

Lupton's **Laugh & Learn** for 2 February, 2009

Thought for Today

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. [Plato]

If you are looking for serious reading, you've already read it. The rest is for fun.

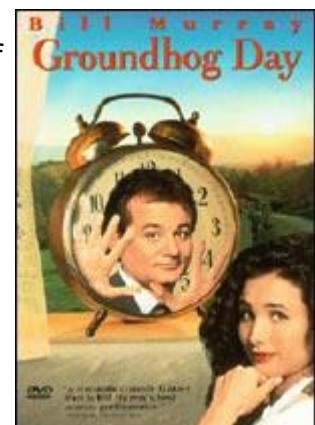


Groundhog Day, February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. Most agree that it is the silliest American tradition, but it is a welcome smile mid-way between the beginning of winter and the beginning of spring,

Groundhog Day has been celebrated in Punsxutawney, Pennsylvania on February 2nd since 1886. It is the day that the Groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter sleep to look for his shadow.

If he sees his shadow, he regards it as a sign of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. If the day is cloudy and without shadows, Mr. Groundhog takes it as a sign of spring and stays above ground.

This year's celebration will see many thousands of visitors in Punsxutawney, Pennsylvania as they wait for Phil's appearance. Phil is the name of the official groundhog. Since he has had that name for many decades we suspect there have been many groundhogs named Phil.



Bill Murray helped lift this day to greater fame with his comedy movie, "Groundhog Day."

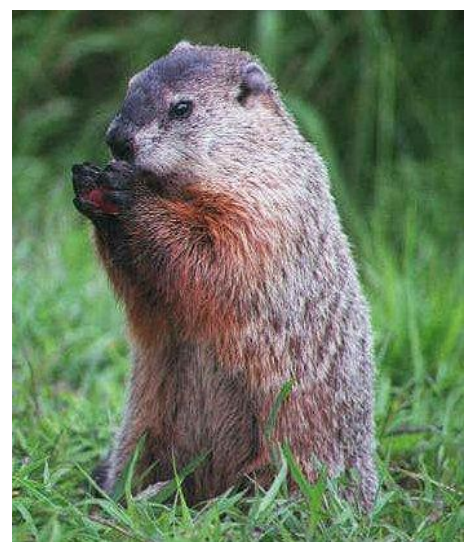
Groundhog is another name for Woodchuck.

Groundhogs are found in North America forests and fields.

Anatomy: A groundhog grows up to 17 inches (43 cm) long. It has a tail that is about 5 inches (13 cm) long. This mammal has a bulky body and short limbs. The fur is brown-gray and the eyes are black. The hands and feet are black and have sharp, sturdy claws.

Diet: Groundhogs/woodchucks are mostly herbivores (plant-eaters). They eat grass, seeds, leaves, flowers, fruit, eggs, and some insects.

Predators: Groundhogs/woodchucks are hunted by many animals, including wolves, dogs, coyotes, bobcats, foxes, and humans. Groundhogs cannot move very quickly, so



their best defense is to retreat into their burrows.

Groundhogs live most of their lives underground. They dig burrows or "dens," that have several entrances, each connected with the main tunnel and nesting chamber where the groundhog will hibernate for the winter. Their whiskers help them to "see" underground, but above ground they have excellent hearing and eyesight!

The Links

Last Year's Groundhog Day: <http://www.groundhog.org/video/>

Watch Groundhog Day live at 1 pm, Feb 2:

<http://visitpa.com/things-to-do/see-more-pa/groundhog-day/index.aspx>

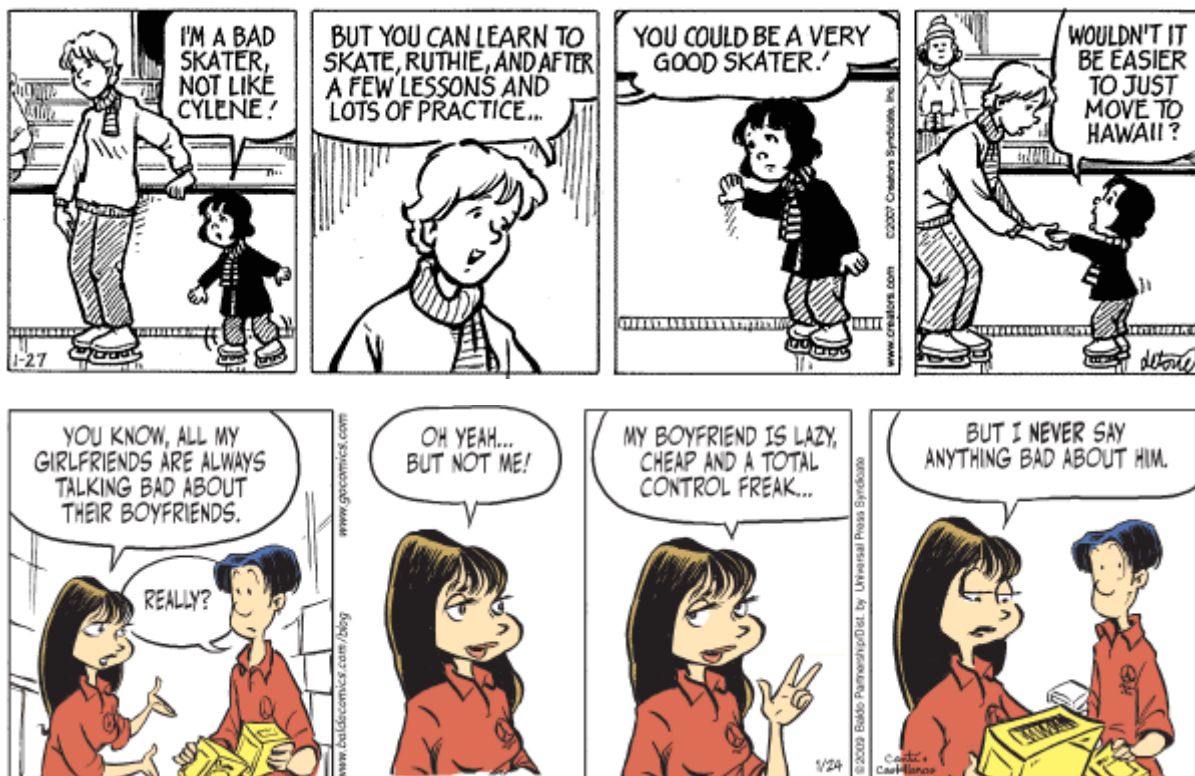
Groundhog Day movie Trailer: http://cz.youtube.com/watch?v=T_yDWQsrajA'

Song about February: <http://cz.youtube.com/watch?v=fKhuHbxkYm8>

Ground Hog Day Quiz: <http://a4esl.org/q/h/mc-lb-ghd.html>

The Laugh

Last year, both Groundhog Day and the USA Presidential State of the Union Address came on the same day. As a radio announcer pointed out, "It is ironic: one involves a meaningless ritual in which we look to a creature of little intelligence to tell our future... and the other involves a groundhog."



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