

Seattle Children's Theatre

ACTIVE AUDIENCE GUIDE

Season 43, Show 2



SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH KENNY WAX FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT AND TC BEECH PRESENTS

MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY RICHARD AND FLORENCE ATWATER
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY PINS AND NEEDLES PRODUCTIONS
MUSIC BY LUKE BATEMAN LYRICS BY RICHY HUGHES
DIRECTED BY EMMA EARLE ILLUSTRATION BY LIZ WONG

ARTSFUND 

SHUBERT
FOUNDATION INC.

 Microsoft

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SYNOPSIS

Be warned: This synopsis contains spoilers!

In the small town of Stillwater, a painter prepares for work. Though he has lived in the same town his entire life without traveling to other parts of the world, Mr. Popper possesses a vivid imagination for other places. Each color he paints inspires a story. He has a special fascination with the South Pole and penguins.

At home, Mr. Popper and his wife discuss the latest book he is reading, *Antarctic Adventures*. Mr. Popper confesses he would love to have a penguin as a pet. He tunes into explorer Admiral Drake's weekly radio broadcast from Antarctica. Admiral Drake addresses Mr. Popper directly, saying he has sent him a surprise. Suddenly the doorbell rings with a delivery. Inside the package is a real live penguin. Mr. Popper names him Captain Cook. Mrs. Popper agrees to allow Captain Cook to live with the Poppers as long as he follows the rules. Captain Cook finds comfort in the fridge where the temperature is nice and cold.

The next day Mr. Popper takes Captain Cook on a walk. Mr. Popper's new pet confuses the residents of Stillwater. Is he a polar goose? A giant parrot? A police officer suggests Mr. Popper get a license for his animal. That turns out to be easier said than done.

As Captain Cook tries to settle into Stillwater, Mr. and Mrs. Popper notice he seems unhappy. Cook will not eat and falls ill. The Poppers nurse him as best they can. Mr. Popper writes to Admiral Drake for help. Through a series of global communications, the London Zoo hears the news. In an effort to save Cook, the Zoo sends Greta, their female penguin who is suffering from loneliness, to the Poppers. Cook is so happy to have another penguin in the house. Greta's presence revives him. As winter sets in, the humans and the penguins enjoy the cooler climes together.

Captain Cook and Greta are inseparable. They lay eight eggs in the Popper's home. Mr. and Mrs. Popper worry the house will not hold the entire family. The baby chicks grow at a tremendous rate. The Poppers feel the financial strain of getting fresh fish for meals. Mr. Popper decides to bring the penguins on a painting project in order to speed the work and potentially earn more money. The penguins roll out paper, slide down ladders, and fall into buckets. Mr. Popper has an idea. He will train the penguins to perform.

Mr. Popper schedules an audition with a notable theater producer. The penguins perform sensationally, with a penguin pyramid as the big finish. Mr. Popper signs a contract for the penguins to tour. The penguins perform a showstopping act with daring stunts.

Admiral Drake comes to Stillwater from the South Pole. He attends one of the penguin shows and meets Mr. Popper. Admiral Drake congratulates Popper on his show, but says it's time for the penguins to return to their natural home. Mr. Popper understands that is best for them. Admiral Drake calls Mr. Popper a good man.

The Poppers say a tearful goodbye to the penguins. Mr. Popper is surprised when Admiral Drake says he is expecting him to join them. As Mr. Popper thanks the Admiral and starts to say his home is in Stillwater, he sees Mrs. Popper is already on the ship, calling him to get on board. The Poppers and penguins all travel to the South Pole for a marvelous adventure.



STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

Washington State K-12 Standards: Theatre Arts



Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists rely on intuition, curiosity, and critical inquiry.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists work to discover different ways of communicating meaning.

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists make strong choices to effectively convey meaning.

Suggestions for Students:

Identify specific events at the beginning, middle, and end of the plot of a story/performance; describe also the time and place, and identify a central conflict.

Describe the characters, plot, setting, and conflict in a script or performance of a play.

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.

Suggestions for Students: Identify the purpose of a theatrical work, such as to entertain, inform, persuade, and describe

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists reflect to understand the impact of drama processes and theatre experiences.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists' interpretations of drama/theatre work are influenced by personal experiences and aesthetics.

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists apply criteria to investigate, explore, and assess drama and theatre work.

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists allow awareness of interrelationships between self and others to influence and inform their work.

Suggestions for Students:

Discuss the meaning of a theatrical performance to relate it to one's own personal experience and knowledge.

Discuss how the arts influence and reflect cultures/civilization, place, and time.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists understand and can communicate their creative process as they analyze the way the world may be understood.

Mr. Popper's Penguins touches on many themes and ideas. Here are a few we believe would make good Discussion Topics:

Trying New Things

Care for the Environment

Antarctic Exploration

We believe that seeing the show and using our *Active Audience Guide* can help you meet the following **State Standards** (exact standards depend on specific grade level) and address these **21st-Century Skills**:

- **Growth Mindset**
(belief that your intelligence and ability can increase with effort)
- **Perseverance**
- **Creative Thinking**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Communication**
- **Collaboration**

Common Core: English Language Arts

READING: LITERATURE

- CCSS.ELA - RL.1** Ask and answer questions such as *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RL.2** Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- CCSS.ELA - RL.3** Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- CCSS.ELA - RL.5** Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.
- CCSS.ELA - RL.6** Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters.
- CCSS.ELA - RL.7** Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

READING: INFORMATIONAL TEXT

- CCSS.ELA - RI.1** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for answers.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.2** Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.3** Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas or pieces of information in a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.4** Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.5** Use text features (table of contents, headings, links, etc.) to locate key facts or information in a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.6** Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.7** Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.8** Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
- CCSS.ELA - RI.10** With prompting and support, read appropriately complex informational text.

SPEAKING & LISTENING

- CCSS.ELA - SL.1** Participate in conversations about grade-specific topics and texts.
- CCSS.ELA - SL.2** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or presented through other media.
- CCSS.ELA - SL.4** Describe people, places, things and events with relevant details.
- CCSS.ELA - SL.6** Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

LANGUAGE

- CCSS.ELA - L.4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

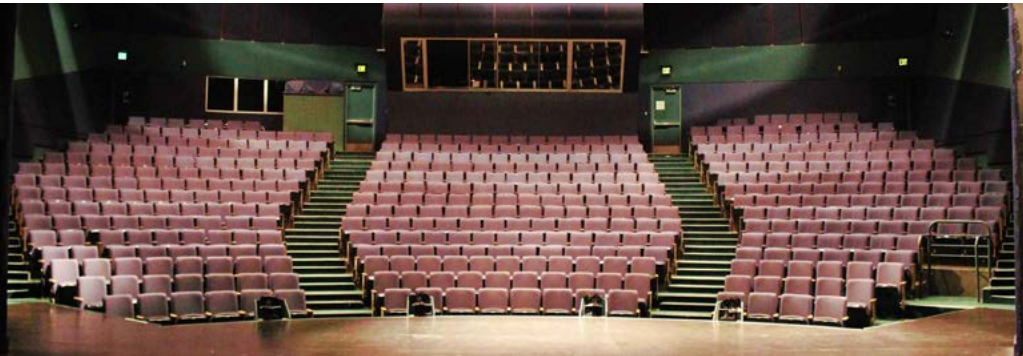
*LANGUAGE: VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND USE

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WE ARE ALL ON THE SAME TEAM

THEATER ETIQUETTE

The fantastic thing about going to see live theater is that it is a shared community event where everyone plays an important part. You hear pre-show announcements about theater etiquette every time you come to SCT. Happily, the vast majority of our audience members help us make the theater-going experience better for everyone by complying with the requests. But if you or the kids in your life have ever wondered why we ask the things we do, here are some explanations:



Please completely turn off all electronic devices including cell phones, cameras and video recorders.

Why turn them completely off? So they won't get used. Airplane mode will stop incoming calls and messages, but it won't stop people from using their devices to take pictures, record audio or video, read books or play games during the show.

Phone calls and texting are a distraction to the audience and performers, and can pose a safety hazard as well as interfere with our sound system.

The distraction factor is an easy one to explain. It is very difficult for people to ignore a lit screen. Walk through a room where a TV is on and you are going to at least glance at it. In a darkened theater, eyes are drawn to the light. Everyone sitting anywhere behind someone looking at a lit phone will turn their attention to that phone. And the actors on stage can see the screen lighting up the holder's face. A ringing phone or text message alert takes everyone in the theater, on stage and off, out of the moment.

How does this create a safety hazard? Distraction can be a problem for actors and crew whose focus needs to stay on doing their work safely, especially when working

on, with or around moving scenic pieces or as scenery is being lowered to the stage.

Do electronics in the audience really interfere with the sound system? Yes. You would not notice it over the speaker system in the house, but our crew is on wireless headsets, and electronic devices in the audience can cause interference. If crew can't hear cues and communicate with each other, they can't do their job safely or efficiently.

Also, taking pictures or video is not allowed.

We are fortunate to work with very talented performers, designers, playwrights and directors at SCT. One of our responsibilities to these artists is to help protect their work from illegal distribution or piracy. Contractually, the use of images of their designs and recordings of their work is very specifically controlled. We appreciate that people want to capture a memory to enjoy later, but it is actually a violation of contract, and of trust between the artists and the audience.

You are welcome to take pictures in the lobby, of family and friends in their seats before or after the show, or when talking to the actors at autographs after the show, with their permission. If you are not sure if a photograph is permitted, please ask.

If you are with someone who becomes noisy or restless, please be kind to your neighbors and use our quiet room, which is located in the back of the theater over your right shoulder.

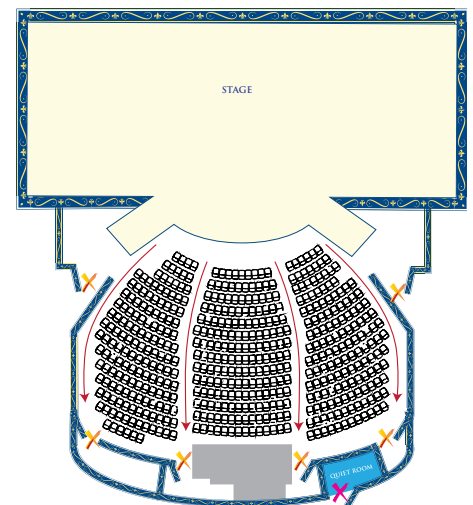
We love our audiences and want them to express themselves during the show—laughing, clapping, shouting in amazement. It's part of the community experience. But everyone has moments when they just don't want to be where they are. And sometimes they express this quite loudly. The quiet room offers a place to see and hear the show, while having a chance to settle in private. Please keep in mind that although it is called the "quiet room" it is not completely soundproof.

If you need to exit during the performance, please use one of the four upstairs doors.

We're pretty sure no one wants to become part of the show if they need to run out of the theater to use the restroom or get a drink of water. Using the upstairs doors is less distracting for everyone. Actors often use the areas near the lower doors for entrances and exits.

Thank you being part of the SCT family. If you have any questions visit our [FAQ Page](#) at sct.org or contact us at tickets@sct.org.

✕ Doors to Lobby ➔ Exit During the Show
✕ Door to Quiet Room ■ Quiet Room



THE ATWATERS

Ad from *The New York Times*, September 25, 1938

Richard Tupper Atwater was born in Chicago in 1892. After graduating from the University of Chicago in 1910, he stayed on seven years as a graduate student and teacher in Greek studies. During this time, he also worked with the university's drama club in different ways including writing a play for them. He went on to write for a number of newspapers including *The Chicago Evening Post*, *The Chicago Daily News*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Herald-Examiner*.

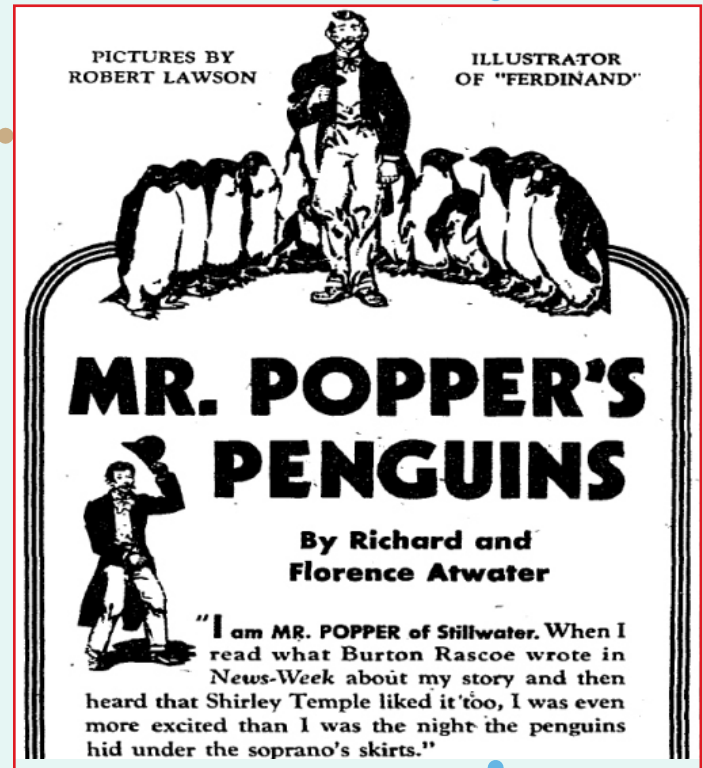
Florence Hasseltine Carroll was born in Chicago in 1896. She earned two degrees in French literature at the University of Chicago, where she was co-editor of *The Chicago Literary Monthly*, and where her Classical Greek teacher was Richard Atwater. The two were married in 1921 and had two daughters—Doris (1922) and Carroll (1925).

Richard's first children's book was the story of two children who go to the land of trolls to rescue a fairy. *Doris and the Trolls* was published in 1931. He also wrote a children's operetta, *The King's Sneezes*, or *Max and His Music Box*, in which young Max Luckyfoot has to cure the King's sneezes. It was published in 1933.

Around this time, the Atwater family saw a documentary film about Richard E. Byrd's Antarctic expedition. This film left an impression on Richard, and when one of his daughters complained about how many history books she was having to read, he wrote a fantasy tale about penguins for her. *Ork! The Story of Mr. Popper's Penguins*, in which a penguin came to life after Mr. Popper drew him on the mirror with shaving cream, was greatly enjoyed by his daughters.

In 1934, Richard suffered a stroke and, though he survived until 1948, he never recovered enough to write again. To help support the family, Florence started teaching high school French, English and Latin and wrote a number of articles for *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*. Looking for ways to make additional income she took *Ork!* to two publishers. Both rejected it.

Florence took a chance and rewrote the beginning and the end of the story, adding slightly more realistic elements. This revised version received a much more positive response from publishers, and *Mr. Popper's Penguins* was published in 1938 to immediate praise. It won a 1939 Newberry Honor and has been in print in many languages ever since. Florence died in 1979 at the age of 83.

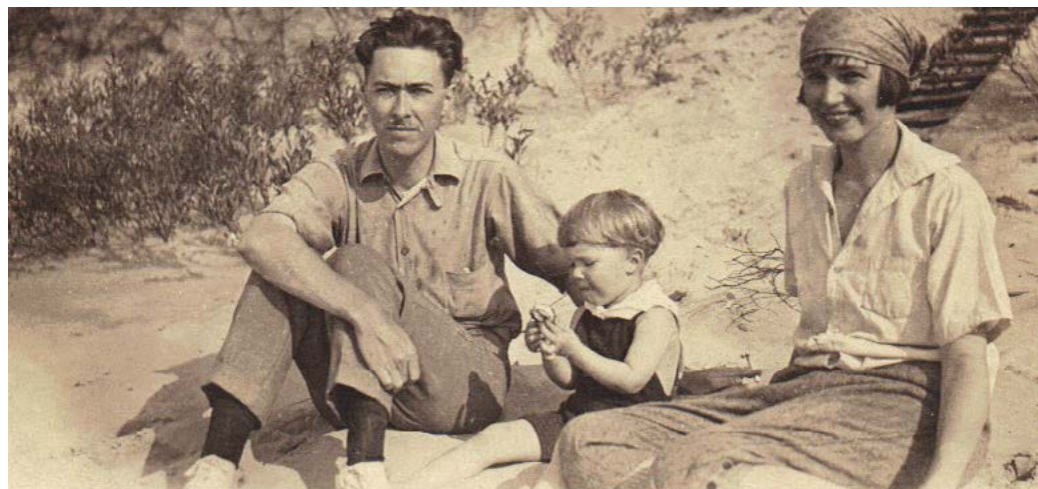


SOURCES*:

IllinoisAuthors.org:
[Richard Tupper Atwater](http://IllinoisAuthors.org/Richard-Tupper-Atwater)

***Mr. Popper's Penguins*,
by Richard and Florence Atwater,
Little, Brown and Co., 1988, c1938,
ISBN 9780316058421**

*All active links can be found on the
interactive AAG, free for download at sct.org



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

A CHAT WITH TAMMY HASE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Please tell us about your working process as the volunteer coordinator.

I have been the volunteer coordinator here at SCT for the past 18 years. My job is to find and train volunteers for many different events in the theater. The biggest part of my job is scheduling ushers for our public performances. Ushers take tickets, pass out programs and make sure that patrons do not walk on the stage or touch things on it. We need six ushers for each performance in the Charlotte Martin Theatre (where *Mr. Popper's Penguins* is performing), and five ushers for each performance in the Eve Alvord Theatre. There are six public performances each week (sometimes more). *Mr. Popper's Penguins* has an eight-week run, so we will need 288 volunteers just for this show. Most other shows have about seven-week runs, so that means we need anywhere from 210 - 288 ushers for each show we do here. Multiply that by six shows in a season and that's a LOT of ushers!



What is a particularly interesting or unusual challenge of this job and how do you set out to solve it?

One thing that sets us apart from most theaters is that ushers can be as young as eight years old if they have an adult with them (14-year-olds and older can usher by themselves). So, when I'm scheduling ushers, I have to keep in mind that some of the younger ones might want to pair up with their adult. I start scheduling in June and don't usually finish until mid-August. You might think I can just relax and put my feet up after that, but there are always last-minute changes or adjustments that happen throughout the season. What's the most difficult time to find ushers? Christmas? No. Spring Break? No. Mother's Day! Sometimes a volunteer family will make ushering a part of their Mother's Day plans (take mom to see a fun play), but sometimes I come in and usher so the house manager, who is in charge of everything that has to do with the audience at the performance, isn't all alone and has someone to help.

There are also special events to plan. I have to figure out what jobs need doing, how many people are needed for each job and how long each job lasts. Then, I need to get the word out to our volunteers and other volunteers in the community. Once I know how many volunteers we have and what times they are available, I can start assigning jobs and figuring out what each volunteer will be doing from one job to the next. This is very much like a puzzle and I love puzzles. Once, we had an event where we had to figure out how to give tours of the whole building to 400 people in just two hours. I walked through the building four different ways (including one way for wheelchair access) and timed each way. Then, I figured out which ways could happen at the same time without crossing paths with the other tours too much. Then, I figured out how often we could repeat the paths. I made a script for each of the tour guides and the route that they needed to follow. We managed to get everyone through in time.

In addition to spending time at SCT, Tammy likes to do logic puzzles, wear aloha shirts, attend emergency preparedness seminars, and read or watch sci-fi and fantasy.

Fun Fact: She's married to the technical director. She and Mike will celebrate their 25th anniversary next year!

Using the set design model for *Fire Station 7* to explain the design process to a tour group, and also the importance of math in making a model to scale



What in your childhood got you to where you are today?

I grew up in Maryland. When I was in 6th grade, I was cast as the Evil Queen in my elementary school's production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. I was always the shy, well-behaved student in class and this gave me permission to be loud and evil. I LOVED it! Our junior high school didn't have a drama program, so I took improv and acting classes in the evenings. These classes helped me to come out of my shell even more and be more courageous in real life as well. In high school, I performed in the school musicals and was a member of the Thespian Society. I realized that theater people were the kind of people I liked hanging out with, even outside of rehearsals and classes.

Then, I majored in theater at the University of Hawai'i. There I not only learned about Asian theater (I got to act in a Kabuki play and stage managed a Beijing Opera), but I also learned about Theater for Young Audiences and acted in several plays for young people. I learned how much fun young audiences are—they have a ton of energy and love to interact with the live actors. ("He's right behind you!" "It's up in the tree!") I also learned that theaters need more than just actors to put on a play and make it a wonderful experience for the audience. Without box office staff and ushers, for example, there would be chaos as no one would be there to guide people or explain things to the audience from the beginning.

Right out of college, I became a company actor for the Honolulu Theatre for Youth for five seasons. I got to perform in five or six shows each year and go on a state-wide tour every year. That's where I learned that actors have to develop endurance and find ways to keep their performances fresh and interesting even when they have done the same thing hundreds of times.

When I moved to Seattle, I actually had a couple of customer service jobs outside of the theater. I soon realized that I would rather be doing anything in theater than the nicest of jobs outside of it. I started with SCT as a Drama School intern, then became a teaching artist, then a receptionist, then the volunteer coordinator. Now that I've been working here so long, I actually have several jobs—volunteer coordinator, receptionist (again) and tour guide. I get to introduce volunteers to the theater and teach them about everything we do here. I get to greet guests when they arrive at the administrative office and make sure things run smoothly for them. I get to show people around the entire building and explain to them everything it takes to put a show together and to make fun classes. And, every once in a while, I get to play a character who helps students in a class figure out a clue in some dramatic adventure they are on. It's really the best of all worlds!

ABOUT THE DESIGN FROM ZOE SQUIRE, SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

I have been working in theatre for over eight years and have designed for many different kinds of stories. After training and meeting at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Director Emma Earle and I set up an independent theatre company called Pins and Needles Productions. Together we have created over 16 shows, many of which we have adapted to stage from original writing.

Mr. Popper's Penguins was based on a book written in the 1930s by husband and wife duo Richard and Florence Atwater. However, due to the tone of the original book we decided to set our version in the 1950s. Mr. Popper is a painter and decorator who lives in a small town called Stillwater where nothing really happens, but who dreams of adventures and becoming an Antarctic explorer like his hero Admiral Drake. The show jumps between multiple locations with a whole array of characters. It features singing, puppetry and non-stop action. The story is full of heart, warmth, surprise, magic, mischief and fun to keep our audience on the edge of their seats.

My aim was to create a playful design that invited our audience to join Mr. Popper on his bizarre journey—everything from adapting his humble 1950s domestic home into a winter wonderland (a penguin paradise), to training his quirky pets to perform circus acts in theatres up and down the country, and eventually all over the world.

Emma and I worked closely together to ensure our vision translated well on stage, both in the script and design. Once the script was in place we worked through it in detail to establish the interpretation of the setting and the characters that live within it. After these initial discussions and a lot of research I was able to try out a few different design ideas and create a preliminary model. This is called a “white card model” and is something a designer will often do in the early part of a design process.



White model of Zoe's design for Pins and Needles Productions' adaptation of *Little Mermaid*. White models are often taken apart and rearranged, the way you might erase part of a sketch and redraw it as you are working on an image



Captain Cook arrives at the Popper's cozy home. You can see some of Mr. Popper's paint supplies used as furniture.



Popper's work cart, with a ladder to use in the scene and some of the same kinds of supplies we see in his home

Its purpose is primarily to explore shape and the use of space. We used this as a starting place for more detailed conversations and to explore if the story could be told within the preferred set designs. Throughout this process we looked closely at all aspects of staging including exits, entrances, quick costume changes, effects and whether there was enough room for all the action to be played in a variety of interesting ways.

With the chosen era and music being inspired by the old MGM musicals, we liked the idea of creating a space that had a similar feel to a backstage area of a theatre. To fit in with this world, the actors' costumes were inspired by vintage stagehands. This concept also worked with Mr. Popper being a painter and decorator by trade, as you often find lots of ladders, paint tins and scenic paraphernalia backstage in theatres. This gave us license to have visible props around the space, which could be brought on and moved around quickly by our performers, changing locations in front of our audience's eyes.

I did a lot of research into 1950s suburban life, as we also wanted to create a sense of how small and static Stillwater was as a town compared to the jungles, seas, skies and snow plains being explored around the world. Stillwater is a town where its inhabitants are very set in their ways, and people care what the neighbours think. I really liked the look of vintage billboards and the style of slogans you often found on them reinforcing idealistic views of what people should think, buy and wear, and how to live correctly. In our design, we ended up creating our own town billboard which read, "Welcome to Stillwater, the town where everyone will fit in." This doubled as our backdrop for most of the show. It was printed on a material called Sharktooth Gauze, which is loosely woven netting, meaning there is more open space than fabric. When it's lit from the front, you see what is painted on the front of the fabric, and when you light it from behind, it allows the audience to see action through it. When Mr. Popper eventually leaves Stillwater to tour with his penguin act, we wanted to create more of a feeling of glitz and showbiz. To help with this we used a contraption called a Kabuki drop to enable our billboard cloth to drop to the ground quickly, revealing a glittery gold slit curtain behind it, and later the front of a boat was pushed through when the Poppers, the penguins and Admiral Drake sail off on their snowy adventure.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...)

Actors transform the Poppers' home into a comfortably frozen landscape for Cook and Greta by draping white fabric over the furniture.





Showtime for the penguins. The gold curtain is revealed and Mr. Popper is using his work broom to lift the penguins into the air to perform a feat of strength.

With *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, there were a lot more characters in the show than actors we had to play them, so we knew this was a production that would have actors playing multiple roles and a lot of small costume changes. Without full costume changes, we knew we also had to rely on the actors' skilled use of their voices and bodies to reveal different characters, and the audience's intelligence and imagination to complete the picture. Our actors would put on items, like a hat or coat, or pick up a prop to instantly suggest a new character. This was often done very fast, and sometimes on stage, so I needed to design a base costume that could work with a variety of different pieces and different characters. One of my favourite costumes was Mr. and Mrs. Popper's final coats and hats, which they added on when their penguin performing act hits the big time. We wanted to create an instant feel of there being lots and lots of penguins on the stage.

One of the biggest design challenges of bringing our adaptation of *Mr. Popper's Penguins* alive on stage was working out how we could bring a family of penguins to life. We needed to see the Poppers juggle parenthood when their house becomes overrun by not just two penguins, but eight flapping babies who create havoc everywhere they go.

We decided from an early stage that these needed to be puppets instead of actors dressed as penguins. There were lots of reasons for going down this route. Firstly, we wanted to create a family of penguins that our audience would fall in love with. There's something incredibly cute about life-size puppet penguins rather than human sized ones. Secondly, using puppets instead of real actors dressed up allowed us to have more fun with what the penguins could do—we wouldn't have been able to fire a human out of a cannon, for example! And thirdly, we needed to find a way of creating 10 penguins and a host of other characters from Stillwater with only four actors.



Another example of Popper's work equipment, in this case a sawhorse, being used for a different purpose. He also puts on a tailcoat for the performance, which not only tells us it's not his ordinary work day, but ties him to the look of the penguins.



The actor holding the balloons in the next photo simply trades her pants for a skirt and becomes Mrs. Popper.

I worked closely with our puppet designer, Nick Barnes, to look at ways we could create puppets that could be manipulated by either one or two people. We drew inspiration from vintage toys of the 1950s. For example, our child penguin puppets have a similar shape to skittles (bowling pins) and we used wooden wheels like the old push-along toys on some of our larger penguins to enable them to rush around the stage causing turmoil.

Designing *Mr. Popper's Penguins* was a lot of fun and it's packed with lots of visual surprises for our audience to enjoy, but none of them can beat the big finale when Mr. Popper finally gets to fulfill his dreams of going to Antarctica to take his penguins back home. We wanted our audience to really be part of this experience, so we decided to make it snow over the entire auditorium, one of the most exciting moments I have ever been able to do in a show.

All production photos in this article are by **Helen Murray.** (previous cast pictured)



The actors' base costume looks

ABOUT THE PUPPETS FROM NICK BARNES, **PUPPET DESIGNER**

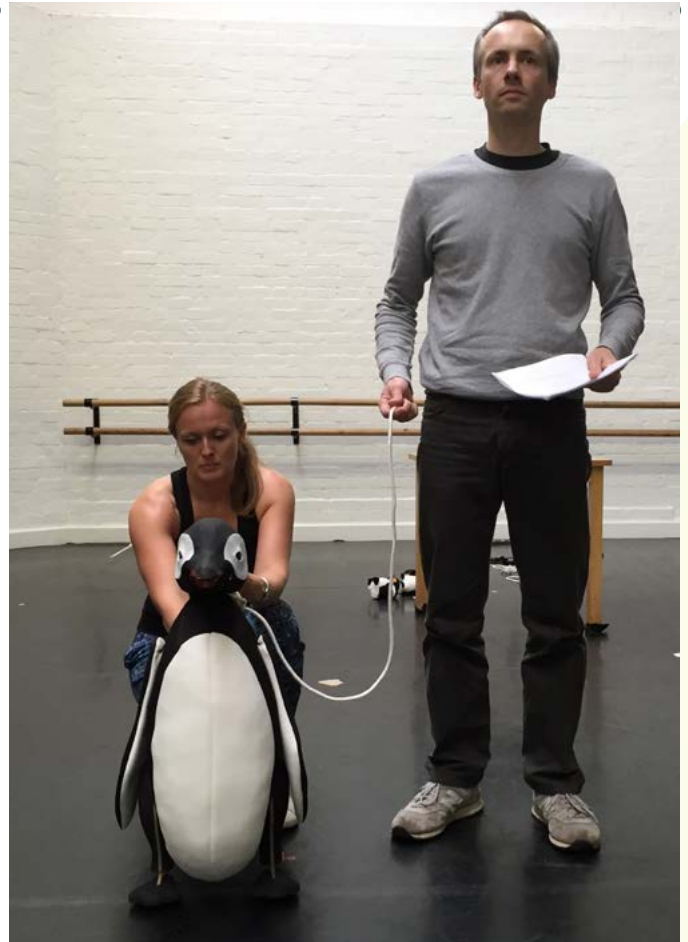
I'll often do a sketch or drawing before making a puppet, but for this project I jumped straight in, making a mock-up for our first research and development period. I made a penguin body from wood and fabric and sculpted a head in Styrofoam (a rigid foam which is good for carving).

This allowed us to quickly gauge how the puppet was going to be operated and how big it needed to be.

The challenge for this show was to give the feeling of many penguins causing mayhem with just four performers. The main puppet characters—Captain Cook and Greta—needed to be sophisticated and detailed enough for the audience to care about them, whilst still feeling playful, and they often needed to be operated by just one puppeteer. The director was very keen to have them move quickly around the stage, and yet the script also required that they march and jump onto furniture. This resulted in two versions of each puppet—one with legs which is operated by two people and establishes the character, and one on wheels, which is easily moved by one puppeteer.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 15...)

Prototype version of Captain Cook at the first research and development session, before rehearsals began



Silicone head molds being made for Greta (left) and Captain Cook (right). The original sculpts used wooden balls you see here for the eyes. When the heads were cast in polyurethane rubber, identically sized balls were placed in the molds to create eye sockets for the eyeballs.



Two puppeteers manipulating Captain Cook. One controls the head (movement and beak opening) and wings using handles; the other controls the legs.



Wheeled version of Captain Cook. As the wheels turn, the feet rotate, giving the illusion of walking.



One of the grown young penguin puppets in process. Their bodies are less complicated than their parents—no moving feet or heads, but they have flapping wings and beaks that open.



Eight baby penguins. The newborns are simple stuffed toys, handled the way you probably play with your toys to make them walk or talk.





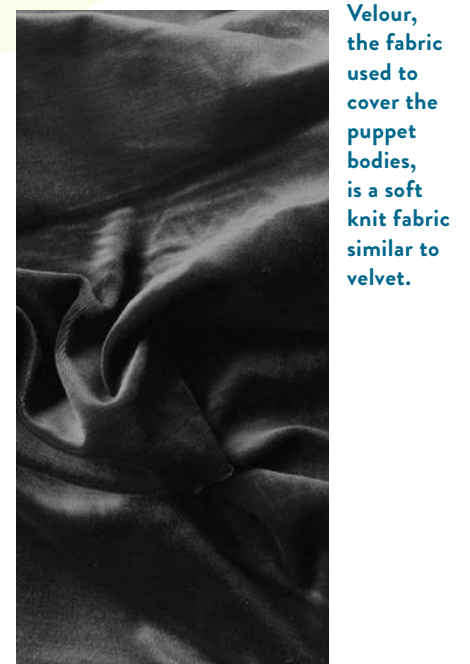
Handles on the young penguins' backs have a trigger used to flap their wings.

Sculpting the heads was a particular challenge. I worked from photos of various real penguins, aiming for a mix of naturalism (the way penguins actually look) and stylisation (not realistic but recognizable) to ensure the characters are convincing and feel real enough, yet remain friendly-looking to a younger audience!

The heads are cast in a soft polyurethane rubber, which means they will not break if they get a knock. They are covered in a black and white stretch velour fabric and have a simple mechanism in the head for opening the beak.

Puppet process photos by
Nick Barnes

Production photos by
Helen Murray
(previous cast pictured)



Velour, the fabric used to cover the puppet bodies, is a soft knit fabric similar to velvet.

Young penguins causing trouble when they go to work with Mr. Popper

PROTECTING OUR EARTH

In *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, the South Pole and its inhabitants inspire Mr. Popper. Antarctica is just one of the amazingly diverse environments on our planet. Earth gives humans everything we need to live a healthy life. However, sometimes humans overuse or disrespect these gifts. As our population increases so do our demands on the Earth.

Our climate is changing. Earth's temperature is rising and that is causing problems for plants, animals and humans. An increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is one of the causes of this change. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is known as a greenhouse gas—one of the gases that allow the sun's energy to pass through it but keeps heat from escaping our atmosphere. Greenhouse gases are what keep Earth from becoming an icy planet, but as we burn fossil fuels like coal, oil and natural gas for energy or cut down and burn forests, levels of CO₂ increase, and so do temperatures on the Earth's surface. We have to work together to protect our home and its plant and animal life. There are many actions you can take to contribute to a safer, cleaner and healthier planet.



Plant a tree. One of the most critical weapons in fighting climate change are trees. As trees grow they help absorb carbon dioxide in the air and release much needed oxygen back into the atmosphere. You can plant trees almost anywhere you live. The National Arbor Day website provides information on how to obtain seedlings, where to plant trees and which trees grow well in your area.

Grow your own food. Most supermarket produce travels more than 1,500 miles to get to you. Eliminating some of that transportation by growing your own produce conserves fossil fuels, prevents carbon emissions and saves money. If you don't have space for a full garden, you can grow vegetables in containers. A window sill, patio, balcony or doorstep can have enough space for a container garden. A simple herb garden can be grown in nearly any space in small re-usable containers.

The more time you spend in nature, the more you will enjoy the benefits of protecting it.

Reduce your "carbon footprint." Your carbon footprint is how much CO₂ you as an individual add to the atmosphere. There are simple ways to minimize your carbon footprint. Unplug any electrical devices not in use. Be sure to turn lights off when you leave a room. Choosing to ride a bike or walk to a destination is another great way to slow climate change and not overuse Earth's valuable resources. Use both sides of a sheet of paper. Turn off the water when brushing your teeth. These actions may seem small. However, if everyone did these things we would experience a huge decrease in the amount of CO₂ emitted into the atmosphere. Talk to your family and friends about why these steps are important.



SOURCES*:

NASA.gov: [Climate Kids](#)

FootprintsEducation.org:

[How Can Kids Help the Environment](#)

BabyGizmo.com:

[10 Ways Kids Can Help Save Our Planet](#)

ArborDay.org: [Trees](#)

Almanac.com:

[Container Gardening for Vegetables](#)

*All active links can be found on the interactive AAG, free for download at [sct.org](#)

Respect planet Earth. The more time you spend in nature, the more you will enjoy the benefits of protecting it. Sitting in a park or backyard you can observe many types of plant and animal life. If you zoom into one patch of grass with a watchful eye you may discover insects that you had never noticed. Nature activates all of our senses—you can see, hear, smell and touch it, and if you get that garden started you can taste it, too. Many studies have shown that outdoor time is good for our personal health, creating a sense of well-being and decreasing stress. As we appreciate the beauty and benefits the world offers, it is only fair that we return the favor. Working together we can make a significant impact to protect our environment.

TALKING ANTARCTICA



Mr. Popper was fascinated by Antarctica because he had never traveled to faraway places, and wanted most of all to see “those great shining expanses of ice and snow” at the Poles. How much do you know about our South Pole continent, Antarctica? Let’s take a look at some of the amazing things about it.

Antarctica is one of Earth’s seven continents. It is the only one without any permanent population of humans, although visiting scientists stay for months at a time while they do research. They live in specially designed research stations that protect them from the harsh environment. Thousands of tourists also visit Antarctica every year.

Antarctica is not owned by any country. Instead, many countries signed the Antarctic Treaty, an agreement to guarantee the continent would be used for peaceful purposes only, and that scientific observations and results would be freely exchanged between countries. The treaty was originally signed by 12 countries in 1959, and since then has been signed by 49 countries.

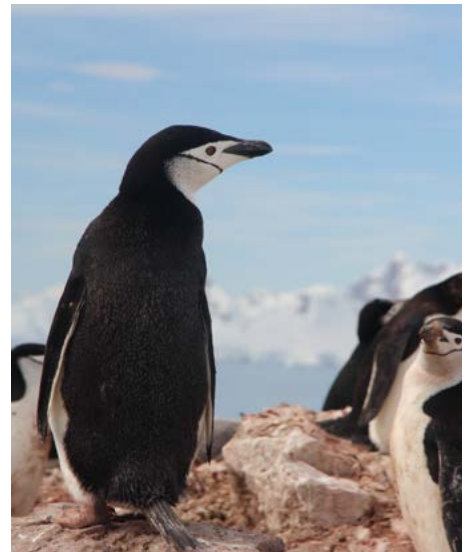
Explorers didn’t discover Antarctica until 1775. It is the coldest place on Earth, with a record of minus 128.6 degrees Fahrenheit. It is the windiest place on Earth, with the highest wind speed ever recorded, and also has the world’s biggest desert, with dry air and thick permanent layers of ice covering the ground, but very little snowfall. The ice is an average of over one-mile thick all across the continent. Antarctica has 70 percent of the world’s fresh water, in the form of ice. Unlike the North Pole, which is on a floating ice sheet, the South Pole is on land. Underneath the deep ice of Antarctica, there are mountains, rivers and valleys that once were covered with trees and other plants. There is even a canyon as big as the Grand Canyon under the ice.



Adélie penguin



Emperor penguins



Chinstrap penguins



Gentoo penguins

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Leopard seal

What animals live in this extreme environment? How do they survive?

Mr. Popper's penguins, as illustrated in the book by Richard and Florence Atwater, are Adélie penguins (although in the play, they are an imaginary kind of penguin). There are 17 other species of penguins in the world, but you might be surprised to know that there are only three other species that live and nest on or near Antarctica. Besides the Adélie, the other Antarctic types are the emperor penguin, the gentoo penguin and the chinstrap penguin.

Penguins look funny when they waddle on land, or fall over to slide on their bellies. They have little wings but can't fly. Instead, they "fly" underwater, where they are amazingly graceful acrobats. More importantly, they are very fast so that they can escape from predators. They swim so fast that they can shoot up out of the water and onto the ice for safety. Penguins have tiny fur-like feathers that they fluff up constantly to make themselves warmer and faster in the water.

Adélie penguins are about 27 inches tall, weigh 11 pounds and have their babies during the months of November through February. Antarctica is in the Southern Hemisphere, where the seasons are the opposite of the ones we have here in the Northern Hemisphere, so these months are spring to summer in Antarctica, a pretty traditional breeding time. Chinstrap and gentoo penguins are about the same height, 27-28 inches, and have their babies in the Antarctic summer. The emperor penguin, however, is HUGE compared to the other three types, at 45 inches tall and 66 pounds. Also, they lay their eggs in the Antarctic autumn and winter months (April-December), so fathers have to protect them from the cold in a huddle of other warm adults, balancing the eggs on the top of their feet to keep them off the ice. Meanwhile, the mothers walk for miles to the open sea to eat and return nine weeks later when the eggs are hatching to feed the newborns. This difficult journey is the subject of the documentary, *The March of the Penguins*.



Wingless midge



Snow petrels in their nest



Wandering albatross

What are some other animals that live in Antarctica? Well, definitely NOT polar bears! Polar bears only live in the Northern Hemisphere. While sometimes they are pictured together in cartoons, no polar bear has ever met a penguin outside of a zoo. But before they moved to Stillwater, Mr. Popper's Adélie penguins did have some animal neighbors—although not all friendly ones. One of them is the most dangerous predator of penguins: the leopard seal. Leopard seals are huge—up to 11 feet long and weighing over 1,300 pounds—with large mouths full of sharp teeth. They are the second largest predator in Antarctica, second only to the orca whale. Besides penguins, leopard seals eat birds, eggs, and other kinds of seals. There are also crabeater seals, Weddell seals and fur seals in Antarctica. And lastly, the southern elephant seal, the largest seal in the world. The males can be over 8,000 pounds.

Seals and penguins are the only Antarctic animals that are land-based part of the time. The only purely land-based animals in Antarctica are microscopic creatures, invertebrates (animals with no backbones) such as the wingless midge, which is the largest of them at only ½ inch long. All the other animals are based in the sea or the air. There are many birds in Antarctica. The snow petrel is a small, pure white bird that is surprisingly tough, and almost the only bird seen at the South Pole itself. It feeds by fishing for tiny shrimp in the ocean. The Antarctic skua is known for stealing other birds' eggs to eat. The blue-eyed shag has a big orange blob on its beak and bright blue eyes. Shags catch squid and fish by diving together in a big group of more than a hundred birds to surround their prey. The largest Antarctic bird is the wandering albatross, with a wingspan of 10 feet. They are remarkable, able to fly hundreds of miles per day by gliding with their wings spread flat.

Whales are also a spectacular part of the Antarctic "fauna," or animals. Whales are mammals, like humans and seals, who have warm blood and nurse their babies. Orca whales are the penguin's largest predators, mainly eating seals, fish and penguins. Other whales in Antarctica are the right, blue, sei, humpback, minke, fin and sperm whales. Orca and sperm whales are toothed whales, eating fish and other large prey. All the others are baleen whales, filtering krill and other tiny prey out of the water.



Scientist in Antarctica studying krill



Blue-eyed shag

What are krill? Antarctic Krill are tiny shrimp-like animals that live in the Southern Sea and are eaten by whales as well as by penguins and other birds. They live in huge numbers in the water. They may be small, but they are a very important food source for many animals. Baleen whales, for example, open their mouths and take in water, then push the water out through their baleen, which is like a comb in their mouths, filtering the krill out of the water. Supertime!

As you can see, there are many interesting animals living in the Antarctic, even though it is an extremely cold and stormy part of the world. They survive in different ways, called “adaptations.” One adaptation is to grow thick layers of fat to keep warm, like a coat. Seals, whales and penguins are all round and fat because of their insulation. Color camouflage is also helpful to avoid predators. The snow petrel is all white so it can’t be seen on the snow. Although the penguin, with its black back and head, is easy to see on the snow, it’s much harder to spot underwater where its predators are waiting.

If there are fauna in Antarctica, are there also “flora,” or plants? Yes, but not very many. There are no trees or shrubs on Antarctica, and the land is 99% covered with ice. But on that 1% of land that is not covered, there are two kinds of flowering plants. Antarctic hair grass and Antarctic pearlwort are small, tough plants that use penguin poop for fertilizer! There are also 100 kinds of moss, 250 kinds of lichen and more than 700 kinds of algae that live in Antarctica. Because of the conditions there, things like mosses grow very slowly—maybe 0.004 to 0.012 of an inch per year. So, a chunk of moss about three inches thick could be 500 years old. Some of the flora live in tide pools and some on the slightly warmer islands around the continent. Scientists have found many fossils of trees in Antarctica, from when it was covered in green forests before it separated from the other continents millions of years ago.

For as much as we know about Antarctica, it is still largely undiscovered. There is so much more to learn about this continent. Maybe someday you can join the scientists working there, exploring this incredible wilderness. Or maybe, like Mr. Popper, you hope to have the chance to visit this unique place, and in the meantime, want to read and learn all you can about the bottom of the globe. Either way, there is adventure to be had.

SOURCES:

Cool Antarctica: [Antarctica - Pictures, Facts and Travel](#)
DiscoveringAntarctica.org: [Discovering Antarctica](#)
Oceanwide Expeditions: [The Plants of Antarctica](#)
YouTube: [Game of Antarctic Mosses](#)

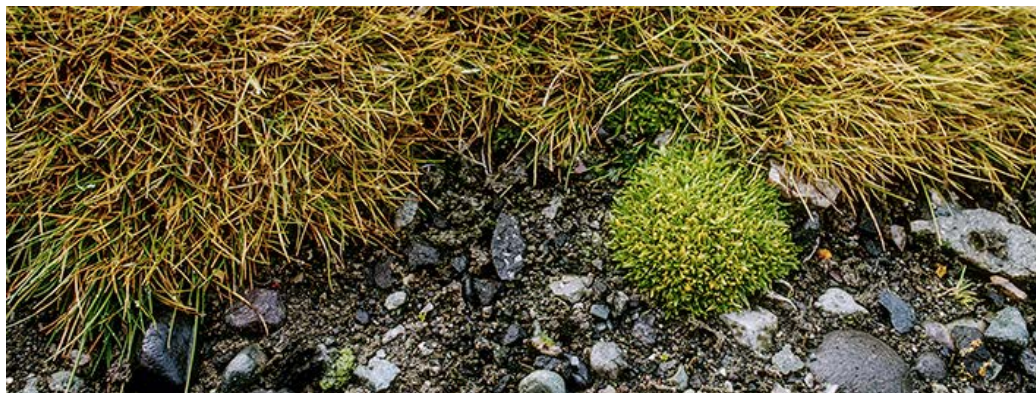
*All active links can be found on the interactive AAG, free for download at [sct.org](#)



Humpback whale straining water through its baleen



Section of baleen hair from a gray whale attached to its rigid plate. Gray whales do not live in the Antarctic.



Hairgrass and pearlwort

EXPLORERS

LINKS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXPLORERS MENTIONED IN THE PLAY *MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS...*

ADMIRAL DRAKE

The book and play take some dramatic license with this character. The real Admiral Drake came close, but he never made it to Antarctica.

Biography.com: [Francis Drake](#)

CAPTAIN ROBERT FALCON SCOTT

Britannica.com:

[Robert Falcon Scott, English Officer and Explorer](#)

Scott Polar Research Institute:

[Scott's Last Expedition – Journal Entries](#)

ERNEST SHACKLETON

Biography.com: [Ernest Shackleton](#)

YouTube: [Survival! The Shackleton Story](#)

ROALD AMUNDSEN

InAmundsensFootsteps.com:

[Roald Amundsen 1872-1928](#)

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK

Biography.com: [James Cook, Military leader, Explorer](#)

History.com:

[10 Things You May Not Know About Captain James Cook](#)

**Be warned that the description of his death is detailed.*

CHARLES DARWIN

Britannica.com: [Charles Darwin, British Naturalist](#)

AboutDarwin.com: [About Charles Darwin](#)

AMELIA EARHART

AmeliaEarhart.com:

[Amelia Earhart – The Official Website](#)



Shackleton expedition's ship Endurance being crushed by the ice in Antarctica, 1915

...AND A FEW WHO AREN'T.

NOBU SHIRASE

Japan also had a heroic explorer dashing to the South Pole 100 years ago.

NewScientist.com: [Scott, Amundsen...and Nobu](#)

ANN BANCROFT

The first woman in history to cross the ice to the North Pole

Dyslexia.Yale.edu:

[Ann Bancroft, Teacher and Explorer](#)

MATTHEW HENSON

An African-American explorer best known as the co-discoverer of the North Pole with Robert Edwin Peary in 1909

Biography.com: [Matthew Henson](#)

GREAT RESOURCE FOR ALL KINDS OF INFORMATION ABOUT ANTARCTICA. GO TO ANTARCTIC FACTS AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE.

CoolAntarctica.com: [A Time Line of the Exploration of Antarctica](#)

WHAT'S LEFT TO EXPLORE?

We actually have better maps of Mars than our own planet.

-ROBERT BALLARD – UNDERWATER ARCHEOLOGIST, DISCOVERER OF THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

We live in a world where just about anything we want to see is at our fingertips, if those fingers are on a keyboard. One quick Google search can take us virtually to almost any place on Earth, and beyond. But seeing is not the same as exploring, and there are still places we believe no modern explorers have ever been, or where there is still exploration to be done.

MentalFloss.com: [15 Unexplored Corners of the Earth](#)

BBC.com: [What Adventures Are Actually Left?](#)

NationalGeographic.com: [The New Age of Exploration](#)



OCEANS: *The ocean covers 71 percent of the Earth's surface and contains 97 percent of the planet's water, yet more than 95 percent of the underwater world remains unexplored.*

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: [What is Ocean Exploration and Why is it Important?](#)

NOAA.gov: [Ocean Today – Exploration](#)

Mongabay.com: [What is the Most Unexplored Ecosystem on Earth?](#)

NationalGeographic.com: [Mariana Trench](#)

CITIZEN SCIENCE

You don't need to travel to the South Pole or the bottom of a cave to make discoveries. Citizen science asks volunteers to assist scientists in their research by submitting data, sharing experiences or spreading valuable information.

PBSKids.org: [Citizen Science Fun for All!](#)

KCEdventures.com: [12 Amazing Citizen Scientist Projects for Kids](#)



THE AMAZON RAINFOREST:

The Amazon Rainforest is home to the largest collection of living plant and animal species in the world. Only a small part of it has been explored, and there are more discoveries to be made.

Mongabay.com:

[The World's Largest Rainforest](#)

Mongabay.com: [Tropical Rainforests](#)

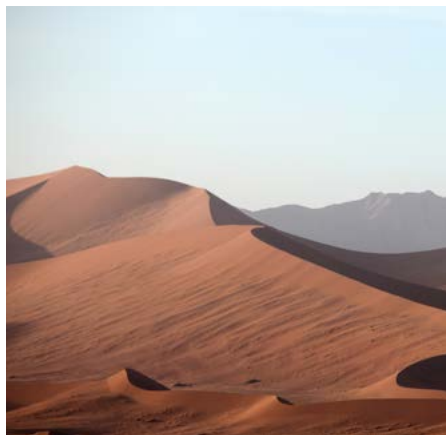


CAVES: *With risks of hypothermia, falling, flooding, falling rocks and physical exhaustion, caves are difficult environments to explore.*

NationalGeographic.com: [Cave Exploration](#)

MysteriousUniverse.org: [The Lost Forest World of the World's Largest Cave](#)

Slate.com: [Cave Exploration Could Help Fight a Major Medical Problem](#)



DESERTS: *About 33 percent of the land on Earth's surface is desert. There are hot deserts and cold deserts (Antarctica is a cold one). Exploration in these harsh environments is very dangerous.*

WorldAtlas.com:

[10 Largest Deserts in the World](#)

DiscoverMagazine.com: [The Last Unexplored Place on Earth](#)

CNN.com: [Sahara Explorer Taming the Desert](#)

PUTTING ON A SHOW

Throughout history, comedy has been an important part of human existence. People simply love to laugh. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Variety shows, or vaudeville, were a way for people to gather and share a comedic experience. Comedy and vaudeville play a big part in *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Through a series of fortunate events, Mr. Popper's penguins find themselves as stars at a local theater that showcases touring performers as a part of the vaudeville circuit.

Vaudeville shows, or "Variety" as they were called in the early years, were popular in America starting in the 1800s and developed from the style of British "music halls," where singers, actors, dancers, musicians, acrobats, animal acts and other performers would present a dozen or more short skits one after the other to create a full evening's entertainment. In the early days, much of the show's content included indecent or even obscene skits, similar to the acts that would appear in "burlesque," a style of show that frequently featured scantily-clad women in venues that served alcohol and attracted a fair share of troublemakers. Benjamin Franklin Keith and his business partner, E. F. Albee, are credited with legitimizing vaudeville when they assumed ownership of the Bijou Theater in Boston in 1882 (then called the Parlor Opera House) and produced a series of variety acts that came to be known as "vaudeville suitable for all audiences." Tony Pastor, a producer who was a former circus ringmaster, banned alcohol from his theaters and would not allow any inappropriate acts to perform. The popularity of the new vaudeville format grew as parents found that they could enjoy the shows with their children. The name "vaudeville" most likely came from the French "voix de ville" or "voice of the city," and was used as a way to separate the new, family-friendly style of productions from their "Variety" predecessors that still carried the reputation of adult-only entertainment.

Cities all across America soon had large theaters that were part of a nation-wide circuit that would host traveling shows for a brief period of time before they headed out to the next city. Martin Beck, one of the first vaudeville producers, managed one of the most famous of these circuits, The Orpheum Circuit, which included Seattle. Alexander Pantages owned more than 30 vaudeville theaters across the country that would regularly present these touring shows, including the Pantages Theatres in Seattle and Tacoma.

When the content of vaudeville shows was adapted in the late 1800s to provide a more wholesome and family-friendly environment, the addition of animal acts was a way for producers to appeal to children as well as adults. Animal acts often came from circuses, where trained seals, dogs, and even horses would show off their routines between the comedy and musical presentations. The famous Ringling brothers of Wisconsin are believed to be the first to present a "dog and pony show" in their small town by traveling around the neighborhood to feature their dog's tricks and to offer pony rides to the town kids for a small ticket price. These small "dog and pony shows" were easy additions to a vaudeville show's evening line-up and added appeal to the younger audience members.



GEO. W. MIETT'S DOGS

15 PERFORMING DOGS

Now Playing the Western Vaudeville Time. Booked Until May, 1908



Promotional poster for the Sandow Trocadero Vaudevilles (1894), showing dancers, clowns, trapeze artists and costumed dogs

SOURCES*:

BroadwayScene.com: [Vaudeville: America's Vibrant Art Form with a Short Lifetime](#)

TheaterSeatStore.com: [An Annotated History of Vaudeville Theater](#)

Wikipedia.org: [Vaudeville](#)

SeattleTheatreHistory.org: [The Early Seattle Theatre Project](#)

PBS.org: [About Vaudeville](#)

*All active links can be found on the interactive AAG, free for download at [sct.org](#)

Even in the early days of vaudeville and circuses, concerns about animal welfare were present and many producers were criticized for the way the animals were treated. Animal welfare activists and organizations routinely protested against these shows and even urged some local authorities to pass regulations forcing animal trainers to prove that they were practicing approved methods for the care and treatment of their animals.

The popularity of vaudeville shows began to diminish in the mid-1900s largely due to the increase of variety shows that were broadcast on radio and the ever-increasing popularity of movies. Many of vaudeville's most famous performers found a new home on radio and in films, including Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, and performers like Bob Hope, George Burns, Fannie Brice, Judy Garland, Will Rogers, James Cagney, Ethel Merman and many others. Ma Rainey, the "Mother of the Blues," also got her start as a performer in the vaudeville circuit. As television developed, variety shows became very popular and many of them followed the same format of the earlier vaudeville presentations. *The Ed Sullivan Show* on CBS, and *The Hollywood Palace* on ABC, and celebrities like Dean Martin, Judy Garland and Red Skelton hosted shows that would feature comedians, singers, musicians and even animal acts in short segments, just like audiences would have seen some 50 years earlier in large, majestic vaudeville theaters.

TUESDAY WEEK MAIN 0212		MOORE THEATRE		TWICE DAILY 230 & 615	
Orpheum Circuit					
MATINEE 5:00 VAUDEVILLE NIGHTS 8:15					
2:30	Overture	8:15			
2:35	Topics of the Day	8:20			
2:45	Koroli Brothers	8:30			
3:04	Simpson and Dean	8:49			
3:18	Cressy and Dayne	9:03			
3:42	Beyan and Flint	9:27			
3:49	Bailey and Cowan	9:34			
4:07	Ivan Bankoff	9:52			
4:24	Besseye Clifford	10:09			
4:33	The Pathé News	10:18			

OCT 4 1922

Ad from *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* for performances at the Moore Theatre, 1922

VAUDEVILLE IN SEATTLE

Seattle had its share of venues that would host vaudeville performances, including some that are no longer standing, like The Palomar (which continued presenting shows until the early 1950s), The Empress Theatre (which, in 1913, hosted a popular British stage performer named Charlie Chaplin just a few years before he gained international celebrity for his work in silent films), John Considine's Orpheum Theatre, Alexander Pantages' Crystal Theatre and his Pantages Theatre, and John Cort's Grand Opera House, which opened in 1900. Cort later moved to New York City where he built the Cort Theater on Broadway, which is still in operation today. Cort was one of the founding members of the Fraternal Order of Eagles in Seattle whose national headquarters at Seventh and Union included a grand ballroom and stage that would frequently present shows from the vaudeville circuit. That building is now home to Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre (ACT). Other historic theaters still open in Seattle today include The Moore Theatre, The Paramount Theatre, The 5th Avenue Theatre, Nippon Kan Theatre and Washington Hall.

Orpheum marquee in Seattle listing a mix of film and vaudeville performances, 1932. On the right side of the picture you can see the window of "Seattle's Own Drug Store," Bartell Drugs



WORDS AND PHRASES THAT MIGHT BE NEW TO YOU

Greetings from the South Pole. – the place farthest south on earth

72 Days ago we set sail from London on a 15,000 mile voyage to Antarctica.

voyage – trip

Antarctica – continent surrounding the South Pole

They're rather cheeky little fellows and we've all become quite friendly.

– playfully sassy

I'm a Himalayan climber – mountain range on the border between India and Tibet

Stretching like a giant's map unfurled – unfolded

Knowing I could plummet – drop

Reach the summit like a fearless mountaineer

summit – top

mountaineer – person who climbs mountains

They walk erect like little men. – upright on two legs

It's no wonder this vast continent has never been inhabited by man!

continent – large area of land surrounded by sea. There are seven continents on Earth: Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Australia, Europe, North America and South America.

inhabited – lived on

Don't take my bloomers from the laundry stack – old-fashioned underwear

Don't make a muddle keep it neat and clean – tangled mess

I think Captain Cook will cause quite a stir, don't you? – lot of excitement

The poor thing must be peckish after such a long journey. – hungry

Don't leave the house when looking like a scruff – untidy mess

Whoops, butter flippers! – clumsy. This is a play on the phrase "butterfingers," which describes someone who drops things.

Ain't it quaint

ain't – isn't

quaint – charmingly old-fashioned



The continent of Antarctica

He's a screw gone loose – strange

There goes Mr. Popper on a penguin promenade – walk

There goes Mr. Popper an eccentric man – odd

There goes Mr. Popper for his morning walk, round the bend with his new friend – around the curve in the road

Our own Mr. Treadbottom of the Bureau of Navigation of Lakes, Rivers, Ponds, and Streams, has just come in. – sailing

I'll put an SOS call out to explorers around the world immediately. – call for help. The term SOS came from the letters S and O in Morse code, a system of radio communication that uses combinations of short and long signals, called dots and dashes, to represent letters of the alphabet and numbers. Three dots, three dashes, three dots was an easy to remember the emergency signal, and it is the letters S, O and S.

Mayday, mayday. – emergency. It comes from the French words m'aider, which means "help me."



President Barack Obama in a tuxedo

Poorly penguin, not on form.

poorly – sickly

on form – as it should be

Peak penguin growing weak. – sickly pale

Dear Mr. Popper, we here at London Zoo, have heard of your plight from Admiral Drake. – difficult situation

Tobogganing in twos is so much fun. – sledding. A toboggan is a long narrow sled curved upward at the front and back.

He and Greta were now inseparable, and the picture of perfect penguin health. – impossible to keep apart

It's jolly hard work all by yourself. – very

I don't suppose they'd need costumes – they're already wearing black and white tuxedos. – men's formal suits

Popper this is your big break – forget the audition, your penguins are on in five.

break – chance

on in five – onstage in five minutes

Ladies and gentlemen, with your kind indulgence we are going to try out a little novelty number tonight.

indulgence – permission

novelty number – unusual performance

And now to come to terms. – agree about payment

If you're not impressed you're talking twaddle. – nonsense

God almighty blessed them with the means to entertain. – ability

The penguins marched on and upstaged a world-famous Austrian tenor – stole attention from

My conjuring tricks will amaze ya – magic

Prepare for my greatest illusion – trick

Showstoppers – something so good the audience stops the show with their excited response

JUMP START

IDEAS FOR THINGS TO DO, WONDER ABOUT, TALK ABOUT OR WRITE ABOUT BEFORE OR AFTER YOU SEE MR. POPPERS PENGUINS!

When Mr. Popper paints, the colors remind him of places he'd like to see. What colors make you think of places you want to explore?

What unusual animal would you like to spend time with?

Balance a small stuffed toy on top of your feet, the way penguins balance their eggs, and try to walk across the room without dropping it. Try different walking speeds. Have a race.

What's the last new thing you tried? What's the next new thing you want to try?

Write or draw a story about a penguin who can fly.

If a penguin showed up at your house what would you do to make it comfortable?

Have a penguin conversation with a friend, using only sounds, your faces, your wings and the word "ork."

Draw what you imagine Antarctica looks like under all the ice and snow.

Put on a talent show with your family or friends, with each person doing a different kind of act—singing, dancing, comedy, magic, drawing, storytelling, reciting a poem, origami—any talent you have.

What would you do if you saw someone walking a penguin down the street? What's the strangest animal you can imagine someone having as a pet?

Tell Captain Cook's version of the story.

Draw a home you could live in to protect yourself from the cold and wind if you moved to Antarctica.

Draw a comfortable and fun home for penguins

Write and record a radio show describing your adventure in an imaginary land.

Make a list of things you want to do to help the environment. Share it with your family and ask them to help.

What would the Poppers lives be like if Admiral Drake did not take them back to Antarctica with the penguins?

Make up a song Captain Cook and Greta would sing about living with the Poppers.

Make paper bag penguin puppets with some friends. Have them do an acrobatic act like Popper's penguins.

Mr. Popper admires Admiral Drake's adventures. Whose adventures do you admire?

Tell the story if Admiral Drake had sent a whale, a seal or an albatross to Mr. Popper.

Write a story about what happens when the Poppers and penguins get to Antarctica.

Why does Admiral Drake send Captain Cook to Mr. Popper if he knows it's not the right place for a penguin?

Put on some music and dance like a penguin.

If you could explore anywhere in the world, where would it be? Make a list of what you'd pack for a trip there.

Look at a map of the world. How close can you get to Antarctica from Seattle traveling only by land? What states and countries do you go through?

DRAMA IN ACTION

This is a customized *Mr. Popper's Penguins* Dramatic Connection Workshop exercise for you to try.



EXERCISE: PENGUIN MARCH

GRADES: K and up

TIME: 15 - 30 minutes

SET-UP: This exercise works best in an open space.

SUPPLIES: None

In Mr. Popper's Penguins the loveable Mr. Popper dreams of a life as a polar explorer. One day he is surprised by a unique gift sent by polar explorer Admiral Drake all the way from Antarctica—a penguin! In this exercise, students will learn how to embody animals and explore environments using movement, voices and facial expressions

INSTRUCTIONS:

Have students stand in a line on one side of a room. Make sure there are no physical obstacles in the way, as students will be crossing the room from one side to the other.

Stand on the other side of the room and declare, "I am an emperor penguin and to get to me you must (*fill in the blank*)."

 Each fill in the blank portion should define an environment, animal and a kind of movement.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- To get to me you must slide across an ice floe like a seal.
- To get to me you must swim in a pod like orca whales.
- To get to me you must hop across a rocky field like a family of penguins.

As students cross the room, ask them to think carefully about the following: How should they use their bodies to depict the movement of the animal? Do those animals move low to the ground? Slide on their bellies? Or use all four legs to move? What sounds does the animal make? Don't forget to use facial expressions. Think about how the conditions of the environment affect how those animals move.

Once all students have crossed the room, move to the other side of the room and have students cross back to you using a new method of movement and environment.

When students are familiar with the game, select a student to be the new emperor penguin who tells the class how to cross. Allow every student to have a chance deciding how the class will cross.

SOME ANIMALS THAT LIVE IN ANTARCTICA TO RESEARCH: emperor penguins, Weddell seals, wandering albatross, elephant seal, orca whales, snowy sheathbill, leopard seal, krill

SOME ANTARCTIC ENVIRONMENTS: glaciers, ice fields, icebergs, snowy mountains, ice floes, ice walls, moss-covered rocks, rocky mountain peaks, ocean

Bring the SCT experience back to your classroom! Expand your experience of watching *Mr. Popper's Penguins* with a Dramatic Connection Workshop all about the production. Engage your students' bodies, voices and imaginations while deepening their knowledge about the themes, characters, historical context and production elements of the play. Dramatic Connection Workshops can occur either before or after seeing the play, and can be held at SCT or at your location. To learn more about our outreach programming and to reserve a workshop for your class, contact educationoutreach@sct.org

REPORTING FROM...

Mr. Popper's Penguins begins with a dramatic report from the explorer Admiral Drake. Replace the underlined sections below with your own explorer name, and other ideas that match the environment your explorer is reporting from.

Greetings from the South Pole.

My name is Admiral Drake, famed explorer,
and today I speak to you from the bottom of the world.

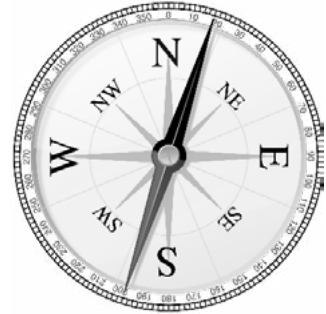
Temperatures here are well below zero.

Snow and ice stretches as far as the eye can see.

But in spite of the cold,

my crew is in high spirits thanks to the penguins.

And golly what funny creatures they are.



Greetings from the _____.

My name is _____, famed explorer,

and today I speak to you from the _____.

Temperatures here are _____.

_____ stretches as far as the eye can see.

But in spite of the _____,

my crew is in high spirits thanks to _____.

And golly what _____ creatures they are.

Your explorer could report from:

The Sahara Desert

The Amazon Rain Forest

The Himalayan Mountains

Under the Pacific Ocean

Your own imaginary land

Your home

- Trade this story with a friend's. Write a letter to each other's explorer explaining why you'd like to adopt that animal.
- Draw the animal.
- Find the explorer's location on a world map. If it's an imaginary place, find where you think it might be.
- Continue writing your explorer's report.

THE TRUTH ABOUT ME!

Penguins are funny birds. In some ways they can seem more like fish. When Mr. Popper takes his penguin for a walk, it gets mistaken for all sorts of different animals, including an anteater and a parrot!

Below we have pictures of a penguin, a parrot and a goldfish. Look how their circles partly overlap.

Around the pictures we have facts that are true for at least one of the creatures, and symbols to represent the facts. If the fact is true of just one animal, draw the symbol in the part of their circle that doesn't overlap at all. If it is true of two of the animals, then draw it where their two circles overlap. If the fact is true of all three, then draw that fact's symbol in the part of the picture where all three circles overlap.

Has feathers



Likes to swim



Has hidden ears



Walks on two legs



Breathes air



Lays eggs



Can fly



Loves cold weather



Brightly colored



Often kept as a pet



Has scales



Black and white



Lives near the South Pole



Breathes underwater



BOOKLIST



FOR CHILDREN:

FICTION:

And Tango Makes Three

Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

A Bear Called Paddington

Michael Bond

A Goofy Guide to Penguins (A Toon Book)

Jean-Luc Coudray and Philippe Coudray

I Won a What?

Audrey Vernick

Lulu and the Duck in the Park

Hilary McKay

Sergio Makes a Splash

Edel Rodriguez

Sophie Scott Goes South

Alison Lester

One Cool Friend

Toni Buzzeo

Enamored with the penguins at the zoo, Elliot asks to bring one home. His distracted father thinks Elliot means a toy penguin from the gift shop, but Elliot has other ideas! (A Caldecott Honor book)

NONFICTION:

Penguin Day: A Family Story

Nic Bishop

One Day on Our Blue Planet...in the Antarctic

Ella Bailey

In the latest volume of Ella Bailey's picture book exploration of the daily lives of baby animals, we head to the ice shelf to meet a young penguin chick. What do she and her family eat? How many brothers and sisters does she have? What do they do for fun?

FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN:

NONFICTION:

Antarctic Antics and More Hilarious Animal Stories (DVD)

Scholastic Storybook Treasures

Lost and Found (DVD)

Megan Dowd Lambert

Based on the picture book by Oliver Jeffers, this award-winning animated film follows a boy who finds a penguin on his doorstep and returns him home to the South Pole – only to discover that home for them both is with each other.

Lives of the Explorers: Discoveries, Disasters (And What the Neighbors Thought)

Kathleen Krull

Ashley Bryan's Puppets: Making Something From Everything

Ashley Bryan

Shackleton's Journey

William Grill

Young, up-and-coming illustrator William Grill weaves a detailed visual narrative of Shackleton's journey to Antarctica. Grill's beautiful use of colored pencils and vibrant hues, and his impeccably researched drawings, rich with detail, effortlessly evoke the adventure and excitement that surrounded the expedition.

WEBSITES*:

LIVE PENGUIN CAMERAS:

[Monterey Bay Aquarium](#)

[San Diego Zoo](#)

Booklist prepared by Lauren Mayer, Seattle Public Library

*All active links can be found on the interactive AAG, free for download at sct.org

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Seattle Children's Theatre

201 Thomas St.
Seattle, WA 98109

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 1561

UP NEXT AT SCT:
JANUARY 18 - MARCH 4, 2018

