

# Punxsutawney Phyllis

~ in the classroom ~

## All About Groundhogs!

Have your students seen a real groundhog? Go around the room and see how many groundhog facts they can think of. Do they know what color groundhogs are? (Brown with black feet and tails.) What size? (Up to 15 pounds.) Where they live? (In underground burrows.) Whether they hibernate? (Yes.) What kind of food they eat? (All kinds of grasses, as well as any fruits and vegetables they can get their little paws on!)

Here are a few facts they might not know:

1. A full-grown groundhog is about the size of a large cat.
2. Groundhogs have very sharp teeth that grow throughout their lives. They must chew on things to file them down or they become painful.
3. Groundhogs have five toes on each back foot, but only four on each front foot!
4. Groundhogs are built for digging! Their ears fold flat to keep out dirt. A groundhog can move as much as 700 pounds of dirt and rock when digging its burrow.
5. Groundhogs build separate rooms in their burrows for eating, sleeping, storing food, having babies, and even going to the bathroom.
6. Groundhogs eat a lot of grass, but they LOVE corn, strawberries and lots of other things that people grow in gardens,
7. Ground hogs are very shy and easily frightened. When they're scared they make a high pitched whistling sound, so they are sometimes called whistle pigs!
8. Groundhogs can swim and climb trees!

For older students, make this a library activity. (See alternate activity page of questions for students to answer by researching during a library period.)

You can use this information in conjunction with the madlibs. Have the students do the madlibs for fun, then teach them the real facts!

## Activities

### Signs of Spring Chart

Phyllis looks for signs so she'll know whether to predict an early spring or 6 more weeks of winter. Ask your students how many signs of spring they can think of. Can they come up with:

- longer days (light comes earlier, stays later)
- warmer temperatures
- snow/ice melting
- birds returning from the south
- birds singing
- grass turning green
- leaves budding
- flowers blooming
- baby animals being born
- farmers plowing

What else can they think of?

Make a chart with all the signs of spring your students think of.

See how many of these signs of spring are present on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Do your students predict an early spring or 6 more weeks of winter?

Check the signs of spring again in the beginning of April. How many signs are present now? Was their prediction correct? Why or why not?

### "I Can Do It!" Story

Phyllis believes in herself even when others doubt her. Have your students brainstorm things that they believe they can do, goals to reach or dreams to strive for. Write a story in which a character believes in him/herself and accomplishes his/her goal, overcoming two or three obstacles along the way. Then let your students illustrate the story. This activity can be done as a group or individually, depending on the age/ability of your students.