

Mr. Popper's Penguins

Grades 4-6

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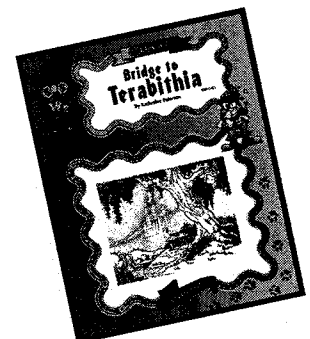
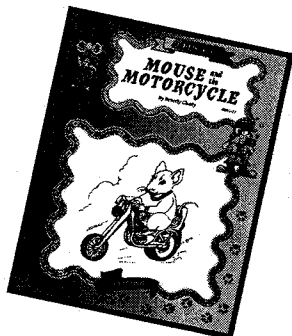
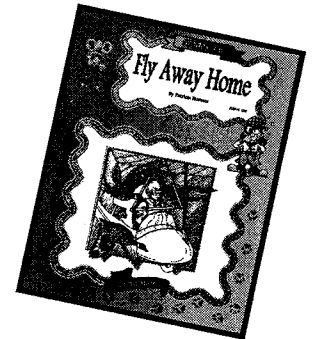
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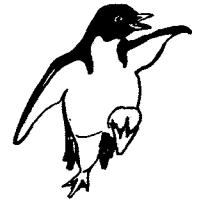
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Expectations

1. The student will develop reading comprehension skills by identifying literal information, drawing inferences, predicting outcomes and analyzing characters from the story Mr. Popper's Penguins.
2. Students will develop language skills through creative writing, phonics activities, vocabulary development and research.
3. Students will understand scientific, geographical and historical concepts pertaining to penguins and the polar regions through the use of research and scientific investigation.

Summary of the Story

Mr. Popper's Penguins

The story **Mr. Popper's Penguins** takes place in a sleepy, little town called Stillwater during the 1930's. Mr. Popper is a rather absent-minded house painter who leads a routine life while trying to support his family. His family consists of his opinionated and practical wife who he loves dearly and their delightful children, Janie and Bill. In Mr. Popper's spare time, he reads and learns about the Polar Regions which he dreams of traveling to some day. Quite unexpectantly a package arrives from the famous explorer, Admiral Drake. In the package is a penguin whom the family name Captain Cook. The Popper family soon learn that living with a pet penguin can be difficult. They must adapt the refrigerator and the house for the penguin's comfort along with supplying an endless amount of fish. The people in Stillwater are even more astonished by Captain Cook.

Captain Cook soon begins to act mopey. In desperation, Mr. Popper writes to an aquarium explaining his situation. The aquarium replies that Captain Cook is suffering from loneliness and sends a female penguin, Greta. Captain Cook and Greta soon produce a family of ten chicks.

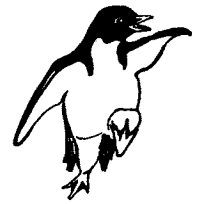
With the addition of the penguin family, money becomes scarce. Mr. Popper then decides to train the penguins as a vaudeville troupe. Popper's Performing Penguins travel across the country performing their routine to delighted audiences everywhere.

However, as winter draws to a close, the penguins begin to feel the effects of the heat plus wind up in jail for disturbing the peace. Admiral Drake hears about Mr. Popper's dilemma and bails him out of jail. He offers to take the penguins to the North Pole to start a breed of penguins there. At the same time, the penguins are offered a Hollywood contract. In the end Mr. Popper decides to send the penguins to the North Pole, and he achieves his life long dream by traveling along with his penguins.



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Author Biography

Richard and Florence Atwater

Richard Atwater was born December 29, 1892 in Chicago, Illinois. He was a writer who also worked as a book editor, newspaper columnist and an instructor of Greek at the University of Chicago. Mr. Atwater wrote two children's books: Doris and the Trolls (1931) and Mr. Popper's Penguins (1938). After suffering a stroke in 1934, he was no longer able to write. He died on August 21, 1948 at the age of fifty-six.

Florence Atwater was born September 13, 1896. She was married to Richard Atwater, and they had two daughters. Mrs. Atwater was a high school teacher and a writer. Along with Mr. Popper's Penguins, she contributed to several periodicals. She died August 23, 1979.

Richard Atwater wrote the original version of Mr. Popper's Penguins in 1931. This non-published edition was more of a fantasy. However during the Depression, Mrs. Atwater tried to have this first version published to bring in additional money. It was turned down. Mrs. Atwater then rewrote the book by changing the first few chapters and the final chapters. She basically removed the fantasy from Mr. Atwater's original manuscript. It was this rewritten version that was published in 1938.

Mr. Popper's Penguins has received several awards and honours. These include the following: Newbery Honor Book, 1939; Young Reader's Choice Award, 1941; and the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, 1958.

Edgar, K., editor. (1992) Contemporary Authors, 135. New York: Gale Research.

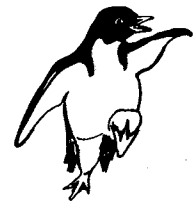
Teacher Input Suggestions

- Mr. Popper's Penguins is fun reading as well as an appropriate novel for the classroom. Not only can the instruction of this novel help develop language skills but it also offers the opportunity for students to learn other subjects such as science, history, geography, art and music.
- When introducing the novel to your class, have the students discuss pets. Question the students about how they care for their pets and how having a pet has affected their daily life. Next channel the discussion to unusual pets. Ask the students what unusual pets they would like to have and what challenges this type of pet would produce. Finally, introduce the penguin as a pet. Once again, concentrate the discussion on how difficult it would be to keep a penguin in their home. Tell the students that they will be reading a book about a family who has a pet penguin. Before they begin reading the book, have the students fill out the first two columns of the "What I Learned" chart.



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- The activities included in this unit are designed to be used while the students read the novel. The activities coincide with chapters 1 to 9, 10 to 11, 12 to 17 and 18 to 20. Students can do reading comprehension, phonics and vocabulary activities after each of these sections have been read. When to use the activity is labeled at the top of the page under the heading. There are also a variety of other activities to use throughout the reading of the novel. These include writing ideas, character analysis, and research activities.
- **Mr. Popper's Penguins** applies to other subject matter as well. During Social Studies the students can learn the characteristics of the Polar Regions as well as the historical implications of these regions. Have the students locate the Polar Regions on a map or globe. Have a variety of books, magazines and other sources available for the students to read to find information on these areas. Compare and contrast the North and South Poles. Investigate who first discovered these regions. Throughout this study, activities are available to supplement the curriculum.
- Science time offers an excellent opportunity to investigate the characteristics of heat. Mr. Popper worked hard to control the heat to keep the penguins comfortable. This can lead to studies on how to control heat. Have the students learn about how heat affects the state of matter; how color and type of material affect the movement of heat; and what are icebergs. A list of science experiments is included in the unit which students can do by themselves or the teacher can use as demonstrations. During science, the students may also want to learn more about the penguin. The unit contains research activities to help them investigate different characteristics of the penguin.
- **Mr. Popper's Penguins** can also be tied in with art and music time. Since the penguins performed to music, a discussion on different types of music can be done. The students may also enjoy drawing and making penguins to help them learn the anatomy of a penguin. Once again, activities are included in the unit to assist in these areas.
- Follow-up activities can be used once the students have completed the novel. Have the students write and answer questions about the book. This is also a good time to complete the "What I Learned" chart.
- Students will find the unit and the book **Mr. Popper's Penguins** fascinating as well as entertaining. They will be motivated to read and learn more about the amusing creature, the penguin, and its environment. You will thoroughly enjoy this exciting teaching experience.