



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Mr. Popper's Penguins

Teacher Guide

Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading
Trek Map

Ages: 9–12

Grades: 2 (read-aloud),
3–5 (independent reading)

Reading Level: 4.9

Lexile Measure: 910L

Guided Reading Level: Q

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 40

Content Areas: English/language arts, social studies (including history and geography), science, visual arts, and music.

Synopsis of Book

Inspired by a 1930 documentary of Admiral Richard Byrd's expedition to the South Pole, Richard Atwater wrote this endearing tale of a midwestern small-town painter and his family who receive a penguin as a gift. In the story, Mr. Popper makes alterations to his home to accommodate the penguins' basic needs. The penguin, named Captain Cook, and then a second penguin, Greta, become parents to ten chicks in their makeshift rookery. Mr. Popper realizes that his twelve penguins are quite entertaining, and after a brief audition, they begin a comical cross-country tour performing in large theaters.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 8: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

National Association for Music Education

- RESPONDING: Analyze and Evaluate

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the [Reading Trek map](#) and highlighting its various layers.
2. View the 1930 documentary [Byrd at the South Pole, 1928-1930](#). Discuss the technological changes in video recording or the relationships of the expedition crew with the sled dogs. You could clip the video segments you want to use with ytCropper ([TeachersFirst review](#)), then use Kapwing ([TeachersFirst review](#)), an online video tool and editor, to create and share the short video clips you made with your class.
3. Both tools are very easy to use. A [brief 3-minute video](#) with documentary highlights is also available.
3. Download [Pocket Penguins](#) to view live streams and penguin cams, or watch the [California Academy of Sciences](#) from a web browser. Check out the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) (between 7 AM and 5 PM Pacific Time), the [Idaho Falls Zoo](#), [Penguin Beach](#), or the [San Diego Zoo](#) for more live penguin feeds. Teams or individual students can visit daily at a specified time and record their

- observations. Additionally, students can microblog their observations using Plurk ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
- Using only items readily available within the classroom or with another parameter, create a rookery. Take a photograph and share on Plurk ([TeachersFirst review](#)) using #mrpopperspenguins, including the reasoning behind two or more items selected.
 - Listen to recordings of Schubert's "Military March," "Merry Widow Waltz," and Brown's "By the Brook." Students can perform dances in response to the music. ccMixer - Dig ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or MusicMap ([TeachersFirst review](#)) offer nice collections of music tracks for this activity.
 - View other illustrations by Robert Lawson using a Google Images search. Identify and discuss the artistic styles, similarities and differences, and perceived levels of difficulty.
 - Have students break into small groups and give them a world map. Have them track Mr. Popper's journey throughout the book. Be sure to include: Stillwater (can use Stillwater Minnesota or mark a fictional starting point), New York, other cities in which they perform in, and Antarctica.
 - Give each student a blank world map with countries and oceans marked. Research and label countries in which penguins live. Compare these real locations to the fictional life in the story.
 - Give students maps with longitude and latitude lines marked on them. Have students map coordinates of places mentioned in the story. (Example: Find the longitude and latitude of New York City, Galapagos Islands, and Antarctica). Have them figure the longitude and latitude of their school. If your students are just learning about longitude and latitude, share [this video](#).

Extension Activities:

- Where allowed, view the 2011 movie version of *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Identify areas where the movie varied from the text. Use Poll Everywhere ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to ask students which version of each variance they preferred. (Note: Student answers will be anonymous, but students will be able to see poll responses live.)
- Create paper penguins using two sizes of paper plates and recycled/repurposed construction, wrapping, or other paper. Photograph the penguin in various school and home activities to share on FigJam ([TeachersFirst review](#)). For ideas on making the paper plate penguins, visit: [I Heart Crafty Things](#), [Instructables](#), and [All Free Paper Crafts](#). The art instructor will also be a good resource.
- Create comic strips showing a new act the penguins could perform on stage using Adobe Express Free Comic Strip Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or Make Beliefs Comix ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
- Create a word search with vocabulary words from the story using My Crossword Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)), or use the ready-made [Mr. Popper's Penguins: Word Search](#).
- Students may self-check for comprehension by using [Mr. Popper's Penguins Quiz](#).
- Have students reflect through journal writing and illustrating after reading each chapter to demonstrate comprehension using this [ReadWriteThink lesson plan](#).

7. Have students write a diary entry from the perspective of Captain Cook or another character.
8. Allow students to act out scenes in the story. Practice speaking skills and dramatic interpretation of written texts.
9. Pass out a pair of rubber gloves to each student. Have them explore how penguins stay warm by first putting a gloved hand into cold water, then placing a gloved hand with shortening in the water. Feel the difference the “blubber” makes in keeping their hand warmer.
10. Create a travel brochure for one of the locations talked about in the novel. Be as persuasive as possible to attract visitors to the featured location. For a digital option, have students create the brochure using Microsoft SWAY ([TeachersFirst review](#)).

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [Penguin Activities](#) - On and Offline