context of the following sentence, what is the meaning of the word *strewn*?

"If we allow that, this entire town will have chicken bones and chip bags strewn from one end of it to the other!"

- a. scattered                      b. piled up                      c. gathered

3. Which animal is the scariest looking? \_\_\_\_\_. Underline the sentence that illustrates this.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Marmota Monax

**Directions:** Read the passage. Then complete the activity.

Scientists classify animals by grouping them according to characteristics they have in common. For example, think of all of the big cats that you know. There are lions, leopards, and panthers. Even though these big cats are of a different species, they all belong to the same family called *felidae*.

Animals in the *felidae* family have certain things in common. They are all carnivores. They also all have very flexible bodies, soft toe pads, and rough tongues. Even your house cat has similar features to these large predators.

*Marmota monax* is the scientific name of the good old groundhog. Groundhogs are also known as woodchucks. They belong to the family called *sciuridae*. Other animals in that family include squirrels, chipmunks, and prairie dogs.

Groundhogs grow to be about two feet long and weigh roughly ten pounds. Groundhogs have powerful limbs and very thick claws. They are excellent diggers and burrow or tunnel through the ground to get from place to place. Unlike other animals in the *sciuridae* family, groundhogs have short tails.

Groundhogs live in burrows. These burrows can be very intricate with up to five ways in and out. With so many escape routes, the groundhog can flee predators when necessary. The burrows of groundhogs can be very extensive. Some burrows can be 50 feet in length.

Groundhogs are herbivores. They eat grasses, plants, and berries. Groundhogs can sit upright and eat nuts as squirrels do. But unlike squirrels, they don't save nuts to eat at a later time.

During the winter months, groundhogs hibernate. They stay inside of specially made burrows from October to April. In order to survive this long period of inactivity, they reach their maximum weight just before they hibernate for the winter months.

Groundhogs can be quite aggressive, especially if other animals or people disrupt their burrows. They will defend them with their sharp teeth and claws.

While groundhogs spend most of the time on the ground, they are great swimmers and can climb trees to escape predators.



**Activity:** What is the main idea of this passage? What supporting details are provided? List your answers on the back of the page.

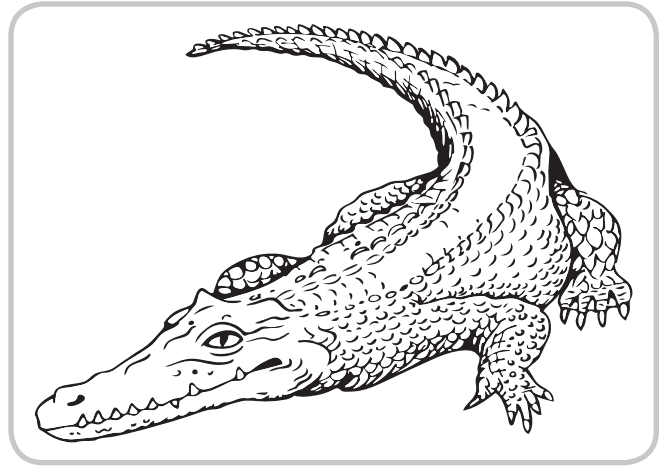
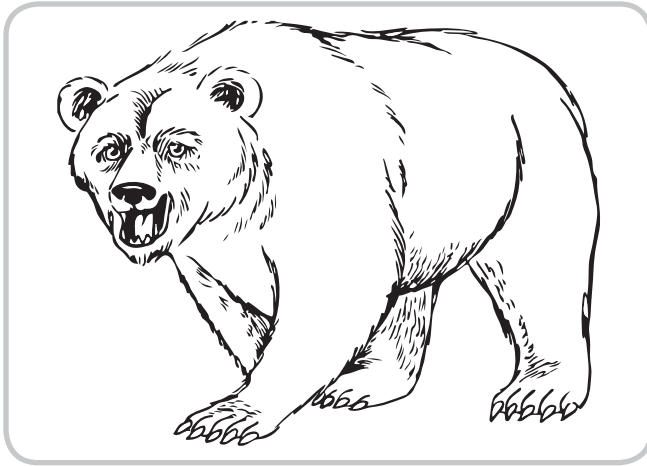


Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Critter Compare and Contrast

Look carefully at the pictures of the animals below. One is a bear. The other is a crocodile. In the space below, write a summary that compares and contrasts these two animals. What characteristics do they share? What characteristics are unique?



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# Meeting Standards *(cont.)*

Grade 6	
Reading: Literature	Activity Pages
ELA.RL.6.1	11, 17, 21, 27, 32, 37, 43, 49, 60, 65, 76, 88, 94, 100, 105, 111, 117, 121
ELA.RL.6.2	21, 32, 43, 76, 100, 121
ELA.RL.6.3	11, 17, 32, 43, 49, 54, 65, 70, 88, 94, 105, 111, 117, 121
ELA.RL.6.4	6, 17, 27, 43, 60, 83, 88, 100, 105
ELA.RL.6.5	21, 27, 32, 37, 60, 70, 76, 88, 94, 100, 105, 121
ELA.RL.6.6	43, 54, 65, 70, 117, 121
ELA.RL.6.7	76, 100
ELA.RL.6.9	21, 49, 76, 111
Reading: Informational Text	Activity Pages
ELA.RI.6.1	7, 13, 18, 28, 33, 39, 45, 50, 56, 66, 71, 78, 84, 90, 96, 101, 112, 123
ELA.RI.6.2	7, 18, 45, 71, 84, 90, 101, 125
ELA.RI.6.3	7, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 39, 56, 78, 84, 96, 123
ELA.RI.6.4	7, 13, 23, 33, 39, 50, 56, 66, 71, 78, 96, 112, 118
ELA.RI.6.5	28, 33, 39, 45, 50, 56, 71, 78, 84, 90, 101, 107, 112, 114, 123, 125
ELA.RI.6.6	39, 61, 66, 78, 101
ELA.RI.6.8	18, 23, 28, 45, 56, 66, 84, 112
Writing	Activity Pages
ELA.W.6.1	29, 34, 39, 40, 46, 51, 72, 79, 85, 102, 108
ELA.W.6.2	14, 19, 21, 29, 40, 51, 61, 62, 85, 113
ELA.W.6.3	8, 11, 14, 17, 24, 46, 54, 57, 67, 70, 72, 79, 91, 97, 108, 117, 119, 121, 124
ELA.W.6.4	all writing activities
ELA.W.6.5	all writing activities
ELA.W.6.9	6, 11, 14, 17, 21, 29, 34, 46, 51, 54, 62, 67, 72, 85, 97, 102, 113, 117, 119, 121, 124
Speaking & Listening	Activity Pages
ELA.SL.6.1	8, 9, 15, 25, 40, 43, 47, 52, 58, 67, 91, 97, 98, 108
ELA.SL.6.2	25, 30, 47, 58, 73, 98, 114, 119
ELA.SL.6.3	9, 25, 40, 81, 108
ELA.SL.6.4	9, 15, 52, 81, 91, 97, 108, 119
ELA.SL.6.5	15, 30, 47, 58, 67, 73, 80, 97, 98, 114
ELA.SL.6.6	8, 21, 40, 47, 52, 66, 81, 91, 97, 108, 119