

# GROUNDHOG DAY



## A **SOAR** Activity

**S**timulating **O**pportunities **A**cademic **R**igor

A SOAR Unit engages students by captivating their attention with stimulating activities that include multiple academic disciplines. Student progress will **SOAR!**

Included in this activity are:

- Informational article about the history of Groundhog Day
- Test Your Thinking Skills Questions that mimic end of year state tests questions
- Test Your Thinking Answer Key
- Stimulating Opportunity: Students write an opinion essay on why or why or why not the groundhog should see his shadow

# Is Groundhog Day for Real?



There really is a Groundhog Day, just look on any calendar and you will see it right there on February 2. Groundhog Day has appeared on the calendar every year since 1886.

What exactly is Groundhog Day? Legend says that February 2 is the day that the groundhog forecasts the weather by predicting if we will have an early spring or six more weeks of winter. Just how does the groundhog do this? If the groundhog sees his shadow, the scared groundhog will quickly return to his burrow and we will have 6 more weeks of winter. If he does not see his shadow, spring is right around the corner.

## What are the Details?

Why is February 2 Groundhog Day? February 2 is the midpoint between winter solstice on December 21 (first day of winter) and spring equinox on March 20 (first day of spring).

You might be wondering what happens if one groundhog sees his shadow and another one doesn't. The answer is simple; there's only one groundhog that has the power to make this prediction and that is Punxsutawney Phil. From Gobbler's Knob, in the Pennsylvania Wilds, Phil will come out of his burrow when the sun rises and he will let the people of the Northern Hemisphere know his prediction. If Phil sees his shadow there will be six more weeks of winter and if he doesn't see his shadow spring is near.

Just how long has Phil had this job? He has been predicting the coming of spring since February 2, 1886. Using your math skills, you have probably figured out that Phil would be over 100 years old (133 years to be exact). According to legend, Phil is given a special punch every year at the annual Groundhog Picnic. This powerful drink gives Phil seven more years of life.

How did Groundhog Day get started? "A local newspaper, The Punxsutawney Spirit, is credited with printing the news of the first observance in 1886... 'Today is Groundhog Day, and up to the time of going to press the beast has not seen his shadow.'" (*Holidays Calendar*)

## What Do You Know About Groundhogs?

- Groundhogs are mammals and are classified as a marmot (a member of the squirrel family)
- Groundhogs are herbivores, eating only plant life
- Average lifespan of a groundhog is 6 years
- They weigh between 6-14 pounds with a body length between 16 and 20 inches
- Groundhogs are yellowish brown to dark brown in color with short legs and a bushy tail
- Groundhogs hibernate from 3 to 5 months depending on the temperature of the area
- During hibernation they don't wake up to eat but feed on their body fat
- Their body temperature drops from 98 degrees F to as low as 38 degrees, and their breathing slows from 16 breaths per minute to as low as 2 breaths per minute.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Test Your Thinking Skills



1. Which one of the following sections would you read to find the answer to the question below?

How did Groundhog Day get started?

- A. Is Groundhog Day for Real?
- B. What are the Details?
- C. What Do You Know About Groundhogs?

2. Read the sentence below from the passage.

Groundhog Day has appeared on the calendar every year since 1886.

What does the word appeared refer to?

- A. Phil has come out of his burrow
- B. Phil's shadow has been seen
- C. Groundhog Day is written on the calendar

3. Read the passage below.

The answer is simple, there's only one groundhog that has the power to make this prediction and that is Punxsutawney Phil.

The writer of the passage wants to replace the underlined word in order to make the meaning more clear. Which one word would make her word choice better?

- A. talent
- B. function
- C. opportunity

4. Which one of the following is NOT a characteristic of a groundhog?

- A. is a marmot
- B. hibernates
- C. lives for 133 years
- D. is an herbivore

5. Do you think that Punxsutawney Phil can really predict how long winter will last? Please explain your answer.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Test Your Thinking Skills

## Answer Key



1. Which one of the following sections would you read to find the answer to the question below?

How did Groundhog Day get started?

- A. **Is Groundhog Day for Real?**
- B. What are the Details?
- C. What Do You Know About Groundhogs?

2. Read the sentence below from the passage.

Groundhog Day has appeared on the calendar every year since 1886.

What does the word appeared refer to?

- A. Phil has come out of his burrow
- B. Phil's shadow has been seen
- C. **Groundhog Day is written on the calendar**

3. Read the passage below.

The answer is simple, there's only one groundhog that has the power to make this prediction and that is Punxsutawney Phil.

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- A. **talent**
- B. function
- C. opportunity

4. Which one of the following is NOT a characteristic of a groundhog?

A. is a marmot

B. hibernates

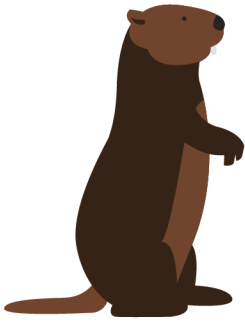
C. lives for 133 years

D. is an herbivore

5. Do you think that Punxsutawney Phil can really predict how long winter will last?

Please explain your answer.

Answers will vary but should explain that Punxsutawney Phil cannot actually predict how long winter will last and include details from the text.



## SHOULD PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL SEE HIS SHADOW? -OPINION WRITING-

What is opinion writing?

Opinion writing states an **opinion**, or how the author feels about a topic. The purpose of an opinion essay is to **convince the audience** to feel the same way the author does by giving **facts and details** to back up the opinion.

How to write an opinion essay:

1. Define your **claim** (your opinion) about the topic
2. Think of 2-3 **reasons** to back up your claim
3. For each reason, write down 2 facts or details to support
4. Draft your essay, using an introductory paragraph, 2-3 paragraphs with reasons and details, and a concluding paragraph

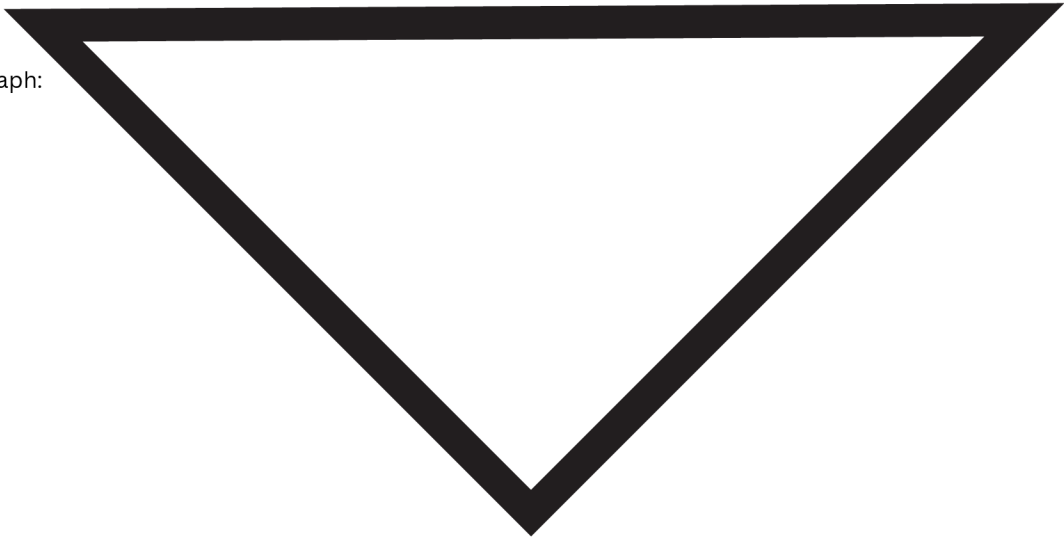
Let's get started!

**Topic:** Do you think Punxsutawney Phil should see his shadow this year? Why or why not?

**Claim:** I believe that Punxsutawney Phil \_\_\_\_\_ his shadow this year.

Use the rectangles and triangles to plan out your reasons and details on the next page. Then, write your essay on the lines provided to convince Punxsutawney Phil!

Introductory Paragraph:  
Lead  
Claim



Reason 1:  
-Topic Sentence  
-2 facts and/or details



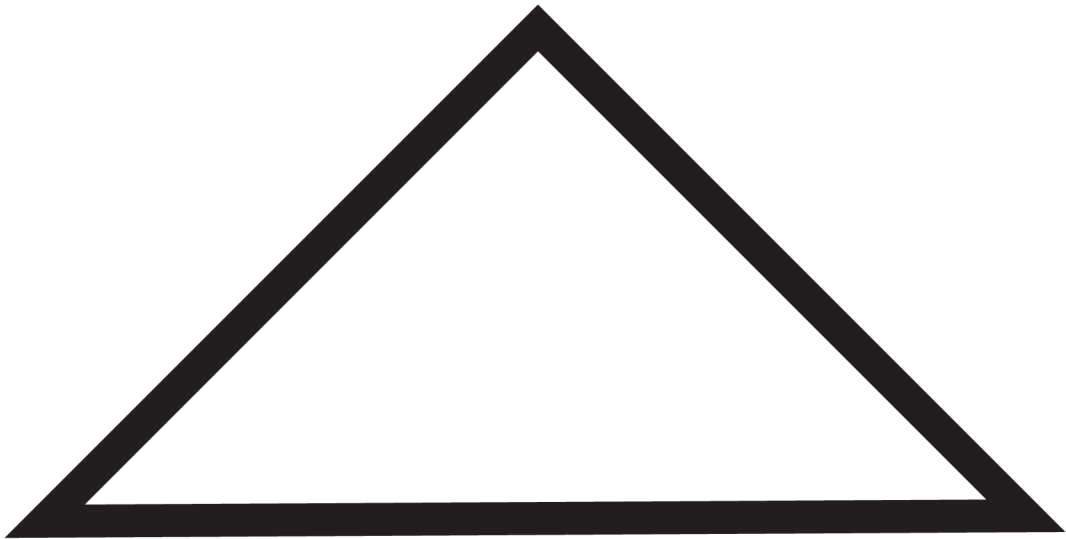
Reason 2:  
-Topic Sentence  
-2 facts and/or details



Reason 3:  
-Topic Sentence  
-2 facts and/or details



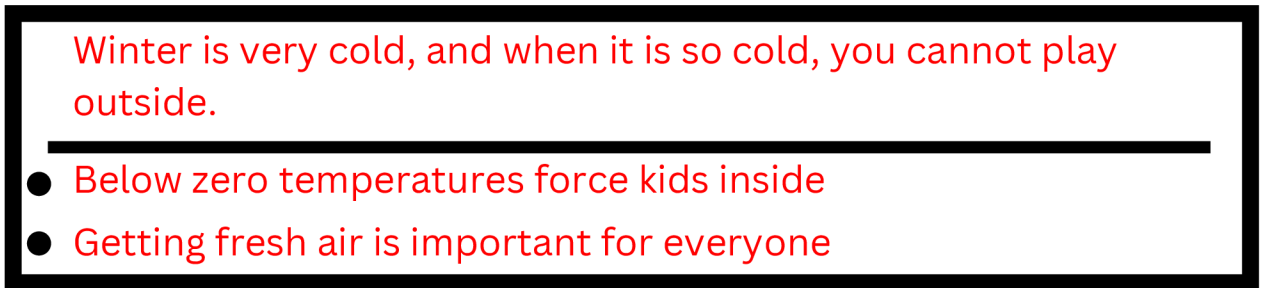
Conclusion Paragraph:  
Restate your claim



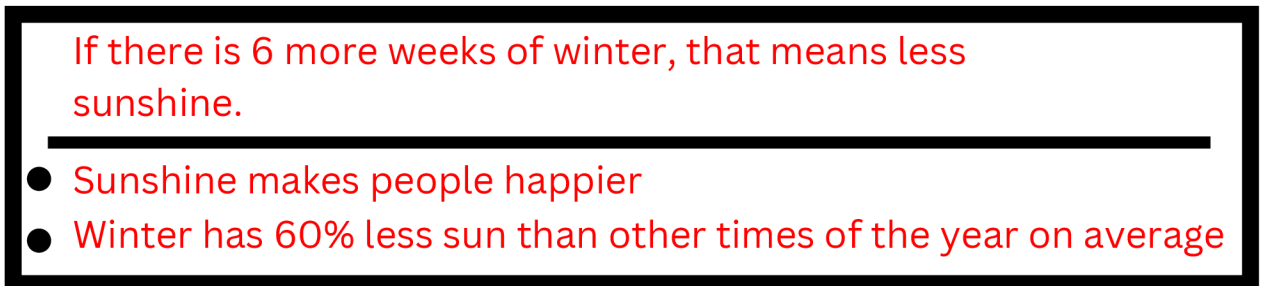
Introductory Paragraph:  
Lead  
Claim



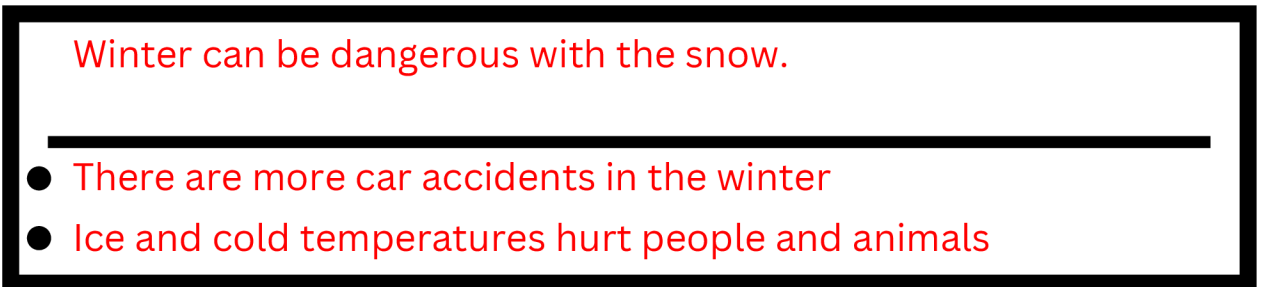
Reason 1:  
-Topic Sentence  
-2 facts and/or details



Reason 2:  
-Topic Sentence  
-2 facts and/or details



Reason 3:  
-Topic Sentence  
-2 facts and/or details



Conclusion Paragraph:  
Restate your claim

