

Mr. Popper's Penguins

CURRICULUM GUIDE



WHEEL●CK
F▲MILY
THEATRE

Mr. Popper's Penguins

ABOUT THE SHOW

Mr. Popper is not just any old painter and exterior decorator – he is a dreamer. His greatest dream is to explore the Antarctic, like the great adventurer Admiral Drake. Mr. Popper's neighbors think his head is in the clouds. However, his wife, Mrs. Popper, loves him just the way he is. Money is tight, and she worries how they will get through the long winter.

One day, Mr. Popper receives an unusual package in the mail - a surprise with a beak, flippers, and webbed feet. Before long, the Poppers must accommodate many new guests in their home. As their family grows, the Poppers find new ways to stay afloat! *Mr. Popper's Penguins* reminds us that adventure comes to your "own backyard."

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL BOOK AUTHOR

This musical is based on a 1938 children's book of the same name, written by Richard and Florence Atwater with illustrations by Robert Lawson. After seeing a documentary of the polar explorer Richard Byrd's first Antarctic Expedition, Richard Atwater was inspired to write this story. Mr. Atwater originally wrote this story for the entertainment of his daughters. Several years later, Mr. Atwater suffered a stroke that left him unable to work. Mrs. Atwater, looking to make more income, attempted to publish Mr. Atwater's manuscript of *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Originally, publishers rejected the story, but Mrs. Atwater persisted. She revised the beginning and ending, and the new copy was accepted by one publisher and received high praise from the public. In 1939, *Mr. Popper's Penguins* was awarded the Newberry Honor. This beloved story has since been adapted into multiple media forms, including a movie by the same name in 2011 starring Jim Carrey and Robert Kazuric and George Howe's musical, which is being produced here at Wheelock Family Theatre.

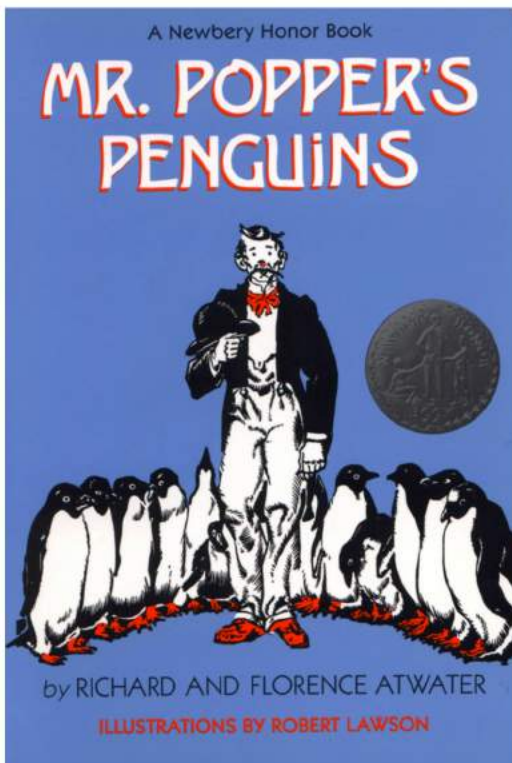


Richard and Florence Atwater with their first-born daughter, Doris, 1925

Mr. Popper's Penguins

BIG IDEAS

- **Integrity:** It is important to prioritize the needs of the people we care about. Doing the right thing isn't always easy!
- **Determination:** Keep trying new ideas and tactics, even when something seems challenging.
- Not all families look the same; sometimes, the most important families are the ones we create for ourselves.
- Dreams may shift and change as you learn; when presented with new information, it's okay to change your mind.
- Animals must be treated with respect and care.



TEACHING MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS IN THE CLASSROOM

Discussion Questions Before Seeing the Play:

- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? How would you get there?
- Have you ever been to the zoo, aquarium, or circus? What did you see there?
- What does "family" mean to you? Who do you call your family?
- Can you think of a time when you tried something multiple times or in multiple ways before you succeeded? What was that experience like? How did you feel before, during, and afterward?



Questions for Discussion After Seeing the Play:

- Why do you think Mrs. Popper agrees to keep Captain Cook and the rest of the penguins, even though she knows they can't afford any pets? Use evidence from the play to support your answer.
- At the start of the play, Mr. Popper sings about longing to be "that bold, courageous man who lives to seize the day." How did he achieve this goal by the end of the play?
- Mr. and Mrs. Popper are offered fame and fortune or adventure and ground-breaking scientific discoveries—opportunities that could have been life-changing for them—yet they prioritize the penguins' needs instead. What influenced their decision?
- What do you think happened when the Poppers arrived in the South Pole? How might Mr. and Mrs. Popper have felt saying goodbye to the penguins?

Mr. Popper's Penguins

ACTIVITY PROMPTS:

- Mr. Popper receives a surprise package from Admiral Drake. Mail or deliver a surprise package to someone (we strongly recommend you do not include a penguin).



- Mr. Popper mentions that seals and penguins are mortal enemies. Seals are known to prey on penguins. Create a food chain or web for Antarctica that includes penguins, seals, and other animals.

- In Mr. Popper's Penguins, we hear many uses of alliterations (a series of words that begin with the same letter or sound) like "Marvelous Marcos," "Jerry's Gigantic Gerbils," "Joe's Juggling Giraffe," and "Sven Svenson, the Swarthy, Swanky Swede, and my Svensen's Sensational Seals." Create five different alliterations using your name.
- The penguins, Captain Cook, and Greta build a rookery (a nest) using supplies they found around the Popper's home, like magazines, string, and coins. Build your own rookery at home! What materials will you use to build your "nest"?
- Compare/contrast the reactions of different townspeople to seeing the penguins—how did they act? Consider the characters we meet in the play, like the news reporter, bus driver, Mr. Greenbaum, and Mrs. Popper. Act out the most skeptical reaction. Act out the most positive reaction.
- Mr. Popper's Penguins received the Newbery Honor. Learn about this award and why certain books receive it. Then, find more books that have received this award.
- Mr. Popper's Penguins takes place during the year 1937. Do some research about what was going on in the world during that time. What was happening in the USA in 1937?
- Write a postcard from the perspective of Mr. or Mrs. Popper that they might send from the South Pole to their friends back home. Unlike a regular letter, postcards normally have photos on one side! So, draw a picture of what the Poppers see when they reach the South Pole on the back of your postcard.
- Mr. Popper names Captain Cook and the 10 baby penguins after famous explorers. Come up with 10 new names that the penguins could have. (Extension: make the 10 names connected in some way! For example, 10 famous musicians or baseball players.)



- Explore local transportation options. Make a map showing how you would get from your home to Wheelock Family Theatre with each different mode of transportation.



Mr. Popper's Penguins

GLOSSARY

Mr. Popper's Penguins takes place in 1937 – 87 years ago! This glossary will help you understand the references in the play!

Works Progress Administration (WPA) - a government organization created as part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. The WPA provided jobs to people out of work because of the Great Depression.

Privation - the feeling when someone or thing does not have what they need to survive (like food and water).

Rookery - the place where a group of birds or social mammals (like penguins or seals) nest and raise their young.

Farmer's Almanacs - journals (like a magazine or newspaper) published yearly, containing weather forecasts and planting advice for farmers.

Barbasol - shaving cream.

Cupie Doll - baby doll toys named for Cupid.

Girdle - a piece of clothing, similar to a corset, that women wore underneath the rest of their clothing to make themselves appear slimmer.

Soft-shoe - a tap dance performed in shoes with soft soles and without metal taps.

Debonaire - charming and friendly in a cheerful way.

Pasteurization - preserving food to keep unwanted bacteria from growing.

Juggernaut - something so strong it crushes everything in its path.

Mr. Popper's Penguins mentions many famous artists and explorers of the time; Have you ever heard of any of these people?

Roald Amundsen - the first explorer to reach the South Pole and the North Pole.

Ernest Shackleton - an Irish Antarctic explorer who at one time held the record for traveling the closest to the South Pole, in 1909, but he was passed by Amundsen, who reached the land in 1911.

Fred Astaire - a famous American dancer and performer in the mid-1900s who was best known for his highly successful musical comedy films, perfect rhythm, and graceful movements.

Louis Pasteur - a French scientist from the 1800s who is said to have discovered the concepts of vaccination, fermentation, and pasteurization (see below).

Harpo and Groucho - two Marx brothers who performed in a popular comedy vaudeville act.

Shirley Temple - a famous child star from the 1930s who became a diplomat in her later life.

Errol Flynn - an Australian actor from the early-mid 1900s, known for playing the leading male in many Golden Age movies.



Mr. Popper's Penguins

In *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, Mr. and Mrs. Popper decide to name the baby penguins after famous explorers and their patrons. Below are the real-life people they're named after.



Captain Cook - an 18th-century British explorer who led the first ship to cross the Antarctic Circle.



Edward William Nelson - an American researcher from the late 19th century. He became a member of several expeditions to study plant life.



Christopher Columbus - an Italian explorer who sailed from Spain in hopes of traveling around the world to get to Asia, but instead landed in the Americas.



Louise Arner Boyd (Louisa) - "Louisa" likely refers to an American explorer of Greenland and the Arctic, she was the first woman to fly over the North Pole.



Jenny Darlington - a scientist who became the first woman researcher to participate in a polar exploration.



Robert Falcon Scott - a British Royal Navy officer and explorer who led two expeditions to the Antarctic regions.

One thing we know today is that explorers, like the people who inspired the penguins' names, sometimes caused harm to the environments that they were exploring. To understand the full history of these explorers and their impacts, find resources at your local library. Additionally, you can see the lesson plan below titled "Exploration: Respect for Nature," which explores the impacts of explorers.

Ferdinand Magellan - a Portuguese explorer. One of his five ships successfully sailed around the globe.



Adèle Dumont d'Urville (Adelina) - "Adelina" likely refers to the wife of Jules Dumont d'Urville, a French explorer who discovered the Adélie penguin and named it after his wife.



Isabella of Castile - a queen of Spain who supported Christopher Columbus' expeditions to the "New World."



Ferdinand of Aragon - a king who ruled Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries. He was married to Isabelle and also supported Columbus' voyages.



Queen Victoria - one of the most famous queens of the UK. She ruled from 1837-1901 and a portion of land in Antarctica is named after her.



Mr. Popper's Penguins

Words, Words, Words: Newspapers in the 1930s

While TVs did exist in the 1930s, they were nothing like the TVs we have today! Only the wealthy could afford a television set in their home, and Mr. and Mrs. Popper certainly wouldn't have had a TV. People also didn't have access to the internet or cell phones, let alone things like Google, Tik Tok or Instagram! When Captain Cook comes to Stillwater, his presence utterly confuses the Poppers' neighbors. Because explorers like Admiral Drake were still learning about the Arctic, most people didn't know all the facts about penguins that we do today.

Information traveled in the 1930s much more slowly than today in 2024. So, how did information travel in 1937? One way that people learned about what was happening worldwide was from newspapers. The articles and stories in newspapers were written by journalists. Additionally, photographs sometimes shared information, but photography wasn't as easily available - or as inexpensive - as it is today. Further, the people of Stillwater wouldn't have been able to Google "penguin" and look at many different full-color photographs of penguins, like we would today. So, words were very important!

Let's try using our words to share information! In this activity, you will be a reporter and write a newspaper article about something happening in your local community. Choose something that excites you, and share your excitement with your words!

GO FURTHER...

Look at some examples of Newspapers from the 1930s:



(Note: The Newseum Ed website requires the creation of a free profile to view artifacts)

The front page of the Chicago Daily Tribune from May 14, 1930, including a story about scientists discovering Pluto.



STEP ONE: BRAINSTORM

Before you start writing, you'll want to decide what you want your newspaper article to be about. Discuss the following prompts with your classmates, friends, or family.

- What is happening in our community that might be “newsworthy?”
 - Have there been any competitions, sports games, or performances? Are there any happening soon?
 - What do you learn in school that other community members should know about?
 - Sometimes newspaper articles are about someone special. Is there someone you would like to do a profile at home or school?
 - Think of a time that you or someone you know achieved something through determination. This could make a great story!

STEP TWO: WRITE YOUR ARTICLE

- Once you have chosen a topic, it's time to write your newspaper article. Fill in the template on the next page, and include an attention-grabbing title to make readers want to learn more.
 - Make sure to also give a title to your newspaper, and credit yourself at the author!
- Be as descriptive as possible. Imagine that you don't have photographs for your article to help you tell the story. How can you paint a picture with your words?



STEP THREE: SHARE

- Get with a partner (this can be a friend, family member, or classmate) and read your newspaper article aloud to them.
- After you read your article, ask your partner to describe what they were picturing while they listened. What images stood out to them? Is it what you expected?
- Now, switch roles and have your partner read their article to you. Listen carefully and see what images stand out to you!

EXTENSION: SNAP A PICTURE!

- Take a photo to accompany your article that captures the action of the event or a landmark/location you discuss in your article.

Newspaper Template on Next Page

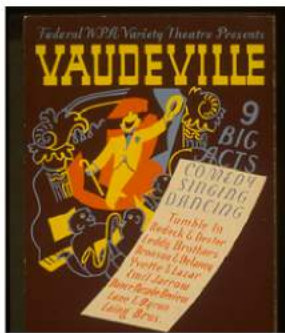




Mr. Popper's Penguins

Making Your Act: Vaudeville Shows of the Early 1900s

We are all unique in our own ways and have different talents and strengths. Differences can make us stronger! When Mr. and Mrs. Popper first try to get the Penguins to perform, they have a lot of trouble. They can only create their amazing show when Mrs. Popper realizes: "We've gotta find a way to take advantage of their natural interests." Mr. Popper knows that what the penguins like most is "Marching in formation, climbing and tobogganing down the snowbank," so that's what the Poppers use to build their vaudeville act!



WHAT IS VAUDEVILLE?

Vaudeville was America's most important and popular entertainment from the late 19th into the early 20th century. Thousands of theaters across the US, in communities large and small, held vaudeville shows. Vaudeville performances featured 10-15 unrelated acts like magicians, acrobats, comedians, singers, dancers, and trained animals (like the Popper's penguins).

STEP ONE: BRAINSTORM YOUR TALENTS!

- Create a list of special skills or talents that you have. No talent is too small!
- Talents can include drawing, acrobatics, tricks or dance moves, singing, playing an instrument, doing tricks with a pet, juggling, telling jokes, and more!
- Decide which talents you want to include in your act.
- **Extension:** Create a name for your tour act using alliteration (words with the same sound like "Marvelous Marcos" or "Popper's Performing Penguins.")

STEP TWO: REHEARSE YOUR ACT!

As Mr. and Mrs. Popper did with the penguins, you should rehearse your Vaudeville Act before you take the stage!

- Decide what order you'd like to present your talents in.
- Run through your performance a few times, practicing everything you will do in the order you want to do it.
- You can even ask someone to help out by introducing your act! Brainstorm together what they might say or do to get the audience excited.



Looking for inspiration?
Scan for recordings of
Vaudeville acts from
the early 1900s.

STEP THREE: SET THE STAGE!

When the Poppers go to the Palace Theatre, they hear a lot of language specific to the setting of a theatre.

- First, the Poppers speak to a theatre manager– someone who is in charge of overseeing the organization and flow of the performance.
 - Find an adult to be your theatre manager and help you build your set and act.
- The theatre manager takes the Poppers backstage– an area of a theater where the actors wait until it's time to walk onto the stage and perform. The audience usually can't see what's going on backstage.
 - Can you build a backstage area by creating some kind of wall, curtain, or divider between you and the audience?
- The Poppers go on tour with their act and travel to many different cities to perform for audiences– the viewers of a show.
 - Who will be in your audience? Invite your family, friends, or neighbors to come watch your act.
- Sometimes, theatres are divided into seating sections, each with a different name. Traditionally, the orchestra section is closest to the stage and on the ground floor. The mezzanine is the second level of seating where audience members can look down at the stage and have a clear view of the whole stage. The balcony section is higher than the mezzanine, and the seats are furthest from the theater's stage.
 - Where is your audience going to sit? Can you create different levels for the audience to sit in? Consider some audience members sitting on the floor while others sit on chairs. Maybe some audience members stand. Make a plan for your audience's seating. You can even write down this plan.



STEP FOUR: SHOWTIME!

Create and perform your own short Vaudeville act!

Now that your stage is set, it is time to share your show with an audience! If the audience loves your talents, they may give you a standing ovation. This is when the audience stands up and applauds at the end of a performance to show their appreciation for the actors.



Mr. Popper's Penguins

Is This Price Right?

Grab
your
pencil!

One of the primary challenges that Mr. and Mrs. Popper face in this show is not having enough money. Financial concerns were common for folks living in the 1930s. This was a period in US History referred to as the Great Depression. During this time, many families worried about being able to afford their most basic needs, like food and shelter. The Work Projects Administration (W.P.A.), where Mrs. Popper (unsuccessfully) goes to try to find additional work, was created to increase employment opportunities. However, as Mrs. Popper experienced, there were not always jobs available. Instead, Mr. and Mrs. Popper strategize different ways to save money.

STEP ONE: HOW MUCH CAN WE SAVE?

“No more roast beef; no more ice cream – not even on Sundays...Beans every day.”

1. In 1937, Roast beef was about .15 cents per pound. If the Poppers were to eat one pound of roast beef each night for a week, how much would that cost?

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

2. Mr. Popper suggests eating beans every day. If the Poppers ate a can of beans for dinner each day in a week, and in 1937, a can of beans was .09 cents, how much would it cost for one week of beans?

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

3. How much money would they save every week by eating beans each night instead of eating roast beef?

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} - \underline{\hspace{2cm}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

STEP TWO: HOW MUCH WOULD THAT COST TODAY?

By comparing the worth of one dollar today with the worth of one dollar in 1937, we can figure out a conversion rate to determine how much something would cost today. The worth of a dollar has changed since 1937 due to inflation (an increase in the price of goods and services over time). **Something costing \$1 in 1937 would cost about \$20 today. To convert a price from 1937 to 2024, multiply the first amount by 20!**

4. If the poppers were saving .42 cents each week in 1937, how much would they save today?

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \$$$

“So, howzabout a ten week contract, say five thousand dollars a week?”

5. Mr. Greenbaum offers to pay The Popper's \$5,000 per week. How much money would that be today?

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \$$$

See final page for
inflation calculator
and answer key.

Mr. Popper's Penguins

TEACHING MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS IN THE CLASSROOM

Different, Unique Families

When the story begins, Mr. and Mrs. Popper don't have any children; together, they are a family of 2! When the penguins arrive, though, the Poppers welcome the penguins into their family. As we see in the play, an Antarctic penguin has much different needs than a person. Still, when Captain Cook arrives in Stillwater, the Poppers work to meet those needs, and they love and care for all of the penguins just like they were their children!

More than that, the Poppers respect the penguins' wants and needs and include them when making important decisions. When Admiral Drake offers to take the penguins to the North Pole, and Mr. Greenbaum offers to put them in the movies, Mr. Popper responds, "Gentlemen. I'd like to thank you both. But I need a moment to talk it through with my family."

While two adults and twelve penguins may not look like many families we know, it is clear that they are stronger together! In this lesson, we will explore what makes a family. Families may look different, but what do they have in common?

Grade Level: 1-2

Length: 45 Minutes

Theatre, Math, and
Literacy Standards
Connections
(see last page)

Materials:

- Open space
- White board **OR** chart paper
- Markers



STEP ONE: RECIPE FOR ME ANCHOR CHART

- First, ask students to describe the elements, structure, and language in a recipe. If the group has not seen a written recipe it might be important to share an example and make observations.
- Write some example terms on the board to begin creating an **anchor chart!** You'll want to include measurement terms like tablespoon, cup, pinch, scoop, et cetera.
 - Make sure students are on the same page about the size of each of the measurements. (Ask, "What's bigger: a teaspoon or a tablespoon?" "If I have a ¼ cup measuring scoop, how many times would I need to fill it up to make 1 cup?")
- Once you've created a list of measurement terms, repeat that process with cooking verbs like boil, chop, stir, and whip.

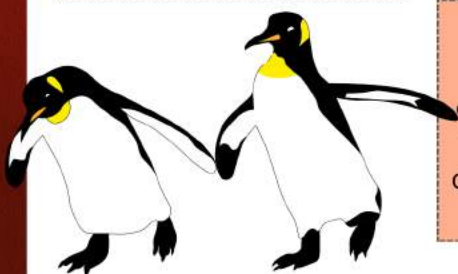
This activity uses a recipe as a metaphor!

Check out another example of this, "**Friendship Soup**"



SIDECOACHING:

Side-coaching is a tool that teachers can use during an activity to offer questions or suggestions to students from the sidelines in order to enhance the dramatic work and increase engagement. Side-coaching for "Show Us" could include: "Try using high or low levels in your statues." or "Make sure to work silently to create an image with your group."



STEP TWO: RECIPE FOR FAMILY

- In this exercise, students will think about what makes a family. Mr. Popper, Mrs. Popper, and the penguins don't necessarily look like most other families, but they still love and care for each other!
- Ask, **"What are the most important building blocks of what makes a family?"**
- Go further. Ask, **"What actions do you take to show your family that you love them?"**
- Have students gather around the board or a large piece of chart paper. Tell them that together, you will be making a recipe for family. You'll decide what creates a family, regardless of who is in it, as we acknowledge families are made up of all different people (and sometimes pets, too)! Ask students to think about some things that make a family. Examples might be: kindness, trust, love, et cetera. Get as many answers from the group as you can and write those on the board.
- Finally, make your recipe! Use the ingredients and measurements you've come up with to create a recipe for family. Ask, **"How much love will we need to make a family? When does the love get added to the recipe? Does it come first, in the middle, or at the end?"**
- Once you've finished your recipe, read it to the group. Have students reflect on what they notice about the recipe. If your group has already seen the show, ask, **"How is your recipe for family similar or different to the Poppers'?"** If your group hasn't seen the show yet, ask, **"What in our recipe applies to all families, even if they are different than ours?"**



STEP THREE: SHOW US

- Once the group has created a "Recipe for Family," the drama strategy "Show Us" allows students to individually reflect upon and embody - using their strengths - what makes a family.
- Students will cover the space, moving through the room slowly. Practice the command stop and go a few times. Then, explain that the students will create a frozen statue using their body by responding to a word. Practice making statues with the words a, b, and c. Ask students to cover the space between each word so that they can reset until you "stop" again.
- Then, use the following prompts (you can come up with more if you desire, and group sizes can be modified to fit your needs; it might be valuable for you to pull words that students offered for the recipe):
 - **By yourself, show us "leader"**
 - **By yourself, show us "love"**
 - **By yourself, show us "protect"**
 - **In groups of 2, show us "friendship"**
 - **In groups of 3, show us "family"**
 - **In groups of 2, show us "trust"**
- While the students are making their frozen images, be sure to call out what you're noticing (for example, "I see raised arms, which shows... I see open bodies, that means... I see people using low levels, that could be...").
- Once you have gone through all the prompts, invite the group to make a circle and **reflect**.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How did we use our bodies and voices in the lesson today?
What steps did we do to make a recipe?
How did our "recipe for family" show up in how we moved our bodies?



Mr. Popper's Penguins

TEACHING MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS IN THE CLASSROOM

Exploration: Respect for Nature

In *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, Captain Cook is taken from his home in the South Pole and sent to live in America. When he arrives at the Popper home in Stillwater, Mr. Popper has to change his house to help Captain Cook feel more comfortable in the foreign environment. Penguins have no biological defenses against germs found outside of the cold Antarctic, so Mr. Popper has to work very hard to keep Captain Cook healthy.

STEP ONE: THIS SETTING NEEDS

- Invite students to sit together facing a large empty space in the room.
- Ask students to identify aspects of a habitat that animals need to survive. Prompt them to consider how the needs may change or remain the same depending on the animal (ie, a fish as opposed to a camel).
- Now, the class will work together to build some of these settings based on the needs of the animals. Invite one student to choose and pose like an animal. Once frozen in a pose, ask the rest of the class what this animal needs in their habitat. With each response, invite the student who answered to add to the frozen image and embody their suggestion individually. This continues until a frozen habitat has been built around the animal, including 5-6 student offerings.
- Repeat with a new animal from a different habitat.
- Ask, “What are the potential dangers of taking an animal out of their habitat?”

Grade Level: 3-4

Length: 45 minutes

Theatre, Literacy, and Science Standards Connections (see last page).

Materials:

- Poster Paper
- Markers

SIDE-COACHING

“What else is missing from our setting?”

“What might this animal need to protect them in dangerous weather?”

“Where might you position yourself in relation to the other parts of the setting?”

“How can you show that with your body?”

STEP TWO: ROLE ON THE WALL

- Remind students that in *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, we hear about many famous explorers, like Captain James Cook, Roald Amundsen, and Ernest Shackleton. These were true historical examples of explorers who ventured across the globe to explore different regions. We also heard about the fictional explorer Admiral Drake and his Antarctic Expedition.
- Outline a large head and shoulders on a piece of poster paper. Leave space to write inside and outside of the person. Label the person Admiral Drake. Say, “We will imagine Admiral Drake has just arrived at the South Pole for the first time. What are some feelings, words, or thoughts that Admiral Drake might be experiencing as he first arrives?” Write the responses inside of the head.
- Then consider what influences might be coming from other sources and impacting Admiral Drake's experience. Think about people native to the area he's exploring, the radio listeners at home, famous scientists, and other explorers (the list could go on). Write their thoughts or messages on the outside of the body outline.
- Ask, “Did Admiral Drake's feelings ever shift or change? How does meeting Mr. and Mrs. Popper change Admiral Drake's plans?”



STEP THREE: MEETING IN-ROLE

Now that students brainstormed stakeholders' responses to Admiral Drake's expeditions invite them to embody the role of someone impacted by Admiral Drake's adventure. We recommend students explore the situation in-role through Hot Seating or Town Hall Meeting (more appropriate for an advanced group).

HOT SEATING

In this activity, you (the teacher) will take on the role of Admiral Drake.

Before stepping into role: Explain that the class will imagine that Amiral Drake is calling a meeting of his team of scientists to get your advice on a potential trip to bring penguins from the South Pole to the North Pole. You will need to work together to ask Admiral Drake any questions about his trip and offer advice on whether he should take this expedition to the North Pole.

In Role: Say, "Hello there. Thank you for meeting with me. I have gathered all the best scientists around to advise me on an upcoming expedition. The government has offered to pay me a lot to bring penguins from the South Pole to the North Pole. As you know, there are no penguins in the North Pole, but there are polar bears. We might be able to establish a new breed in the Antarctic. I need your advice. A friend said the birds belong where nature intended them, but I'm not sure it's such a problem. What would happen if I took the penguins out of their usual habitat at the South Pole?" Ask, "What dangers might the penguins face if brought to the North Pole?" "Do you think the environment in the South Pole would suffer if I removed most of the penguins?"

After stepping out of role: Ask, "What are the potential problems if Admiral Drake takes his expedition to the North Pole and brings the penguins? How would this impact the penguins?"

TEACHER TIP

When stepping into a role, use some kind of physical indicator (like a hat or coat) to show when you are that character.



TOWN HALL MEETING

In this activity, you (the teacher) will take on the role of the mayor hosting the town hall meeting.

Before stepping into role: Explain that the class will imagine that they live in a small town in the North Pole, with very little contact with the rest of the world. The mayor has called a town meeting to discuss a potential visit from a supposedly world-famous explorer, Admiral Drake. He plans to bring a new animal species to the town. People in the town will likely have varied opinions about this visitor, depending on their interests and occupation. Offer potential character ideas for students, like a fan who has listened to Admiral Drake on the radio or an ecologist who feels strongly about preserving the current ecosystem.

In Role: Say, "Admiral Drake is coming to explore our little town and bring a new species." Go around to each student and have them introduce themselves as their character. Invite students to share their character's opinion about the situation. Ask, "How do you feel about a stranger coming into our town to explore our environment?" "What could result from Admiral Drake bringing a new species to our town?"

After stepping out of role: Ask, "What impact does an explorer have on their visiting environment? What do we need to keep in mind when traveling to a new place?"

DID YOU KNOW...

You won't find penguins at the Smithsonian's National Zoo? Want to know why? Find out more here:



Mr. Popper's Penguins

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Penguins In Your Backyard!



In *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, most people had never seen a penguin before! Today, we know that there are many different kinds of penguins worldwide. In Boston, we are lucky enough to have some living here in the city! In this activity, you can visit the **New England Aquarium** to see and learn about the African and Southern Rockhopper penguins or use their online webcam to watch them live from home! **How are African penguins similar to or different from the Antarctic penguins we meet in the play?**

STEP ONE: LEARN ABOUT MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS!

While scientists disagree on the exact number, sources say there are between 17-19 different species of penguins! Between 5 and 8 of those species live in Antarctica for at least some of the year - including Gentoo penguins. In the 2011 movie *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, you see Gentoo penguins on screen.

Talk with your family about some of the traits of Gentoo Penguins:

- Gentoo penguins have a white patch and bright, red-orange beaks above their eyes.
- Gentoo penguins can reach heights of up to 30 inches tall and weigh up to 12 lbs!
- When swimming, they can reach speeds of up to 22 mph. They can dive up to 650 feet and stay underwater for up to 7 minutes. They eat krill, fish, squid, and crab.
- When Gentoo penguins lay eggs, the males and the females take turns incubating the eggs.



Learn more about Gentoo Penguins:



STEP TWO: WATCH SOME PENGUINS IN ACTION!

The New England Aquarium in Boston has a Penguin Colony exhibit home to over 50 penguins! The Penguins that live here are **African** and **Southern Rockhopper Penguins**. While some Rockhopper penguins live in the South Pole, they have a unique look. See how they compare to gentoos and other penguins you might be familiar with!

With your family, spend some time watching these penguins!

- **Option A:** take a trip to the aquarium and see the Penguin Colony in person!
- **Option B:** check out the "Penguin Webcam" on the New England Aquarium's website! (See QR code on the next page.) The penguins are fed daily at 9:00am and 2:30pm.

STEP THREE: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

- You just got to observe two different species of penguins! What did you learn about them? How do the African and Southern Rockhopper penguins compare to each other?
- With your family, try making a list or a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts African and Southern Rockhopper penguins. Make a note of both the similarities and differences.
- As you compare the two species of penguins, start with what you noticed by watching them and then get more specific about what you learned!
 - For instance, start with: **what do the penguins look like? How big are they? How do they move around?**
 - Then, move into: **where are these penguins found in the wild? What do they eat? Where do they breed and how many chicks (baby penguins) do they have at once?**
- If you're visiting the aquarium, make sure you read any signs that are posted! Ask a staff member if you have questions.

GETTING TO THE AQUARIUM:

Did you know?

If you live in or around Boston, you can get to the aquarium by taking the T! It is about 100 yards from the **Aquarium** stop on the **Blue Line**.

The aquarium can also be reached by walking from the following stations:

- **State Street**
(**Orange Line**) - 8 minutes
- **Government Center**
(**Green Line**) - 10 minutes
- **South Station**
(**Red Line**) - 12 minutes

(This information is taken from and can be found on the New England Aquarium's website.)

Go further! If there's more information you'd like to explore that you couldn't learn from visiting the aquarium or watching the Penguin Webcam, do some more research to see what you can learn! With the help of an adult, use an online search engine or check out the resources below.

PENGUIN WEBCAM!



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What do you already know about penguins? What would you like to learn more about?
- How do the aquarium penguins look? What physical features do you notice?
- How do the aquarium penguins act? What types of behaviors do you see?
- Is there anything that you saw that surprised you? What's something new that you learned?

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT...

African Penguins:

<https://www.neaq.org/animal/african-penguin/>

Southern Rockhopper Penguins:

<https://www.neaq.org/animal/southern-rockhopper-penguin/>

Antarctic Penguins:

<https://www.bas.ac.uk/about/antarctica/wildlife/penguins>

https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/penguins/



Mr. Popper's Penguins

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

On the Radio!

Throughout *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, we hear reports come in from the Radio Announcer. Radio was one of the main ways information traveled from place to place during this time! By the late 1930s, more than 80% of households had a radio. Radio programs provided entertainment, including musical performances, radio plays, and guest-star interviews, and reported factual updates on weather conditions, local news, and current global events.



STEP ONE: LISTEN



ARCHIVE OF 1930-1937 RADIO PROGRAMS

What do you notice about how the speaker talks? What speed - how quickly or slowly - are they speaking at? What topics did you find the most interesting to listen to? Who do you want to listen to your radio show?

STEP TWO: CREATE

Now it's time to make your show! You can write out your script, or create it from memory.

- Make sure you introduce your name (make up a fun radio name to use) and say goodbye at the end of the recording!
- The voice memos or voice recorder app on a smartphone would work perfectly to record your voice.
- If you can't record, the radio show, present it live!

STEP THREE: SHARE

After creating your radio program, invite friends or family to gather around and listen!

EXTENSION: SELL IT!

The first recognized radio commercial occurred just over 100 years ago. By the late 1930's, radio programs began to acquire sponsors who would advertise their products during the radio programs.

- Find a product around your house that you would like to sponsor your radio show (it could be toothpaste, your favorite food or snack, or a kind of toy.)
- What would someone selling this product want you to say about it? What makes it fun or useful?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What kind of news would you like to report on your radio show?
- What can you do, as the host, to make your radio show fun to listen to?

REFLECTION QUESTION

- How is a radio show similar to or different from entertainment today - for example, your favorite television show?





Mr. Popper's Penguins

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Travel the World... At Your Local Library!

Mr. Popper longs for adventure and to travel the world! But, traveling to new places can be very expensive. Mr. Popper tells Mrs. Popper, "Since we can't afford to travel, reading about far-away places is the next best thing" (p. 5). There's so much we can learn about the world through books, and stories can even transport us to far-off places, just like they do for Mr. Popper! If you plan to travel to a new place, it's important to research that place to understand the culture and customs of the people who live there before you go.

Let's try traveling the world together... by visiting our local library! **The Boston Public Library** has branches all over Boston - use their website to find the one closest to you.

Once you're at the library, pick a place you have never been to, but want to travel to. You can ask your librarian for help if you need it, to locate books about that place! You will want to look for non-fiction books - try to find **3 books** about the place you're interested in.



Once you find your books, it's time to go on a **FACT-FINDING MISSION!**



FIND THE FACTS - MISSION 1: WHAT IS THIS PLACE LIKE?

- What is the weather like here? What are the seasons like?
- What is the landscape in this place?
 - For example, is it very flat there? Are there lots of hills?
- How do people get around this place? Do they drive cars? Do they walk? Take public transportation?



FIND THE FACTS - MISSION #2: FAMOUS PEOPLE, PLACES, & EVENTS

- See if you can find some of the most well-known information about this place.
- What are some famous or "iconic" locations, landmarks, or events at this place?
 - For example, Big Ben in London, England or The Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, Spain
- What are some famous people who live or were born in this place? What are they famous for?
 - For example, Former U.S. President Barack Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii

LIBRARY

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY:



If you want to check out the library before or after the show, the **Central Branch** of the Boston Public Library is just a short train ride away on the T! You can take a **Green D-line train** inbound from the **Longwood** stop (just a 5-minute walk from the theater) and then get off the train at **Copley**.

FIND THE FACTS - MISSION #3: CUSTOMS AND CULTURE

- Now that you've discovered what people might like to do when they visit, see if you can find some information about what the people who live there like to do!
- Are there important cultures or customs at this place that you must respect or be mindful of when traveling?
- Examples: if you're traveling to Barcelona, Spain, many businesses may be closed from 2:00-5:00pm for a daily "siesta," a midday rest or nap that is part of Spanish culture! If you're traveling to Prague, Czech Republic, it's polite not to talk (or speak quietly) on public transportation.
- What types of food are typically eaten at this place?

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What are some places you might like to visit? Why do you want to travel there?

How is this place similar to or different from our home? **(Ask at every step!)**

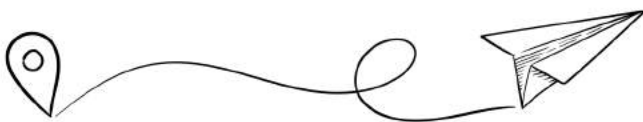
How can you respect the people you meet and the places you visit when traveling somewhere new?

What's exciting about traveling to new places?
What do we learn when we travel?



CAREGIVER TIP!

ask a variety of "guiding questions" before, during, and after the activity! These questions help deepen engagement and comprehension for the young people you're working with.



FURTHER RESOURCES:

Admiral Drake is planning an expedition to the North Pole and wants to bring the penguins! Learn more about the North Pole:

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/north-pole/>

Do you think this would be a good place to bring the penguins?

Here is a travel site that has some information about Boston:

<https://www.visittheusa.com/destination/boston>

What do you think about this information? Is there anything you would want to add or think people should know if they're visiting your city?

FURTHER RESOURCES

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

Lesson 1: "Different, Unique Families"

Theatre Standards:

TH:Cr2-1.b
TH:Re9.1.1.a
TH:Cn10.1.2a

SEL Competencies:

Relationship Skills
Responsible Decision-Making

ELA Standards:

W.4.3

Mathematics Standards:

MD.4.A.1

Lesson 2: "Exploration: Respect for Nature"

Theatre Standards:

TH:Re8.1.3.a
TH:Cn11.1.4.a
TH:Cr1.1.3.a

ELA Standards:

RL.3.3
SL.3.1

Life Science Standards:

3.LS.4.3



Scan for a map of the real places mentioned in *Mr. Popper's Penguins!*

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

- *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson
- *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev, illustrated by Tae Eun Yoo
- *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester, illustrated by Lynn Munsinger
- *The Popper Penguin Rescue* by Eliot Schrefer
- *Waiting for Mama*, written and illustrated by Gianna Marino
- *The King Penguin*, written and illustrated by Vanessa Roeder

ADDITIONAL MEDIA

- *March of the Penguins, 2005*
- *Happy Feet, 2006*
- *Mr. Popper's Penguins (film), 2011*



ONLINE RESOURCES

Information about the New England Aquarium's Penguin Colony:

<https://www.neaq.org/exhibit/penguin-exhibit/>

National Geographic - Penguin Facts:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/facts/penguins-1>

Penguin Profiles:

<https://www.ripleyaquariums.com/gatlinburg/penguin-profile/>

Penguin Habitat Interactive Map:

<https://www.penguinworld.com/map/map.php>

RESOURCE GUIDE CREATED BY:

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Michaela Barczak

Advised/Edited by Joshua Rashon Streeter

"Is This Price Right"

ANSWER KEY

1. \$1.05
2. \$0.63
3. \$0.42
4. \$8.40
5. \$100,000



INFLATION
CALCULATOR