

Name: _____

Groundhog or Woodchuck?

by Kelly Hashway

What's the difference between a groundhog and a woodchuck? Actually, they are the same animal. Groundhogs are also known as woodchucks and even marmots.

Groundhogs are the largest members of the squirrel family. They are a member of a special group of ground squirrels called



marmots. Groundhogs may not look like they would be good climbers, but they are. Even with their heavy looking bodies, they can climb trees to escape predators or check out their surroundings. Groundhogs like to stay alert, which is why you'll often see them standing on their hind legs and being very still. If a groundhog senses danger, it will give a loud whistle to warn other groundhogs. Besides whistling, groundhogs will grind their teeth together and make low barking sounds.

Climbing trees isn't a groundhog's only talent. They are also good swimmers. But groundhogs prefer to be in burrows under the ground, which is where they make their homes. A burrow usually has anywhere from two to five exits to help the groundhog escape predators. Luckily, groundhogs have very strong limbs and curved claws that make digging easy. Once a burrow is made, the groundhog will stay close to it. This is why they make their burrows near

sources of food. Groundhogs eat mostly wild grass and other vegetation. But they do eat small animals like grasshoppers, snails, and grubs, too.

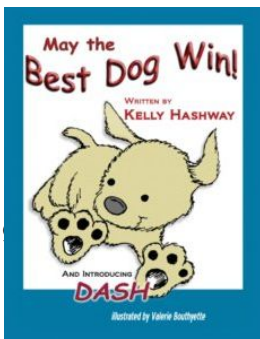
While groundhogs will eat nuts like squirrels do, they do not store food the same way. Groundhogs will eat and eat all summer long to build up fat in their bodies. Once the weather starts getting cold, they hibernate like bears in underground burrows.



These are called “winter burrows” and are different from the burrows groundhogs use during the summer months. They’ll sleep until spring, living off the body fat they have stored up all summer.

Whether you call them groundhogs, woodchucks, or marmots, these creatures have become quite famous among humans. They even have a day named after them.

About the Author



Kelly Hashway's latest book, *May the Best Dog Win*, is now available!

Dash has the perfect life until the Super Sweeper 5000 shows up. Sweeper runs all over the house sucking up the leftover food scraps, and he even has his own room! But Dash won't give up his place as the favorite dog without a fight.

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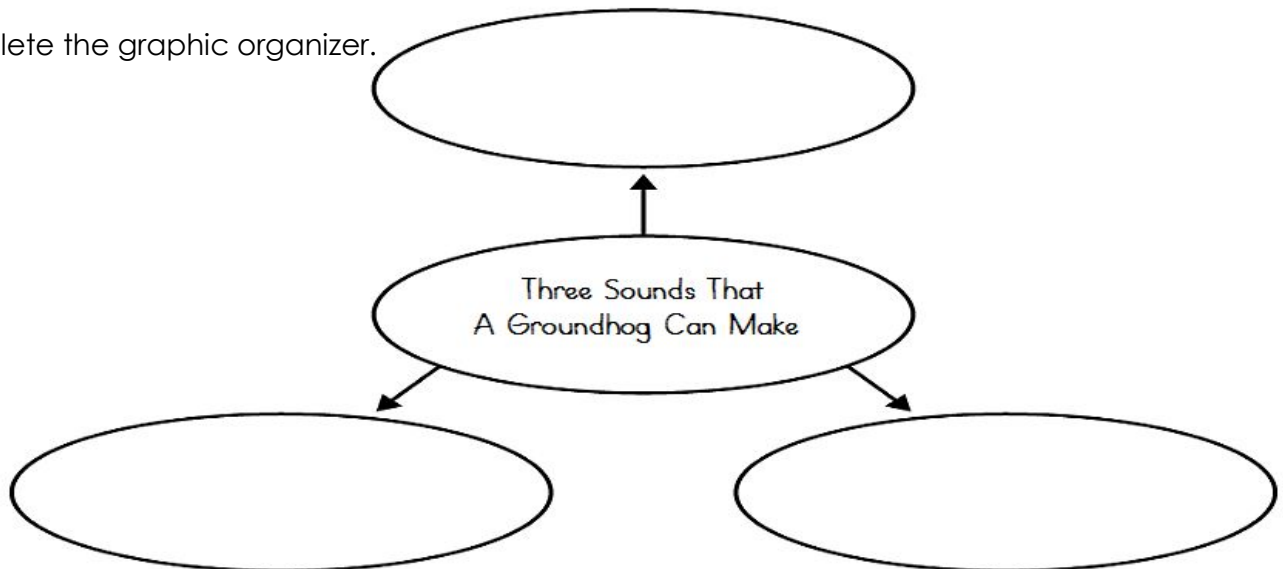
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1. What is the difference between a groundhog and a woodchuck?
 - a. Groundhogs are larger than woodchucks.
 - b. Woodchucks climb trees, but groundhogs do not.
 - c. Groundhogs are marmots, but woodchucks are not.
 - d. Woodchucks and groundhogs are the same animal.

2. Complete the graphic organizer.



3. Explain how a groundhog's burrow is designed to keep the groundhog safe from predators.

4. Do you think a groundhog is likely to weigh more in early spring or late autumn? Explain.

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Groundhog or Woodchuck?

Vocabulary Activity



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the story. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ___ l e ___ ___

hint: quick to notice any danger

2. ___ l i m ___ ___ ___ s

hint: animals that can climb well

3. ___ ___ r ___ o ___

hint: underground animal home

4. ___ ___ e ___ a ___ o ___ s

hint: animals that hunt and eat other animals

5. ___ a n ___ e ___

hint: something that is not safe

6. ___ s c ___ p ___

hint: get away from

7. ___ a r ___ o ___

hint: large ground squirrel

ANSWER KEY

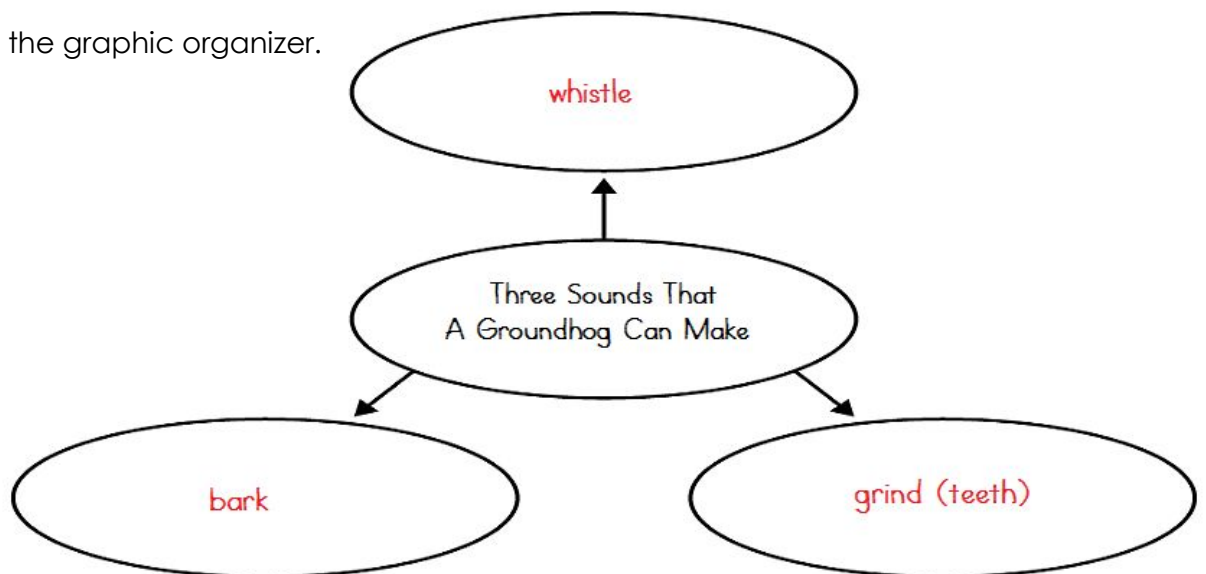
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 - a. Groundhogs are larger than woodchucks.
 - b. Woodchucks climb trees, but groundhogs do not.
 - c. Groundhogs are marmots, but woodchucks are not.
 - d. **Woodchucks and groundhogs are the same animal.**

2. Complete the graphic organizer.



3. Explain how a groundhog's burrow is designed to keep the groundhog safe from predators.

A groundhog's burrow has two to five exits so it can escape predators.

4. Do you think a groundhog is likely to weigh more in early spring or late autumn? Explain.

A groundhog will weigh more in the fall because it stores up fat in its body for winter hibernation. In the spring its body has used up much of the fat, so it will weigh less.

ANSWER KEY

Groundhog or Woodchuck?

Vocabulary Activity



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the story. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. a l e r t alert
hint: quick to notice any danger
2. c l i m b e r s climbers
hint: animals that can climb well
3. b u r r o w burrow
hint: underground animal home
4. p r e d a t o r s predators
hint: animals that hunt and eat other animals
5. d a n g e r danger
hint: something that is not safe
6. e s c a p e escape
hint: get away from
7. m a r m o t marmot
hint: large ground squirrel