

1 Read the text and match the subheadings to the correct paragraphs.

- And can it predict the weather?
- So when did the groundhog become part of this?
- OK, but first – why 2nd February?
- What's a groundhog anyway?

The History of GROUNDHOG Day

*I see a little groundhog, furry and brown.
He's popping up to look around.
If he sees his shadow, down he'll go.
Six more weeks of winter - oh, no!*

Perhaps you've heard this poem before, or perhaps you're wondering what a groundhog is and what it's got to do with the weather. Let's find out!

1) _____
It's a type of rodent that belongs to the squirrel family. It spends the winter sleeping in its underground burrow and comes out again in early spring.

2) _____
Well, not exactly! In Canada and the USA, there is a superstition that says if a groundhog comes out of its burrow on 2nd February and the sky is cloudy, then it will stay above ground and spring will begin. However, if it's sunny and the groundhog sees its shadow, it will go back under the ground and winter will last another six weeks! This is a rather strange way of predicting the weather, but it actually has a long history.

3) _____
This is the halfway point between the Winter Solstice – the shortest day of the year – and the Spring Equinox, which is the first day of spring. On this day in Europe long ago, Christians celebrated a festival called Candlemas. They said that, if the weather was sunny on Candlemas, winter would carry on. If it was cloudy and raining, however, spring would soon begin. This idea probably came from an even older Gaelic superstition about 2nd February and the goddess Cailleach.

4) _____
Well, the Europeans thought that hibernating animals such as hedgehogs, badgers and bears woke up at Candlemas and came out of their holes and caves to greet the Virgin Mary. When European settlers moved to North America, they brought the tradition with them. They chose the groundhog to make their predictions about winter because it was a hibernating animal. Also, in Native American folklore the groundhog was an important symbol of wisdom. The first arranged Groundhog Day celebration was held in Pennsylvania in 1887. The tradition spread across the USA and Canada, and continues to this day!



2 Read the clues and complete the crossword.

Down

- 1 The location of the first organised Groundhog Day celebration
- 2 The groundhog belongs to this family.
- 3 If a groundhog sees this, it goes back into its burrow.
- 4 Hedgehogs, badgers, groundhogs and bears are this type of animal.
- 5 The name of a Gaelic goddess
- 6 This is how much longer winter will last if the groundhog goes back underground.
- 7 The groundhog symbolises this in Native American folklore.

Across

- 5 An old Christian festival celebrated in Europe
- 8 Another name for the shortest day of the year

