



TeachersFirst **READING TREKS**

Mr. Popper's Penguins

[TeachersFirst Reading Treks Link](#)

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 midwest, 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 penguin's 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. After the writer, Richard Atwater, suffered a stroke, his wife Florence Atwater, made revisions to the story before publication.

Using a TeachersFirst Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks are a way of creating a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or 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 a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this Instructional Guide and the accompanying Reading Trek 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!

Grade Level & Content Areas

Grades 3-5, Ages 9-12. Teacher Read-Aloud = 2 grade. Guided Reading Level: Q. Lexile: 910L. DRA: 40. English/language arts, social studies (including history and geography), science, visual art, and music.

Common Core State Standards for K-5

Reading

- **Literature** (key ideas and details and craft and structure)

Writing

- **Text Types and purposes**
- **Research** (to build and present knowledge)

ISTE: Student Standards

- (1) Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving, and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.
- (3) Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.
- (6) Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- **Theme: CULTURE**
- **Theme: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE**
- **Theme: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS**
- **Theme: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY**

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- **CREATING**
- **RESPONDING**

National Association for Music Education

- **Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.**
- **Evaluating music and music performances.**

Using the Reading Trek in Class

This title has connections to culture and people, places, and environment; additionally, this text has history connections in the realm of time, continuity, and change.

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map, and highlighting the various layers.
2. View the 1930 documentary "[With Byrd at the South Pole.](#)" Discuss the technological changes in video recording. Discuss the relationships of the expedition crew with the

sled dogs. (Note: The video is 1 hour: 22 minutes.) It begins with a speech by Admiral Byrd. Much of the video has only music playing in the background with the occasional descriptive placard. You could clip the video parts you want to use with [ytCropper](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) and then use [Kapwing](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)), an online video tool and editor, to create and share the short video clips you made with your class. Both tools are very easy to use.

3. Download [Pocket Penguins](#) for live streaming of [California Academy of Sciences Penguin Cam](#) or the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) between 7am and 5pm Pacific Time, [Idaho Falls Zoo](#), [Penguin Beach](#), or the [San Diego Zoo](#). Teams or individual students should visit daily at a specified time and record their observations. Students can microblog their observations using [Twiducate](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
4. Using only items readily available within the classroom or other parameter, create a rookery. Take a photograph and share on [Twitter](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) using #mrpopperspenguins, including the reasoning behind two or more items.
5. Listen to recordings of Schubert's "Military March," "Merry Widow Waltz," and Brown's "By the Brook." Students can perform the dances in response to the music. [ccMixer - Dig](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or [Music Map](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) offer nice collections of music tracks for this activity.
6. View other illustrations by Robert Lawson using a Google Image Search. Identify and discuss the artistic styles, similarities and differences, and perceived levels of difficulty.

Additional Activities

1. Where allowed, view the 2011 movie of *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Identify areas where the movie varied from the text. Use [Live Slides](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) for students to answer poll questions as to which version of each variance was preferred. (Note: Student answers will be anonymous; students will be able to see poll responses live.) Additionally, [Heartland](#) has created curriculum as a pdf that is made to accompany the film's viewing.
2. 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 [Twitter](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) using #mrpopperspenguins. For ideas on making the paper plate penguins, visit: [I Heart Crafty Things](#), [Instructables](#), [Love to Sew](#), and [All Free Paper Crafts](#). The art instructor will also be a good resource.
3. Create comic strips showing a new act the penguins could perform on stage using [Printable Comic Strip Templates](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or [Make Beliefs Comix](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
4. Create a word search with vocabulary words from the story using [Crossword Hobbyist](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or use the readymade [Mr. Popper's Penguins: Word Search](#).
5. Students may self-check for comprehension by using [Mr. Popper's Penguin Quiz](#).
6. Students reflect through journal writing and illustrating following each chapter to demonstrate comprehension using this [Read Write Think](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) lesson plan.

Helpful Resources



- [Mr. Popper's Penguins Extension Activities](#)
- [Penguin Activities - On and Offline](#)
- [A Guide for Using Mr Popper's Penguins](#)
- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Google MANIA - Google Maps: Make Learning a Journey with Reading Treks](#)