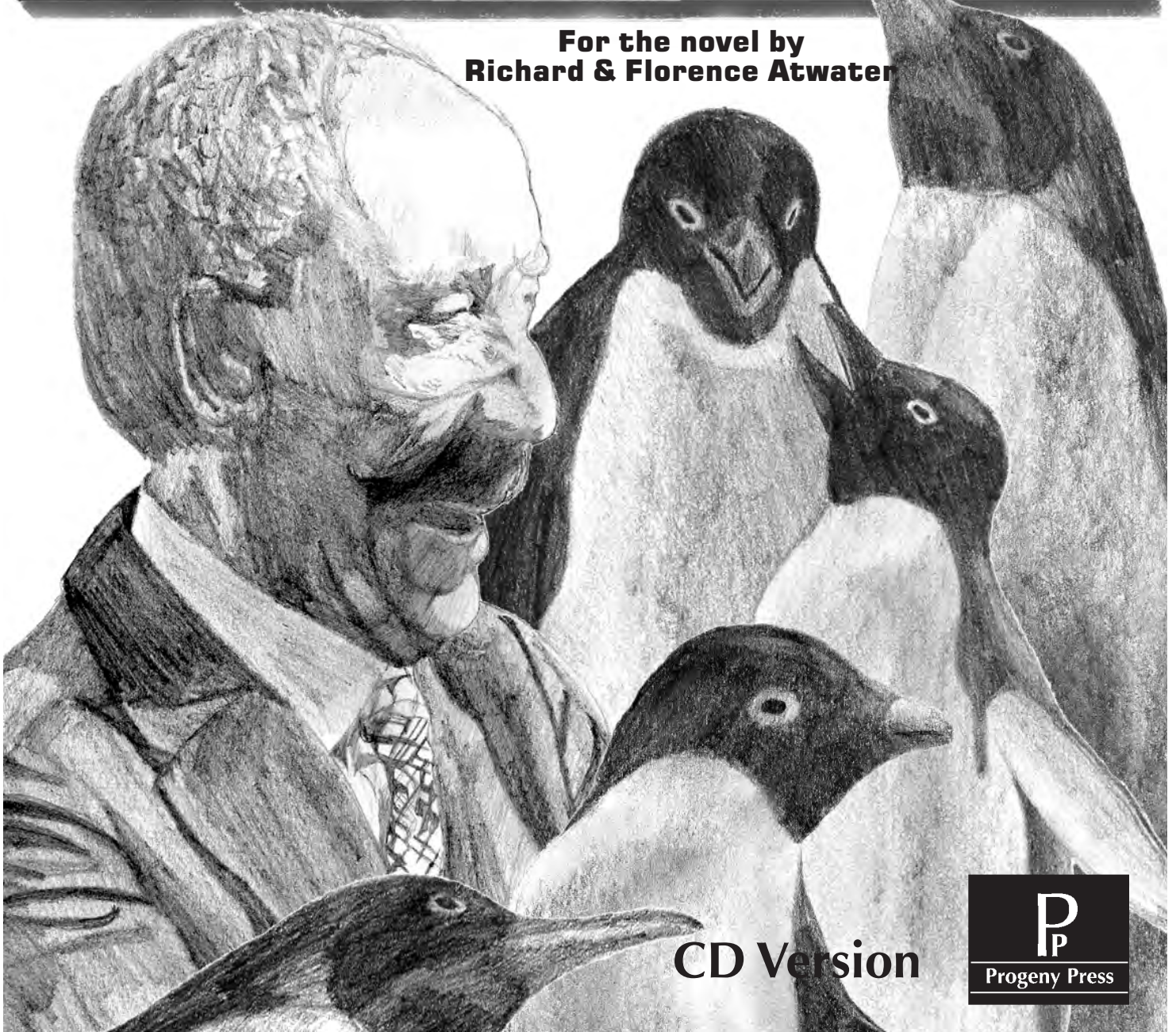


Mr. Popper's Penguins Study Guide

by Rebecca Gilleland

For the novel by
Richard & Florence Atwater



CD Version



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Mr. Popper's Penguins Study Guide

A Progeny Press Study Guide

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Synopsis

Mr. Popper lives a sensible life as a house painter, but he often wishes he had seen the world before settling down—particularly the North and South Poles. As a busy summer season of work ends, Mr. Popper prepares to spend his off-season reading about the Arctic regions. He even writes to his favorite explorer, Admiral Drake. But he does not expect the answer that Admiral Drake sends—special delivery. With the arrival of a penguin, Captain Cook, life at the Popper's will never be the same!

When Captain Cook starts to get sick from loneliness, a zoo sends *its* lonely penguin, and now Mr. Popper has two! Soon Captain Cook and his new mate, Greta, lay eggs, and 10 new little penguins join the crowd. Complications set in as Mr. Popper, who doesn't have the money for roast beef or ice cream, starts buying shrimp for 12 penguins. Then he has the furnace moved and a freezing unit installed in the basement.

There is only one solution Mr. Popper can think of to pay the debts they owe: He'll begin a performing penguin act! So begins the family's adventures across the country, living in hotels, performing on vaudeville stages, and making enough money to pay their debts. But travelling can be exhausting, and near the end of their tour, Mr. Popper makes a terrible mistake. He takes them to the wrong theater, the penguins frolic with the seals, and chaos follows.

Luckily, as Mr. Popper and his penguins languish in jail, Admiral Drake arrives and rescues them. The family heads for home, but the story isn't over. Admiral Drake offers to take the penguins to the North Pole, and invites Mr. Popper to accompany them. Thus, one adventure rolls to a close as another begins for Mr. Popper and his performing penguins.

Chapters XIII–XVI: “Money Worries,” “Mr. Greenbaum,” “Popper’s Performing Penguins,” “On the Road”

Vocabulary:

Read the following sentences from the book, and fill in the blank with the letter beside the meaning that matches the usage or meaning of the underlined word.

1. “What these penguins like to do most,” said Mr. Popper, “is to drill like an army, to watch Nelson and Columbus get in a fight with each other, and to climb up steps and toboggan down.”

to drill means to _____.

- a. make a hole
 - b. work hard
 - c. march in formation
 - d. fight
2. So they raced each other all the way, and in the last block they tried to pass each other, and one of the fenders got torn off.
a fender is _____.
- a. door trim
 - b. a parking meter
 - c. a sun visor
 - d. side panel of a car, covering a wheel

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3. We are going to let you see a rehearsal of the Popper Performing Penguins instead.

a rehearsal is a _____.

- a. practice
- b. film or tape
- c. speech
- d. song

4. The penguins began to drill very nicely, wheeling and changing their formations with great precision until Mrs. Popper stopped playing in the middle of the piece.

to do something with precision is to be _____.

- a. quick
- b. exact and careful
- c. energetic
- d. slow and boring

5. "I don't mind telling you, Mr. Popper, that I think you've got something absolutely unique in those birds."

if something is unique it is _____.

- a. funny and amusing
- b. common
- c. part of a group
- d. rare, one of a kind

6. "I'd like to predict that your penguins will soon be packing the biggest theaters from Oregon to Maine."

If someone predicts something, they have _____.

- a. announced what has already happened
- b. said a prayer
- c. announced what will happen in the future
- d. mocked it

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7. "And you must remember, my love," said Mr. Popper, who had never before been out of Stillwater, in spite of his dreams of distant countries, "that travel is very broadening."

If something is broadening, it is _____.

- a. full of adventure
- b. educational and enlightening
- c. tiring and long
- d. expensive

8. From the start, the penguins were a riotous success.

If something is riotous it is _____.

- a. amusing and loud
- b. dangerous
- c. complete
- d. calm and sure

9. It was here that the penguins added a little novelty number of their own to the program.

When something is a novelty, it is _____.

- a. a toy
- b. unimportant
- c. very important
- d. unusual

10. And whenever they appeared, the more they interfered with the other acts on the program, the better the audiences liked them.

To interfere with something is to _____.

- a. interrupt, bother
- b. cheer for
- c. stop it
- d. avoid it

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Questions:

1. What problem is the family facing in these chapters?
2. What solution does Mr. Popper come up with?
3. What three things do they teach the penguins to do?
4. How does Mr. Popper get a job for the penguins?
5. What happens between the two taxis that take the Poppers to the railway station?

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Think About the Story:

6. How does Mr. Popper reassure Mrs. Popper that being out of school for 10 weeks is all right for the children? Do you think it is a good reason for missing school? Why or why not?

7. Why do audiences seem to like it when the penguins interfere with other acts?

8. An *idiom* is a saying common among a certain group of people, usually using word pictures to express another thought or idea. Generally the meaning of the saying is very different from the actual words of the saying. Some examples of idioms are:

“Turn over a new leaf.” (Meaning: start over or make a change in your life for the better.)

“It’s raining cats and dogs.” (Meaning: the rain is coming down hard.)

“Keep your fingers crossed.” (Meaning: hope for the best.)

At the beginning of Chapter XVI, the authors write,

Then Mrs. Popper had to scrub and polish and straighten the whole place, for she was much too good a housekeeper to leave everything at sixes and sevens while the Poppers were away.

What words in the sentence are part of an idiom? What do you think the idiom means? (Use the context of the sentence to figure it out.)

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Dig Deeper:

9. Mr. Popper involved his entire family in the solution to their lack of money. Read Ecclesiastes 4:12, Proverbs 17:17, and Psalm 133:1. How do these verses apply to Mr. Popper's solution for his family's money problems? Has your family ever had to work together to achieve something or solve a problem? What was it and what did you all do?

10. How did Mr. Popper decide what kinds of tricks to have the penguins perform? How would this make learning the tricks easier for the penguins and for the Poppers?

11. What things do you like to do and are you good at? Do you like to listen to people or talk to people? Figure out the fastest way to do something? Write or read? Fix things? Draw? Cook? Sew? Garden or work with animals? Under the heading "Things I Like and at Which I Am Good," make a list of at least five things that you like to do and that you do well. Under the heading "Chores at Home/School That Use These Talents," write several ideas about ways in which you could use your talents to help your family, school, or church. (For example, Do you always want to know what everyone is doing? Maybe you could help keep a class or family calendar.) Under the heading "Adult Jobs That Use These Talents," write down several ideas for jobs that use your talents. (For instance, do you like to try to make certain everyone understands exactly what you mean and sometimes get into arguments because of it? Maybe you would make a good attorney or teacher. Do you always want to know what everyone is doing? Maybe you could be a reporter.)

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Things I Like and
at Which I Am Good

Chores at Home/School
That Use These Talents

Adult Jobs That
Use These Talents

12. After the Poppers perform for Mr. Greenbaum, he tells them, “Your act is a sensation. And the way you helped out my friend the manager, here, shows that you’re real troupers—the kind we need in show business.” What did Mr. Greenbaum mean that the Poppers were “real troupers”—what did they do?

13. Read Colossians 3:23, 24. According to these verses, how are we supposed to act when we are working? Do you think these verses apply to such things as schoolwork and chores?

Although the Poppers were not necessarily trying to obey the Bible, were their actions somewhat like these verses? Did anything good happen to them because they acted like this?

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Optional Activity:

Try to find music recordings of the songs that Mrs. Popper played or the sheet music to play it or sing it. Is this the kind of music entertainers use today? Do you like it? If you were to choose music for an act like this today, what music would you choose?

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3. A policeman arrives at their door and he says he expects to find at least a lion from the way the serviceman yelled.
4. The penguin bites the phone cord while he talks, Mr. Popper gets transferred from person to person, and the connection is so bad that they never get his name correct or understand what he wants. As a result he never does get a license for his penguin.
5. She thinks he will be quite a help around the house.
6. To take Captain Cook out for a walk. He wants to look as nice as Captain Cook.

Think About It:

7. He doesn't actually believe Mr. Popper, or he doesn't really care, but he wants it to be a good story for the newspaper readers.
8. The author begins Chapter V saying, "The next day was quite eventful. . . . First there was the service man and then the policeman and then the trouble about the license." Answers will vary, but the author certainly intended to make the reader curious about what was going to happen, and so make the reader want to read more, by hinting that trouble was coming.

9. The last sentence says, "The man who kept the barbershop had, up to this time, been a very good friend of Mr. Popper's." The sentence hints that something is about to happen that will make the barber *not* a very good friend of Mr. Popper's. The phrase "up to this time," in the middle of the sentence, shows that there will be a change *after* "this time."

Dig Deeper:

10. Yes, he is proud. Answers will vary. Pride is a delight in your own actions, a reasonable or an overblown self-respect.
11. a. B; b. G; c. B; d. G; e. B; f. B; g. G; h. G; i. B; j. B; k. G; l. G
12. Answers will vary. Many of the verses above that discuss pride in a negative way also mention arrogance, not listening to advice, quarrelsomeness, and mocking or putting people down. Bad pride seems to be something that looks down on people, that makes a person think he or she is better or more important than someone else. We can know it is bad pride if it makes us feel someone else is stupid or unimportant. Good pride often is pride in someone or something else, or makes us want to help someone else or use our talents to improve someone or something.
13. No, the children are not polite or respectful to the police officer. When the police officer asks Mr. Popper what he does for a living, Janie interrupts her father and answers for him. When the police officer will not come in, Bill laughs at him and says he is afraid, mocking him. Bill also embarrasses his father by saying that his mother sometimes says that his father's hair looks like a lion's mane.
14. See also Matthew 15:16–19. We should let wisdom guide our speech because we will have to give an account of our words to God. We should not say bad, disrespectful, or mean things because God should be in our hearts and we should concentrate on and speak what is true, right, and kind. Answers may vary about the way the Poppers acted. They did not act terribly, but they were not as respectful to each other as they should have been. Actually, the police officer was the most respectful and nicest person during their conversation.

Chapters IX–XII: "In the Barber Shop," "Shadows," "Greta," "More Mouths to Feed"

Vocabulary:

1. *spectacle*: show; 2. *mopey*: sad; 3. *stupor*: numbness; 4. *solemn*: serious; 5. *plunge*: dive; 6. *toboggan*: slide; 7. *aquarium*: water tank

Questions:

1. Captain Cook climbs all three flights of steps and then slides down all three flights with Mr. Popper getting pulled along down the steps behind him. Mr. Popper thinks because penguins do not have wings, they like to get high in the air any way they can, and penguins like to toboggan on their stomachs.
2. He sits in his refrigerator; he will not eat, he sulks, he sleeps, and he bites. Answers will vary as to the reason why, but should mention loneliness or sadness.
3. Mr. Popper writes a letter to Dr. Smith, curator of the Mammoth City Aquarium, who writes back that he also has a penguin who is failing, and since it may be loneliness, he is sending her to Mr. Popper. When the penguins are united, they recover.
4. He has a freezing plant installed in the basement and the furnace is moved up to the living room. Mr. Popper's solution may be more tidy in that the family can now use the living room, but it still causes a lot of disruption and probably is not what Mrs. Popper wanted.
5. The penguins have 10 babies.