



MINIS AT HOME

volume 1, issue 18

Greetings kids, parents, grandparents, guardians, friends and neighbors!

Welcome to issue 18 of Minis at Home newsletter. Each newsletter features a special theme and offers pertinent information, a craft, and recommended reading. Grownups: please work on projects together with your children. Your pARTicipation is important! We will offer hints and tips for ways to create art as a twosome or a family.

This week's theme = Groundhog Day

What is **Groundhog Day**? Groundhog Day falls on February 2nd: it's the day when a certain groundhog from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, pops up from his hole in the ground (called a **burrow**) and checks for his **shadow**. If the sun is shining, he will most likely see it. According to **folklore**, this means that there will be six more weeks of winter. If it is a cloudy day, he probably won't see his shadow, which means that **spring** is on the way!



Groundhog Day is a tradition in the United States and Canada. It began in 1886 (a very long time ago) in the small town of Punxsutawney, home to many farmers. The farmers were always on the lookout for signs of spring, so they could begin planting their crops. Usually, when hibernating animals wake up, warm weather will follow shortly. In ancient times, people who lived in Europe believed that bears and badgers had a weather spirit. If they saw one of those animals in winter they thought that the cold weather would soon be over. Groundhogs look a bit like badgers or tiny bears, so North Americans looked to them to see when they stopped hibernating. They chose February 2nd as the date to check on the progress of spring. Folks in Punxsutawney nicknamed their weather-predicting groundhog Punxsutawney Phil. Punxsutawney Phil's full name is **"Punxsutawney Phil Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators, and Weather Prophet Extraordinary."** Can you say that? Groundhog Day has become a tradition in other parts of the U.S. as well. New York City has a groundhog named "Pothole Pete." Not sure where he pops out of the ground! It would be hard to hibernate with the sound of the subway rumbling below.



Groundhogs are also known as woodchucks, whistle-pigs, land-beavers or mouse-bears. They are **herbivores**, which means they eat plants, grasses, and sometimes tree bark. They have thick brown fur, a bushy tail, small eyes and ears, curved claws to help them dig, and 4 very long teeth (2 on the top and 2 on the bottom). These large teeth, called **incisors**, keep growing a little bit each year, so they will stay nice and sharp for chewing.

Groundhogs work together by warning each other if there is a predator nearby. They make squeaky, high-pitched sounds, similar to the noises a squirrel makes.

Groundhogs eat a lot, so they can stay nice and fat through the winter when they hibernate.



Groundhogs build tunnels underground to move around so predators like large hawks and foxes can't see them. They like to build their tunnels in open grassy areas next to forests. They are quite busy when they are not hibernating. They store food, build nests, take care of their babies, and keep the tunnels very clean. They even build special areas inside the tunnels just for using the bathroom!

Groundhogs really can predict the weather! Although Punxsutawney Phil's predictions are correct less than half the time, if you see a groundhog out and about in the wintertime, you'll know spring is not too far away.

Activity: Shadow Play!

Head outside on a sunny day and stand on a paved surface like a driveway or sidewalk. Do you see your shadow? Stand up and move any which way you want so you can watch your shadow move with you. Try looking at your shadow at different times throughout the day. What do you notice about your shadows? Are they longer or shorter at certain times of day? Hint: this has to do with the where the sun sits in the sky. The science of sight and the behavior of light is called **optics**. When you are noticing how shadows change throughout the day, you are being a scientist!



It's also fun to draw your shadow using chalk. Have a grownup or sibling trace your shadow onto the driveway or sidewalk while you stand very still. Try this several times during different times of the day, making sure your body is in the exact same position each time. How does your shadow change?



Here's a fun optics project for the indoors. Choose a bright sunny day and head over to a window where the sun streams in.

Stand small toys, such as Lego sculptures, or pieces of fruit on a piece of white paper. You will see the shadows of these objects on the paper. Can you carefully trace the outline of these shadows? Ask a grownup to help you if necessary. What color are the shadows? Talk about what you notice.

You can also play with optics by shining a flashlight indoors when it's dark out. What do you notice about these kinds of shadows?



Activity: Craft

Groundhog Day Puppet



Materials:

Paper cup

Brown paint

Construction paper – brown, black, green, white

Paint brush

Scissors

Aleene's Tacky Glue

Small googly eyes

Small black pom-pom

Tape

Large craft stick, long pencil or a wooden dowel

Procedure:

- **Paint the outside of the paper cup brown**
- **Cut a rectangular piece of green construction paper that is slightly taller than the cup, making sure it's long enough to wrap all the way around the cup.**
- **Snip a fringe of "grass" all along one long edge of the green paper**
- **Using brown paper, cut out a circle or "fat" oval for the groundhog's face and 2 smaller circles for ears (make sure the width of the face can fit inside the opening of the cup)**
- **Attach the ears to the top of the face**
- **Glue small googly eyes in place**
- **Glue the black pompom in the center of the face, or cut out a small circle from black paper and glue in place, or draw a small black dot for the nose**
- **Cut out 2 long skinny triangles from the white paper for the 2 front teeth and glue in place**
- **Using scissors or a knife (grown-ups, please!) make a 1-inch slit in the center of the bottom of the cup, making sure it's large enough for the craft stick to fit through**
- **When the cup is dry, wrap the green "grass" paper tightly around it, taping or gluing the two ends together, making sure the "grass" sticks up beyond the opening of the cup**
- **From the opening of the cup, push the craft stick, bottom first, through the slit in the bottom of the cup**
- **Tape the groundhog's face onto the top end of the craft stick**
- **Holding the end of the craft stick, you can now push and pull your groundhog puppet up and down! You can use a flashlight to make him see his shadow**
- **Think of a fun name for your groundhog**

Activity: Move and Sing

I'm a Little Groundhog (original source unknown)
(sung to the tune of *I'm a Little Tea Pot*)

**I'm a little groundhog,
furry and brown;
I'm popping up to have a look around.
If I see my shadow, back down I'll go
For six more weeks of winter - OH NO!**

**I'm a little groundhog,
furry and brown;
I pop my head out and look around.
If I don't see my shadow, I'll stay out here
And enjoy an early spring this year!**



Move Like a Groundhog!

(by Ann Hansen)



Groundhog, groundhog crawl from the ground (pretend to crawl)

Groundhog, groundhog turn around (stand up and turn around)

Groundhog, groundhog look at the sky (look up high to the sky)

Groundhog, groundhog what do you spy?
(use your hands like binoculars)

Do you see clouds or the sun so bright?

Do you see your shadow holding on so tight? (look to your side)

If you see your shadow, then wave hello (wave hello to your shadow)

Then head back down to your tunnel below
(pretend to crawl back down a hole)

If you see the clouds, then jump for joy (stand up again and jump)

Spring is coming for all to enjoy!

Activity: Tongue Twister Fun

Can you say this really fast over and over?

"How much wood
would a woodchuck chuck,
if a woodchuck
could chuck wood?"



Wake Up, Groundhog

(original source unknown)
(sung to *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*)

**Wake up Groundhog:
Time to see
what the weather's
going to be.**

**Time to stretch,
time to think,
time to eat
and time to drink.**

**Wake up Groundhog:
Time to see
what the weather's
going to be.**

Literacy: POEM TO SHARE

Groundhog Day By Constance Del Nero

February 2nd
has finally beckoned
the groundhog to rise from his bed

He climbs up through the hole
and sniffs the air,
as if to clear his head

If it's a sunny day
and his shadow is dark,
he'll want to go right back down

But if the sky is gray,
he might want to play
and scurry all over the town!



Literacy: RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Snuggle up in a big comfy chair and read together

Grumpy Groundhog by Maureen Wright

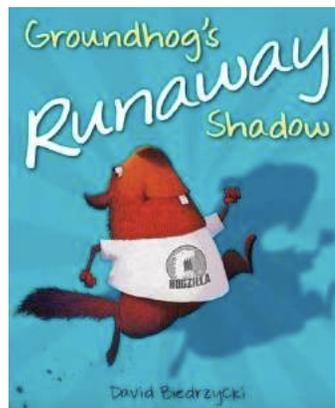
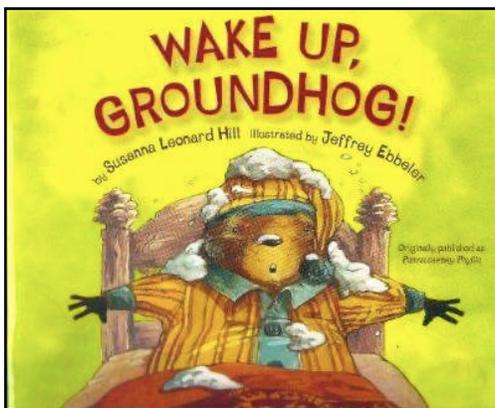
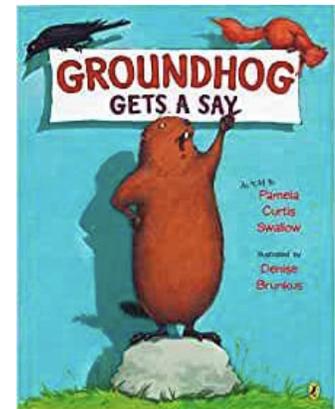
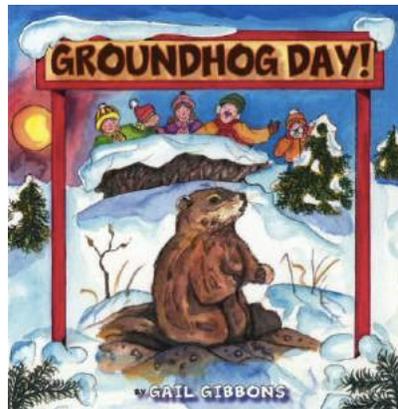
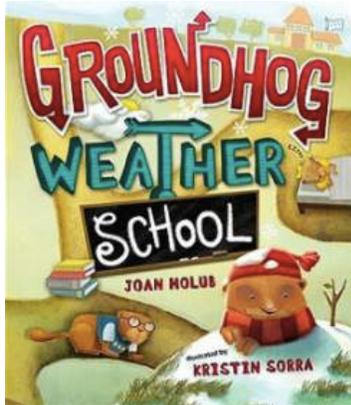
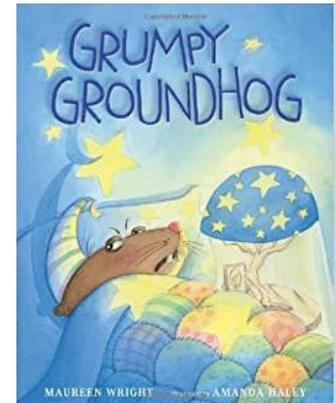
Wake Up Groundhog by Susanna Leonard Hill

Groundhog Day by Gail Gibbons

Groundhog Gets a Say by Pamela Curtis Swallow

Groundhog Weather School by Kristin Sorra

Groundhog's Runaway Shadow by David Biedrzycki



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See you next week with issue 19 of **Minis at Home!**

Share your work on <https://www.instagram.com/minimastersaam/>

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