



# 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 art, 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 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.

## 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
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

## National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

## National Association for Music Education

- RESPONDING: Analyze and Evaluate

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## 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 [With Byrd at the South Pole](#). Discuss the technological changes in video recording or the relationships of the expedition crew with the sled dogs. 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. A [brief 3-minute video](#) with documentary highlights is also available.
3. Download [Pocket Penguins](#) to view live streams and penguin cams from the [California Academy of Sciences](#) or the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) (between 7 AM and 5 PM Pacific Time), the [Idaho Falls Zoo](#), [Penguin Beach](#), or the [San Diego Zoo](#). Teams or individual students can visit daily at a specified time and record their observations. In addition, students can microblog their observations using Twiducate ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
4. Using only items readily available within the classroom or with another parameter, create a rookery. Take a photograph and share on Twitter ([TeachersFirst review](#)) using #mrpopperspenguins, including the reasoning behind two or more items selected.

5. 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. digccMixer - 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 Images search. Identify and discuss the artistic styles, similarities and differences, and perceived levels of difficulty.

## Extension Activities:

1. 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 questions as to which version of each variance they preferred. (Note: Student answers will be anonymous, but students will be able to see poll responses live.) Additionally, [Heartland](#) has created a curriculum as a PDF to accompany the film.
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 Layouts ([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 Penguins Quiz](#).
6. Have students reflect through journal writing and illustrating after reading each chapter to demonstrate comprehension using this [Read Write Think lesson plan](#)

## Helpful Resources

### From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks](#)

### Other Resources:

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