

*A note from Reel History: Certainly,* Groundhog Day *is not necessarily a historical film. However, if offers a uniquely comedic cultural interpretation of western Pennsylvania. For this reason, Reel History host Jared Frederick has occasionally used the film in his Pennsylvania history course.*

1. Phil describes Punxsutawney folk as “hicks.” Why do you think there is often division between city and country residents?
2. What compels people to travel to Punxsutawney every February 2?
3. What scenes, people, or conversations remind you of the Altoona area?
4. Why might some people consider living the same day over and over in Western Pennsylvania a form of hell?
5. Unlike the movie *Witness*, very little of this film was actually shot in Pennsylvania. Why do you think this decision was made?
6. How does *Groundhog Day* effectively balance comedy, drama, and fantasy?
7. Are people right to be dismissive of the celebration of Groundhog Day or should it be considered a legitimate holiday?
8. A major theme of the movie is redemption. Why do you think the filmmakers thought it could be found in rural Pennsylvania?
9. Some critics have deemed this the best movie about Pennsylvania. Explain why you agree or disagree. If you disagree, what movie would you choose?
10. In what ways is the film an accurate or inaccurate representation of Pennsylvania culture?

Shape

Description automatically generated with medium confidence  
Subscribe and view additional content on our YouTube channel.

Accompanying primary source:

**Groundhog sees his shadow, predicts six more weeks of winter**

February 2, 1993 – United Press International

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa. -- Punxsutawney Phil, America's weather- forecasting groundhog, emerged from his burrow just after dawn Tuesday and saw his shadow, which legend has it means six more weeks of winter.

If Punxsutawney Phil had failed to see his shadow, the same legend has it there would have been an early spring. Punxsutawney Phil has been represented by various groundhogs over the years. Phil has been making his annual predictions since 1887 atop Gobbler's Knob in western Pennsylvania, about 90 miles northeast of Pittsburgh.

About 5,000 spectators were on hand when the furry forecaster emerged from his burrow at 7:27 a.m. with the temperature 6 below zero. Phil's followers, who chanted 'We want Phil!' before he emerged, contend he has never been wrong.

During the ceremony, Groundhog Club President Jim Means talked to Phil 'in groundhogese' about his prediction, then translated. 'See that image over by that twig?' Phil asked. 'It's not very dark and not very big. It's a likeness of me. That's my shadow I see. Six more weeks of winter there will be.' The members of the Inner Circle of the Orginal Groundhog Club awaited his sage advice attired in top hats and tails.

Phil actually didn't see his shadow. The whole thing is a publicity stunt in which Groundhog Club members deliver Phil's 'message' to the media. Phil had to be dragged from his year-round burrow, an indoor glass enclosure at the local library he shares with other groundhogs Philomena and Barney, and was taken to the nearby Gobbler's Knob.

The Groundhog Day holiday is an extension of a belief among the nation's early German immigrants that a badger, a close relative of the groundhog, was a harbinger of spring. Groundhog Day festivities in Punxsutawney include a breakfast, a dinner and dance and the crowning of a high school king and queen. Punxsutawney is a town of about 7,800 people.

There are other weather-forecasting groundhogs across the country, including Octorara Orphy, Sun Prairie Jimmy and Greta, but local residents say Phil is the animal kingdom's top meteorologist. At the Staten Island Zoo in New York, Charles G. Hogg, the forecasting groundhog in residence, woke up to the coldest day of the winter -- 11 degrees -- saw his shadow and went back to bed.

Staten Island Chuck has been on the job for 12 years. 'He's been about 82 percent correct over the years,' said zoo spokeswoman Margaret Pellon. At Stone Mountain, Ga., Gen. Beauregard Lee, Georgia's groundhog answer to Punxsutawney Phil, waddled down the the red-carpeted veranda of his southern mansion at the Yellow River Game Ranch at 7:22 a.m. and did not see his shadow.

Actor Keith Carradine, in the area for an Atlanta performance, announced: 'General Lee did not spy his shadow. Southeasterners can soon shed their mittens and expect spring in the next few weeks.' In the Midwest, zoo-kept groundhogs in St. Louis and Springfield, Ill., and a lone prairie dog in Decatur, Ill., saw their shadows to predict six more weeks of winter.

However, 'Shadow' and 'Sunshine,' the two appropriately named young groundhogs at Brookfield Zoo west of Chicago, broke ranks with their colleagues. They bolted so fast when released they didn't have time to see their shadows, officials said.