

# **Mr. Popper's Penguins Study Guide**

**Mr. Popper's Penguins by Richard and Florence  
Atwater**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Mr. Popper's Penguins Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 and 2.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 3 and 4.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5 and 6.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 and 8.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9 and 10.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 and 12.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13 and 14.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 15 and 16.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 17 and 18.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 19 and 20.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>



# Plot Summary

Mr. Popper's Penguins is the story of a house painter named Mr. Popper who is gifted a penguin from a South Pole explorer. One penguin turns into twelve penguins, and Mr. Popper puts on a stage show with the penguins to help pay for their upkeep.

Mr. Popper is a dreamer who loves tales of adventure, particularly about the Poles. He writes a letter of praise to Admiral Drake, a famous explorer of the Poles, and Drake sends Mr. Popper a penguin in the mail. Mr. Popper names him Captain Cook after another explorer. Mr. Popper next gets a grumpy service man to drill air holes in the family icebox so that Captain Cook has a cold place to nest. Captain Cook is very inquisitive, and he sticks his nose into all corners of the house.

Despite his cold icebox nest, Captain Cook becomes mopey and despondent, falling ill. Mr. Popper writes to the curator of an aquarium for help, and the curator responds by sending Mr. Popper another penguin, figuring that maybe the cause of the sickness is loneliness. This second penguin is named Greta. Sure enough, Captain Cook improves with company, and soon the two penguins have babies, ten in all, for a total of twelve penguins in the house. Mr. Popper converts the entire basement to an icy environment with a freezing machine.

The freezing machine and all the related expenses of feeding and housing the penguins prove too much for the family's finances. Mr. Popper has the idea to start a stage show with the penguins. The Poppers take the time to train the penguins, coming up with a three-act show: marching, a "boxing match" starring two penguins, and climbing (and then sliding down) ladders. The Poppers take their penguins to a local theater, where the owner, Mr. Greenbaum, loves the act and decides to hire them for a nationwide tour.

The family enjoys touring the country, and the penguins become a sensation. But Spring is coming, and the penguins are getting restless. In a final stop on the tour, in New York City, the Poppers travel to the wrong theater and disrupt a show that's going on. Mr. Popper and the penguins are arrested for disturbing the peace, and they spend a short time in jail.

Admiral Drake arrives from an expedition to bail Mr. Popper out of jail. Drake wants to take the penguins to the North Pole to start a new breed and keep the government personnel there company. At the same time, a movie man, Mr. Klein, offers Mr. Popper a great deal of money to feature the penguins in movies. Mr. Popper, figuring Hollywood would take a toll on the penguins, chooses to give the penguins to Drake. However, Drake wants Mr. Popper to accompany him as well. Getting his Arctic adventure at last, Mr. Popper leaves his family to establish a penguin colony in the North Pole.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Chapter 1: Mr. Popper is a house painter living in Stillwater. He often strays from his work to fantasize about exotic locations and adventures. He has never been outside of Stillwater, and though he has a good job and a good wife with two children, Bill and Janie, he longs for something more. He particularly loves reading and watching movies about the Arctic and Antarctica. Winter is coming, and that means the season for house painting is over. Mr. Popper has just ended his last job, and returns home covered in paint. Mr. Popper does not look forward to a long, listless winter with little to do but sit around the house. He volunteers to remodel the bathroom, but Mrs. Popper rejects the offer, because Mr. Popper had already painted the bathroom four times previously. For her part, Mrs. Popper worries about the lack of income, and she resolves to get by by having beans for dinner every day, and eschewing roast beef and ice cream.

Chapter 2: Having just ended his last job, Mr. Popper curls up at home with a book, called Antarctic Adventures. Mrs. Popper gently ribs him for spending so much time reading about the South Pole. Mr. Popper tells her about a movie he saw, featuring real-life Admiral Drake and his expedition to the South Pole. Mr. Popper further tells Mrs. Popper about the wondrous creatures living there, the penguins. Mr. Popper marvels at their ability to walk upright like little men. He also states they are very intelligent creatures. Mrs. Popper cringes at the thought of a dirty big bird in the house, preferring their nice and tidy goldfish for a pet.

Hearing that it's the twenty-ninth, Mr. Popper rushes to the radio and tunes to a broadcast from Admiral Drake himself. Drake addresses Mr. Popper by name and promises a surprise. Mr. Popper confesses that he had previously written Drake a letter, expressing admiration for the penguins. Husband and wife wonder what the surprise is, though practical Mrs. Popper is more interested in her meeting the next day for the Ladies' Aid and Missionary Society.

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Chapter 1 sets the scene and provides necessary exposition. Mr. Popper is a dreamer who is constantly fantasizing about visiting the polar regions. He is faced instead with a dreary, boring winter at home with nothing to do, and with nothing but beans to eat for dinner. There is immediately a conflict between what Mr. Popper desires, and what he has.

In Chapter 2, Mr. Popper rushes to the radio, and Mrs. Popper listens with much surprise as Admiral Drake refers to Mr. Popper in his broadcast. Possessed of no dramatic irony, the reader is surprised right along with Mrs. Popper. In this case, the



withholding of a crucial bit of information until later—the fact that Mr. Popper wrote to Admiral Drake—preserves some dramatic interest for the reader.

Chapter 2 ends on a cliffhanger, with Admiral Drake promising a "surprise." The reader, along with the Poppers, is left to guess at the nature of this surprise. Also interesting are the opposite natures of the Poppers, with Mr. Popper the idealist and Mrs. Popper the practical realist. Mr. Popper's obsession with the penguins is a simple foreshadowing of the penguins' later arrival.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Chapter 3: Full of excitement with the prospect of Drake's surprise, Mr. Popper hardly sleeps that night. The next morning, he is already bored from having nothing to do, and he sits in a chair to read more of the book *Antarctic Adventures*. Just as he is settled in, the doorbell rings. There's a postman at the door with the biggest package Mr. Popper has ever seen. The box has instructions to "Unpack at Once" and "Keep Cool." Mr. Popper figures it is the package from Admiral Drake. He opens the box and hears a honking sound ("Ork!"). Startled, he rips the rest of the package open and discovers an Antarctic penguin. Mr. Popper is delighted.

The curious beast immediately begins to waddle around and inspect the rooms of the house. Mr. Popper fills the bathtub with cold water and the penguin takes a dip. Bill and Janie, the children, discover their father and the penguin and are similarly delighted and surprised. When asked by the children what the penguin's name is, Mr. Popper hears the penguin's cries ("Gook! Gook!") and settles on the imitative Cook, as in Captain Cook the explorer.

Chapter 4: Mrs. Popper discovers her family, and Mr. Popper introduces Captain Cook. Captain Cook leaves the bathtub and begins pecking at Mrs. Popper, who strongly reproaches him. Captain Cook waddles out of the bathroom and into the kitchen, where he pecks at the handle to the refrigerator. The Poppers give him all sorts of food from the fridge, and the penguin purrs in appreciation. However, he leaves for another food source: the goldfish. Before they can stop him, Captain Cook eats the family pets. Mrs. Popper slaps Captain Cook on the head, and he waddles back into the kitchen and squeezes into the icebox. Mr. Popper resolves to renovate the icebox so that it can be a kind of nest for Captain Cook. For now, Mr. Popper takes some ice cubes and places them under Captain Cook, figuring they will be a nice substitute for the pebbles and stones from which penguins normally build their nests.

## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Chapter 3 is very much concerned with describing the appearance and mannerisms of Captain Cook the penguin in detail. As the "star of the show" and the chief interest in the novel, the penguin is given a meticulous description. The naming of the penguin, as Captain Cook, demonstrates Mr. Popper's love of exploration, with Captain Cook being a famous explorer. The authors have fun with onomatopoeic cries from the penguin, such as "Ork!" "Gook!" and "O-r-r-r-r-h."

Chapter 4 introduces a short but significant conflict with respect to Mrs. Popper's reception of the animal into her own. She had already expressed displeasure about the thought of penguins in her home, and she is now faced with the very thing she dreaded,



leading to an inevitable conflict. However, the penguin eventually warms her heart, and by the end of Chapter 4, she is firmly allied with her husband in affection for the bird.

Part of the fun of the story is its realism, despite the ridiculous situation of a penguin in middle America. This is no talking bird or magical bird, but a real-life penguin run amok in a typical home. It is clear the authors have done their homework with respect to capturing attributes of the real animal.



# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Chapter 5: Captain Cook is in the children's room, watching the children put together a jigsaw puzzle, when the doorbell rings. Mr. Popper greets a service man at the door. Mr. Popper takes him to the refrigerator, and asks him to drill air holes into the door. The service man thinks Mr. Popper is crazy, as putting air holes into the door would seem to defeat the purpose of the icebox. Mr. Popper wants to keep Captain Cook somewhat of a secret, so he does not tell him about the penguin. Mr. Popper has to pay him a handsome sum (five dollars) to get the grumpy service man to drill the holes, but he does so.

Mr. Popper next wants the service man to attach a handle inside the door, so that Captain Cook can get in and out. Now the service man really thinks Mr. Popper is crazy, and Mr. Popper again has to give the man extra money to do the job. As the service man finishes up with the handle, Captain Cook stumbles upon him and starts to peck him. The service man screams and flies out of the house. Mr. Popper trains Captain Cook how to use the newly-designed icebox.

Chapter 6: A policeman arrives at the door, and is surprised to see the penguin waddling around. The policeman is somewhat scared of the beast and won't come in. He thinks it's a giant parrot, and Mr. Popper must correct him. The policeman had been called by the scared service man to investigate, but he is totally flummoxed by the penguin, and doesn't know if it's legal to have or not. The policeman allows Mr. Popper to keep the bird, but he orders Mr. Popper to call City Hall about the proper permit.

Mr. Popper calls City Hall, and he is subjected to a good deal of bureaucratic red tape, as he is swapped from operator to operator. He tells one city employee about Captain Cook, but the confused employee believes Captain Cook is a real person at first, or that this Captain Cook wishes to obtain a permit to shoot birds. After one final time being transferred, Mr. Popper has had enough, and he decides that City Hall has no laws for or against penguins, so he will simply keep Captain Cook without a license.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

The humor of Chapter 5 derives from dramatic irony, a situation in which the reader knows more than a character or characters. In this case, the service man does not know that Mr. Popper intends to turn his icebox into a penguin nest. Without this knowledge, Mr. Popper's request for ventilation holes and an inner handle seem ridiculous. The climax of this situation comes with Captain Cook pecking at the service man, resulting in a comic egress from the house.

By contrast, Chapter 6's humor depends upon cultural context. The policeman, like the rest of Stillwater, has had no contact with penguins, and so the appearance of the



penguin elicits a good deal of comic consternation. Later in the chapter, Mr. Popper has a series of frustrations with the bureaucratic City Hall switching him from person to person, a more adult humor depending on the reader having experienced similar frustrations in their deals with government or complicated phone systems.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Chapter 7: Bill and Janie go to school, Mr. Popper is busy shaving (because he feels a surge of pride about the ownership of the penguin), and Mrs. Popper is busy in the kitchen doing dishes. This presents Captain Cook the opportunity to wander around the house. He pecks into every nook and cranny, and he finds a wide variety of junk and little knickknacks, which he brings back to the refrigerator in a nest-building instinct. Everything from a chess piece to thread to coins to a partially-consumed lollipop have been gathered. Mrs. Popper is actually grateful, since the bird has saved her effort from tidying up. Nevertheless, Mr. Popper takes Captain Cook away by placing a leash of clothesline on him and taking him out for a walk.

Chapter 8: Mr. Popper takes Captain Cook out for a walk, but Captain Cook does not like being on a leash. He fights at first, and cries out in protest, but Mr. Popper is firm, and soon Captain Cook learns to tolerate the leash. Mr. Popper has put on his finest clothes for the occasion, and the two look like very well-dressed gentlemen (with Captain Cook's coat looking like a tux). Captain Cook slides down the steps on his stomach and starts to stroll.

They walk down the street, and encounter Mrs. Callahan, a neighbor of the Poppers. Her arms are full of groceries. She is frightened by the bird, having never seen one in her life, and urges Mr. Popper to get it away from her. Mr. Popper continues on, and encounters two young news reporters. They had heard about the penguin. One of the men snaps the duo's picture for the newspaper. The other questions Mr. Popper about how he got the bird and what its name is. Mr. Popper is happy to provide more information. Mr. Popper and Captain Cook then head for the barber shop.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

In Chapter 7, Mr. Popper cleans himself up, shaving, combing his hair, and putting on his Sunday best. This indicates the great pride he feels in owning the bird, and shows that he has come into his own, that he feels empowered and purposeful. Also in Chapter 7, the authors delight in listing a great many items, paragraphs long, that Captain Cook recovers from the house. This is an instance where the huge list, while not particularly important to the plot, is interesting and valuable for its own sake, for its length and specificity.

Like the policeman, Mrs. Callahan doesn't know what to make of the bird, calling it everything from an owl to an anteater. Mrs. Callahan is another opportunity to inject some comic befuddlement into the narrative. By contrast, the young news reporters are eager to meet the penguin and get the "scoop." Mrs. Callahan and the young men are

separated by a generation gap, with the older Mrs. Callahan not as receptive to new experiences.



# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Chapter 9: Mr. Popper and Captain Cook walk into the barbershop. The barber is a good friend of Mr. Popper's. The barber is shaving an older gentleman, and Captain Cook becomes entranced by the white shaving cream, likely thinking it is ice or snow. He jumps on the counter to get a better look. The man being shaved looks up and becomes startled, fleeing out into the street. The barber yells at Mr. Popper to "take that thing" out of the shop, having little patience for something that will lose him customers. Mr. Popper quickly carries the penguin outside.

In the back of the barbershop, Captain Cook discovers a stairway leading to a roof, and he can't resist climbing it. Mr. Popper, with leash, reluctantly climbs the stairs behind him. Once Captain Cook reaches the top, he suddenly slides back down, and Mr. Popper is pulled on his stomach all the way down with him. Mr. Popper finally gets back home, and Mrs. Popper expresses regret that his fine clothes have been ruined.

Chapter 10: The next day, Mr. Popper and Captain Cook appear in the Stillwater newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*. The story is picked up by the Associated Press, and soon the pair is appearing in newspapers around the country. While Mr. Popper becomes very happy, Captain Cook gets sick, becoming listless and feverish. His coat loses its luster, and he starts to lose weight. The Poppers become worried and call a veterinarian. The veterinarian, while never having treated a penguin, can tell it is quite ill, and he prescribes some pills, though he is not hopeful of recovery. In desperation, Mr. Popper writes to Dr. Smith, curator of an aquarium in a nearby large city. Dr. Smith writes back, stating that the problem might be loneliness, and he has his own penguin that has fallen ill. Dr. Smith sends Mr. Popper his penguin in the hopes that companionship will cure both penguins.

## Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Chapter 9 relies upon broad physical humor, first with the barbershop and next with Mr. Popper tumbling down the stairs after his diving penguin. The penguin's penchant for diving down stairs sets up the future stage show in which diving is a large part of the performance. The authors use another real-life attribute of penguins—diving on their stomachs—to provide charm and humor.

Chapter 10 provides the first real crisis in the story, with the penguin falling ill and no apparent remedy in sight. The sad and worried reaction of the family shows how close they have grown to the animal. There is a similar reaction in the town, with neighbors checking in or bringing treats, showing how the once-fearful community has rallied around the now-famous penguin. The chance that penguins may not thrive (or even

survive) in a warm-weather climate is returned to at the end of the story, demonstrating that even Mr. Popper's dreams can be limited by reality.



# Chapters 11 and 12

## Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Chapter 11: Captain Cook and the new female penguin, Greta, become very cozy in the icebox, and soon they are both cured of their maladies. Captain Cook drops a checker (from the icebox) at Mr. Popper's feet in appreciation. Mrs. Popper brings up the problem of being able to tell the two penguins apart, and Mr. Popper responds by grabbing his paint and painting "CAPT COOK" on the back of Captain Cook.

Mr. Popper predicts that the two penguins will soon be having chicks, and so the refrigerator will become an inadequate nest in a short amount of time. Mr. Popper suggests they open all the windows and let the coming cold turn the entire house into a penguin habitat. In the meantime, the family will wear winter overcoats indoors. Soon, the first snow comes, and the penguins enjoy sliding around the snowdrifts. Going one step further, Mr. Popper sprays the inside floors with a garden hose, making them ice over. The children join the two penguins in slipping and sliding across the icy floors. Mrs. Popper implores Mr. Popper to come up with another solution, because they cannot live for long like this.

Chapter 12: To solve the problem of the penguins' habitat, Mr. Popper has an engineer come to install a "freezing plant" in the cellar, presumably a machine that keeps things very cold and makes ice. The furnace is moved to the living room for the family to keep warm. These changes are very expensive, and the Poppers are worried about their finances.

Right after the "rookery" or nest is built in the basement, Greta lays her first egg. To Mr. Popper's great surprise, she lays nine more. Mr. Popper keeps the eggs warm with hot-water bottles and heating pads. Soon, there are a total of twelve penguins on the grounds. Mr. Popper names them all, and many are named after people important to the history of exploration, like Isabella, Ferdinand, and Magellan.

To improve the rookery, Mr. Popper makes ice structures out of blocks of ice so the little penguins could crawl and play on them. He also digs a hole in the cellar floor and fills it with water to act as a pool. He puts live fish in the pool, an upgrade for the penguins over canned shrimp. The penguins develop a marching routine, like an army, which Mr. Popper delights in, and two penguins, Nelson and Columbus, have fun fighting with each other. Mr. Popper spends much of his time down in the cellar, tending to his pets.

## Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Chapter 11 resolves the problem presented in Chapter 10. The penguins recover from their illness together, buoyed by companionship. The painting of Captain Cook's back with the penguin's name is a clever way to incorporate Mr. Popper's painting profession back into the narrative. Chapter 11 also features the children having fun with the



penguins by sliding around with them in the snow and in the icy living room. The presence of children allows the young reader to identify a little stronger with the material, and while Bill and Janie are minor characters, they are nevertheless central to the family.

Chapter 12 has Mr. Popper at his most creative but also most desperate, since he has to find a way to accommodate not two but twelve penguins. He shows himself to be creative by coming up with the rookery in the basement, but he also demonstrates his often foolish idealism by wrecking his home, having more regard for the penguins than his own family, and spending a small fortune on renovations that his family cannot afford. The addition of so many penguins is naturally a story complication, and it also adds to the already absurd premise of penguins in middle America.



# Chapters 13 and 14

## Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Chapter 13: Mrs. Popper approaches Mr. Popper, and informs him that the rookery, the live fish, and other expenses have been too much: the family is running out of money. Mrs. Popper suggests, half-heartedly, that they stew up the penguins for food, but of course Mr. Popper is opposed to that notion. But Mrs. Popper is getting desperate, since she is the money person in the family. She also suggests that they could sell the penguins to someone for money.

Mr. Popper has the idea to train the penguins in order to put together a stage show for money. Mrs. Popper goes along with the idea. They move a piano down to the rookery, and go about training the penguins. Mrs. Popper has not played piano in a long time, but she picks it back up again to provide musical accompaniment for the act. Mr. Popper carefully trains the penguins in three separate acts. In the first, the penguins will march in formations. In the second, Nelson and Columbus will fight. In the third, the penguins will march up steps and slide back down. Mrs. Popper plays a specific piece of music during each act so the penguins know which act to do. By the end of January, the penguins appear to be well trained.

Chapter 14: Mr. Popper reads in the paper that Mr. Greenbaum, owner of a large theater chain, is in town. He seems like the perfect man to audition the penguins in front of. So the family packs up and walks the penguins outside in a long line to the downtown theater. They board a bus, and Mr. Popper opens all the windows to give the penguins some cool air. The passengers protest, and the Poppers are kicked off the bus, but they made good progress in the meantime toward the downtown theater. Mr. Popper introduces himself to the manager, and the manager fetches Mr. Greenbaum. Mr. Popper comes up with the name of Popper's Performing Penguins for the show. Mr. Greenbaum agrees to see the penguins in action, and Mrs. Popper sits down to play the stage piano.

## Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Chapter 13 features a clash of personalities, with Mrs. Popper trying to bring Mr. Popper back to reality and force him to face the family's money woes. Mr. Popper actually responds with additional reckless fancies, imagining a stage show with the penguins to raise money. But, as often is the case with Mr. Popper, he is able to back up his dreams with some practical know-how. He smartly bases the stage show off of tricks the penguins have already proved they can do: marching, fighting, and sliding down the stairs.

Chapter 14 features perhaps the most surreal image in the book: Mr. Popper leading his family and twelve penguins down a busy city street. To accentuate and acknowledge



this moment, the publishers have devoted a full-page illustration depicting the line of penguins and Poppers. Mr. Popper names his act Popper's Performing Penguins, showing his marketing savvy despite (or because of) his quixotic nature. The name also gives the authors another chance to have fun with alliteration.



# Chapters 15 and 16

## Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Chapter 15: Before the penguins can start performing, the theater manager bursts in, and informs Mr. Greenbaum that the final act of the show that day, the Marvelous Marcos, have not turned up. The angry audience is demanding their money back. Mr. Greenbaum is resigned to giving back the money, but Mr. Popper suggests they turn their rehearsal/audition into the final act in the real show, and Mr. Greenbaum agrees. As stagehands help the Poppers furiously prepare, the manager introduces Popper's Performing Penguins. With Mr. Popper on stage, the penguins march in formation while Mrs. Popper plays the piano, and the audience loves it. Nelson and Columbus fight next, as the other penguins sit in a circle and watch. Finally, the penguins fight each other to the top of stepladders for the final act, after which they slide back down. The penguins push and shove each other, causing the audience to laugh. The audience loves the performance and claps vigorously.

After the show, Mr. Greenbaum also expresses his delight, particularly because Mr. Popper saved his show. Mr. Greenbaum offers him a nationwide tour lasting ten weeks, at five thousand dollars a week. After conferring with Mrs. Popper, Mr. Popper agrees to the contract.

Chapter 16: The family gets busy packing for their nationwide tour. Mrs. Popper scrubs the entire home thoroughly. Mr. Greenbaum sends the first payment in advance, so Mrs. Popper is able to pay off the freezing machine engineer, and all the other bills pending. The family and penguins travel to the railway station, and must take two cabs to accommodate all the animals. The taxicab drivers drive fast in an attempt to get to the railway station first to get all the press attention, and they wind up crashing into one another. Finally they arrive at the station and board the train. When the penguins are led through the sleeping cars, they climb ladders to sleeping compartments, alarming the passengers and causing a ruckus. They are finally calmed down and led into the baggage car, where Mr. Popper stays with them to keep them calm.

The family starts their show, and it is a big success in every town they visit. The curious penguins get a reputation for disrupting the other acts of the shows they're in, much to the delight of the audiences. This includes disrupting a tightrope walker named Monsieur Duval, who almost falls from his tightrope after the penguins waddle onto stage.

## Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Chapter 15 introduces one of those perfectly-timed story conveniences we've grown accustomed to—the manager rushes in and informs the group that the Marvelous Marcos are no-shows, and that the real show is in danger of failing. Mr. Popper's



Performing Penguins step up to wow the crowd in their very first performance. The detail of Mrs. Popper refusing to take off her gloves to play the piano is appropriate for her character in two ways. She is a strong woman who will persist in doing what she thinks is right, and she is a practical woman, due to the fact that she practiced the songs with her gloves on and there is no reason to change what has worked.

Chapter 16 is more opportunity for mischief and comic foibles on the part of the ever-active penguins. No less than three mishaps occur: the taxicabs collide in a race for media attention, the sleeper car is greatly disturbed when the penguins climb the ladders, and Monsieur Duval nearly falls from his tightrope during his performance. The authors provide the penguins with a rare bit of human intelligence when the narration states that the penguins were "pretending not to understand" (107) Monsieur Duval's angry yelling at them. In almost all other instances, the penguins are not treated with this kind of anthropomorphism.



# Chapters 17 and 18

## Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Chapter 17: The birds become famous all across the country, and crowds are out the door at every venue. Actors in their shows, however, come to resent the penguins as show-stealers and nuisances who disrupt other acts. During one show in Minneapolis, an opera singer refuses to go on stage until the penguins are caged up in the basement. Mr. Popper obliges, but the penguins find a way out and are soon waddling around the orchestra pit, ruining the singer's act. The penguins slide up on stage and hide in the opera singer's dress, causing her to shriek instead of sing.

The family as well as the penguins become used to a life on the road. Mr. Popper has to fight at every hotel to keep the hotel managers from outlawing the penguins. Life in hotels proves to be quite expensive, and the family does not save much from the five thousand dollars a week salary. Mr. Popper saves some money by promoting Owens' Oceanic Shrimp, as the company gives him free canned shrimp to feed his penguins. Mr. Popper is too honest to promote other products, however, as his penguins won't eat other foods. Despite all the success, a warm spring is coming, and Mr. Popper can tell the warmer weather is making the penguins irritable.

Chapter 18: The ten-week contract is set to end with a final performance at a theater in New York City. A weary Mr. Popper instructs the taxi driver at their hotel to drive to the Regal Theater, when in fact the Royal Theater is the correct venue. Unbeknownst to Mr. Popper, they arrive at the wrong theater. They encounter Mr. Swenson, who has a pack of six seals he performs with. Mr. Swenson warns Mr. Popper to keep his penguins away from the Swenson seals, or they might be eaten. To Mr. Popper's horror, he realizes the penguins have already gotten away. The seals and penguins get together in a room at the theater, and Mr. Popper fears the worst. The police and fire department are called in. However, the penguins and seals are more curious than anything toward each other, and no penguin is eaten. The police and fire department show up, and for fun they put police caps on the seals and firemen caps on the penguins. The furious theater owner presses charges against Mr. Popper for ruining his show, and Mr. Popper and the penguins are arrested for disturbing the peace. Mr. Popper only now realizes he showed up at the wrong theater.

## Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Chapter 17 starts to show some deep cracks in Mr. Popper's dream to continue his charmed life as a celebrity and penguin wrangler. The penguins' growing fame comes with a price, perhaps part of a thematic tendency to demonstrate that fame in and of itself comes with a price. The actors in the shows grow to hate the penguins for upstaging them, Mr. Popper must fight with hotel after hotel for the right to house his birds, money is quickly being spent on huge ice blocks and food, and the penguins are

growing irritable with the warmer weather. All of these create a sense of inevitable "dread" in the reader, sensing that the end to the adventure is near.

With Chapter 18, the penguins have one last adventure, with Mr. Swenson's seals. There is a good bit of drama when the penguins encounter with the seals is prefaced by Mr. Swenson's ominous warning that seals love to eat penguins. The scene with the police hats on the seals and firemen hats on the penguins is the chance for another absurd, charming image, and another illustration.



# Chapters 19 and 20

## Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Chapter 19: Mr. Popper and all twelve penguins are put in a police wagon and hauled off to the New York City jail. The bail is put at five hundred dollars for Mr. Popper, and a hundred apiece for the penguins. The family is unable to pay that amount, and Mr. Greenbaum is in Hollywood somewhere and unreachable, so they must stay in jail. The penguins become very despondent and weak in prison, and Mr. Popper is sad. After a few days, Mr. Popper gets a visitor. He thinks it is Mr. Greenbaum, but it turns out to be Admiral Drake himself, freshly returned from an expedition. He pays Mr. Popper's bail and Mr. Popper is released. Mr. Popper returns to his family at the hotel, and explains to Drake the entire story of how he got twelve penguins and how he started a show.

Drake asks Mr. Popper if the penguins can be taken to the North Pole to start a new colony of penguins there, and to cheer up the scientists and government people living there. Before Mr. Popper can answer, Mr. Greenbaum arrives with Mr. Klein, owner of a movie studio. Mr. Klein offers a large amount of money to Mr. Popper to take the penguins to Hollywood and turn them into movie stars. Mr. Popper has an important decision to make, and he asks everyone to leave so he can think about it and decide in the morning.

Chapter 20: The next morning, Mr. Popper calls all the gentlemen back to his hotel room. He refuses Mr. Klein, and agrees to turn the penguins over to Admiral Drake. He feels that Hollywood and more travel in a warmer climate would have been too much for the penguins to handle, and that they will be happier at the North Pole. Mr. Klein asks if they can shoot a short movie for twenty-five thousand dollars prior to the departure of the penguins, and the Poppers agree. The shoot proceeds, and the Poppers are paid.

It is finally time to say goodbye to the penguins. Mr. Popper is very emotional, and is teary-eyed when he says goodbye to all the penguins, especially Captain Cook. The penguins arrive at the docks and board a boat with Admiral Drake. At that point, Admiral Drake wonders why Mr. Popper isn't coming; after all, he is the manager of the penguins, and they will need his help to breed the penguins. With his wife's blessing, Mr. Popper is delighted to board the boat to live at the North Pole for a year or two with the penguins.

## Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Chapter 19 shows Mr. Popper and the penguins at their lowest. They have fallen from grace and the public spotlight, and have landed in prison, once again showing the price of fame and of Mr. Popper's overreaching. Chapter 19 ends on a cliffhanger, in which Mr. Popper must make the near-impossible decision of continuing with fame in Hollywood or contributing to science and giving the penguins up to Admiral Drake.



The ending is frankly dubious, and the message it sends is contradictory to the message relayed in the rest of the novel. Mr. Popper makes the correct decision for the penguins' welfare, and suddenly he is invited onto the ship for the Arctic, abandoning his family. Mr. Popper's ceaseless daydreaming has paid off, and he gets the adventure he always wanted. At the same time, this turn of events seems to negate the fact that Mr. Popper had a grand adventure in his own home with the penguins. The message—something like "Be thankful for what you have" or "Adventure can be found in even ordinary things"—is diluted when Mr. Popper abandons his family for the North Pole. The ending could even be viewed as somewhat subversive, particularly for a children's book. In essence, Mr. Popper's romanticism conquers love of family or responsibility to his community. But, of course, the counterargument would urge us not to read too deeply into this story twist. Mr. Popper simply gets his wish of true adventure in the end.



# Characters

## Mr. Popper

Mr. Popper is a house painter in Stillwater. Though a hard worker, he is a dreamer and a romantic. He has never been outside of Stillwater, and he fantasizes often about having great adventures in exotic places, such as the Himalayas. He is particularly fond of the Arctic and Antarctic, and is enthralled by "Polar" movies with those places as their subject. His own adventure starts when he writes Admiral Drake, explorer of the Poles, a letter, which Drake responds to by sending a penguin to Mr. Popper.

Mr. Popper's absent-minded idealism exhibits itself in his dealings with the penguins. He has little regard for money or for the comfort and well-being of his family, renovating his home and spending all the family's money in service of the penguins. When the family runs out of money, he gets the idea to put on a stage show featuring his trained penguins. And when Spring comes and it is clear the penguins are not happy in such a warm climate, Mr. Popper unselfishly gives the penguins up to Admiral Drake, but rather selfishly abandons his family to go live with the penguins at the North Pole.

Mr. Popper is a clever man with respect to the penguins, coming up with smart ways to house and maintain them, such as drilling air holes in the refrigerator door, or installing an ice cube machine in the basement.

## Mrs. Popper

Mrs. Popper is the "polar" opposite of Mr. Popper, pun intended. Whereas Mr. Popper is an idealist and a dreamer, Mrs. Popper is down to earth and practical. It is Mrs. Popper who voices logical concern about housing penguins in the home, though she does warm to the penguins over time. Mrs. Popper is also the holder of the purse-strings in the Popper household, paying bills and such. Mrs. Popper must warn Mr. Popper that the penguins are breaking them financially.

Despite her practical and skeptical nature, Mrs. Popper is quite loyal to her husband, and she usually goes along with whatever scheme he invents, after initially expressing doubt. The house is massively renovated, but Mrs. Popper is still able to keep things tidy. And when Mr. Popper comes up with the idea for a penguin stage show, Mrs. Popper plays the music and accompanies Mr. Popper on a nationwide tour. And displaying a rather herculean capacity for understanding, Mrs. Popper gives her husband permission to live in the Arctic for a few years to help Admiral Drake breed penguins there. In fact, Mrs. Popper states that the house will be easier to tidy with Mr. Popper not lounging around. Mrs. Popper is active in the Ladies' Aid and Missionary Society.





## Janie Popper

Janie is Mr. Popper's daughter. Her age is not stated, but from context and illustrations, she appears to be about twelve. Both children greatly enjoy the penguins' presence, and they play games with them. They also accompany Mr. and Mrs. Popper on a nationwide tour with the penguins.

## Bill Popper

Bill is Mr. Popper's son. His age is not stated, but from context and illustrations, he appears to be about twelve. Both children greatly enjoy the penguins' presence, and they play games with them. They also accompany Mr. and Mrs. Popper on a nationwide tour with the penguins.

## Service Man

A service man comes one day to convert the Popper refrigerator into a home for penguins. The service man thinks Mr. Popper is crazy for wanting such alterations, and he is argumentative. He is scared out of the house when Captain Cook the penguin starts pecking at him.

## Mrs. Callahan

Mrs. Callahan is astonished and frightened by Captain Cook when Mr. Popper takes the penguin for a walk on a leash. Later, though, she sends a custard for Captain Cook, in a bid to make him feel better.

## Mr. Greenbaum

Mr. Greenbaum is a theater owner who hires the Popper family to take their penguins on the road for a stage show. He is very impressed by the penguin show and believes it will be a sensation.

## Monsieur Duval

Duval is a Frenchman and tightrope performer whose act becomes a disaster when the penguins waddle onto the stage. He nearly falls from his tightrope when the audience bursts into laughter at the sight.



## **Mr. Klein**

Klein is the owner of the Colossal Film Company. He is enamored of the Poppers' stage show, and wishes to make the Poppers rich by making movies starring the penguins. Mr. Popper turns down the offer, however.

## **Admiral Drake**

Admiral Drake is a famous explorer of the Poles, and a man Mr. Popper greatly admires. When Mr. Popper writes to Drake, Drake sends a penguin to Stillwater. Later in the story, Drake arrives and asks Mr. Popper to bring his penguins to the North Pole to breed them.



## Objects/Places

### 432 Proudfoot Avenue

This is the home address of the Popper family. Mr. Popper renovates his home to accommodate the penguins by turning his icebox into a nest and turning the cellar into a winter wonderland.

### Stillwater

This is the town in which the Poppers live. It is a small town, and no one there had ever seen a live penguin before. Mr. Popper's penguins cause much commotion and confusion in the town.

### Antarctic Adventures

Antarctic Adventures is the title of one of Mr. Popper's favorite books about the Antarctic. Mr. Popper reads these kinds of books due to his love of exotic places, particularly the Poles.

### Captain Cook

Captain Cook is the name given to Mr. Popper's first penguin, sent by Admiral Drake. Mr. Popper names the penguin after famous explorer Captain James Cook. Captain Cook the penguin's chief characteristic is inquisitiveness. He is always poking around the house or getting into mischief.

### Icebox Rookery

A service man converts the Popper's icebox into a nest for Captain Cook the penguin. Captain Cook later supplements his nest with small items he picks up from around the house. The icebox has holes for ventilation and a handle built on the inside, so the penguin can come and go as he pleases.

### Greta

Greta is the name given to Mr. Popper's second penguin, sent to him by Dr. Smith, the curator of a city aquarium. Greta is able to cure Captain Cook's loneliness, and soon they have a litter of penguins together.



## **Schubert's Military March**

Mrs. Popper plays this piece of music on the piano to accompany the marching part of the penguins' stage show.

## **Palace Theater**

The Poppers and their penguins travel to the Palace Theater to put on an audition for Mr. Greenbaum, the theater owner. Mr. Greenbaum loves their act and hires them to go on a nationwide tour.

## **Nelson and Columbus**

These two brother penguins fight with each other as a part of the penguin stage show, slapping and bumping into one another.

## **Swenson's Seals**

A rival stage show run by Mr. Swenson features a group of six seals. When the penguins and seals accidentally encounter each other, Mr. Popper fears the worst, but the seals and penguins merely play with each other.

# Themes

## The Love of Adventure

Mr. Popper is early on described as a lover of adventure, in contrast to his mundane existence as a house painter in the sleepy town of Stillwater. Though he does his job well, his thoughts wander to fantasies of climbing the Himalayas or exploring the Arctic. Mr. Popper is unfulfilled; there is a hole in him, despite his charmed home life and good job.

Mr. Popper gets his adventure in the form of Captain Cook the penguin. With Captain Cook, Mr. Popper is able to realize the adventure he thought could only occur in books or in exotic locations. He is able to turn his own home into an ice palace, of sorts, hosing down the floor and building a penguin habitat in his basement. He then embarks on a nationwide tour with his pets, leading to plenty of more adventures and mischief.

Bringing the adventure home, however, proves ultimately to be disastrous. The penguins do not thrive in a warm habitat, and they become irritable and depressed. The penguins also get into mischief, with Mr. Popper being arrested for disturbing the peace. Mr. Popper eventually must leave to the North Pole to continue his adventure. For the reader, the "message," if there is one, is muddy. Mr. Popper seems to be overreaching by insisting on having a pseudo-Arctic adventure in America, and he is initially punished, but he is finally redeemed at the end by embarking on a true Arctic adventure. At any rate, Mr. Popper is rewarded for his adventurous spirit.

## The Novelty of the Penguin

Much of the charm of the novel lies in its "fish out of water" scenario, the transplanting of the Antarctic penguin to a typical midwestern American town. This is a sharp juxtaposition, a surreal clashing of two disparate elements that results in misunderstandings, surprises, and tensions. Around the time the novel was written, America (through Admiral Byrd and others) was exploring the polar regions, and there was a high level of excitement about the creatures there. Mr. Popper's Penguins capitalized on this interest by bringing the iconic penguin to middle America.

Using these exotic beasts with which America had little familiarity, the book no doubt elicited plenty of delight in children at the time. Part of the fun of the story is a kind of documentary interest in these animals, from descriptions of their tuxedo-like coats and funny tailfeathers to their sharp peaks, white-circled eyes, and pink feet. And many of the situations in the story are motivated by the curious, mischievous behavior of the penguins. While some of this behavior is grounded in reality—such as the penguins' sliding across icy patches on their stomachs, for one example—other behaviors are likely the creation of the authors, invented to add charm or dramatic interest.



## The Entrepreneurial Spirit

Just as the novel rewards Mr. Popper's sense of adventure and daydreamer qualities, the novel encourages entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity. Mr. Popper is not overwhelmed or depressed by the arrival of the penguin, which represents a considerable challenge to care for. Instead, he goes about cleverly planning ways to keep the penguin comfortable and healthy. He has a service man drill holes and a handle into the icebox so the penguin has a nest. He decides upon canned shrimp to use as food, and later live fish. With a freezing machine, he builds an elaborate ice habitat in the basement, going so far as to dig a pond. He paints names on the back of the penguins so he can tell which is which. And later, when his family's financial health is threatened, Mr. Popper doesn't skip a beat, coming up with a way to have the penguins make money for him by putting on a show.

The show makes the penguins a nationwide sensation, and the Poppers enjoy a tidy sum at the end of the novel courtesy of Mr. Klein. Furthermore, Mr. Popper's efforts have paid off in the form of realizing his lifelong dream, an expedition in the Arctic.

Mr. Popper may be a dreamer, but his practical know-how and work ethic also contribute to his success by the novel's end. The novel celebrates the combination of both idealism and pragmatism. Mr. Popper aims high, and his efforts pay off handsomely.



# Style

## Point of View

Mr. Popper's Penguins is told with third-person perspective. While the narrator often is allied with Mr. Popper, sharing the man's thoughts and motivations, the narrator is capable of seeing all and knowing all. However, there are certain points in the plot that are restricted to the Popper family's point of view in order to increase dramatic tension and interest. For example, Admiral Drake reports that he is sending a special surprise to the Popper residence, but the reader is not told what that surprise is. The reader is instead left to discover the surprise (a penguin) along with Mr. Popper as he opens the package.

As is typical of children's stories involving strange, magical, or surreal elements—in this case, a family of penguins living with a typical family in their home—the narrator speaks with authority, in a calm, nothing-out-of-the-ordinary manner, in contrast to the ridiculous situation at the heart of the story. This contrast is amusing and interesting in and of itself, but it also heightens the sense of realism, and allows the reader to willingly suspend his or her disbelief in order to fully immerse him or herself in the story. In addition, the authoritative narrator is prevalent in children's stories to provide a calming anchor to the adventure, assuring the young reader that everything will work out well in the end.

## Setting

The setting is the town of Stillwater in contemporary times, or approximately the late 1930s when the book was written and published. While there are several real-life candidates for Stillwater, likely the authors wished for the town to remain somewhat anonymous and fictional, as if the story of Mr. Popper and his penguins could have taken place in any typical town in America.

Stillwater is a sleepy, small town. It is isolated and not very cosmopolitan—Mr. Popper himself has read about many places but has never left Stillwater—making the arrival of Captain Cook the penguin all the more surprising and mind-boggling to the citizens. The time frame of the novel is also important. Interest in exploration of the poles was at an all-time high in the 1930s, corresponding with Admiral Byrd's famous expeditions, and the novel is born out of that public interest. Additionally, the reader must place him or herself in the novel's time and place to understand the novelty and shock of seeing a penguin. Images of penguins were not nearly so ubiquitous in the 1930s as they are now, and the sight of a penguin would have elicited precisely the type of reactions the authors describe in the book. The novelty of the penguin, particular to the novel's time and place, provides much of the charm of the novel.



## Language and Meaning

Given that the novel was written in the 1930s, there are a few select phrases which may need some footnoting or further explanation. For example, Mr. Popper is described as being "spattered here and there with paint and calcimine" (3), and the young reader may not know what calcimine is, since this product is not used for modern painting. Another example is when a household is described as being left "at sixes and sevens" (101). This colloquialism, indicating a state of confusion or disarray, has fallen out of the popular vocabulary, at least in America. Despite these handful of phrases, however, the authors have written in a very accessible, simple style intended for young readers. The vocabulary is usually simple, and the descriptions and plotting are clear and uncomplicated.

Naming in the novel has a certain interest. By giving the name of "Mr. Popper" to his protagonist, the authors are indulging in the fun of alliteration, with the title Mr. Popper's Penguins having three "p" sounds. This incorporation of fun or silly names is a common device in children's stories. Additionally, several of the penguins' names, including Captain Cook, Magellan, and Columbus, are named for famous explorers, as is Admiral Drake, named for pirate and navigator Sir Francis Drake. This naming convention reflects the novel's (and Mr. Popper's) interest in exploration.

## Structure

Mr. Popper's Penguins is divided into twenty chapters. The story is told in chronological order, beginning with some background on Mr. Popper, including his painting job, his home life, and his love of adventure and exotic locales. The "inciting incident" which begins the bulk of the story is the arrival of a penguin, Captain Cook, to the Popper household.

The chapters are quite short—perhaps acknowledging the short attention span of the young reader—and are often logically divided according to significant points in the story. For example, Chapter V, entitled "Troubles with a Penguin," tells the story of the service man's visit to the Popper household, ending with the service man running out of the house in fright at the sight of Captain Cook. At other times, chapter divisions are not as neatly demarcated; Chapters III and IV do not describe concrete events such as Chapter V does, for example, and Chapter IV merely continues the action of Chapter III.

As is typical of story structure, the narration builds to a crisis—Mr. Popper and the penguins landing in jail for disturbing the peace—and then climaxes with an important decision for the protagonist. In this case, the decision is whether the penguins should go off to Hollywood or go to the North Pole with Admiral Drake. Mr. Popper makes the decision to go with Drake, and the resolution involves Mr. Popper leaving for adventure in the Arctic. In this way, the story is nicely bookended, in that the longing for adventure with which Mr. Popper started the tale is answered with just such an adventure at the end.





## Quotes

"That was what [Mr. Popper] regretted most of all. He had never seen those great shining white expanses of ice and snow. How he wished that he had been a scientist, instead of a house painter in Stillwater, so that he might have joined some of the great Polar expeditions." (Chapter 1, page 6)

"Mr. Popper had read that penguins are extremely curious, and he soon found that this was true, for stepping out, the visitor began to inspect the house. Down the hall it went and into the bedrooms, with its strange, pompous little strut." (Chapter 3, pages 18-19)

"Now a penguin may look very strange in a living room, but a living room looks very strange to a penguin. Even Mrs. Popper had to smile as they watched Captain Cook, with the light of curiosity in his excited circular eyes, and his black tailcoat dragging pompously behind his little pinkish feet, strut from one upholstered chair to another, pecking at each to see what it was made of." (Chapter 4, pages 23-24)

"The service man was still on the floor, putting in the final screws that held the new handle in place, when the penguin came out to the kitchen on his silent pink feet. Surprised at seeing a strange man on the floor, Captain Cook quietly walked over and began to peck him curiously. But the service man was even more surprised than Captain Cook." (Chapter 5, page 35)

"Captain Cook was now attending to the picking up. Into the corners of every room he prowled and poked and pecked with a busy thoroughness; into every closet he stared with his white-circled eyes; under and behind all the furniture he crowded his plump figure, with little subdued cries of curiosity, surprise, and pleasure." (Chapter 7, page 45)

"Everyone was very sympathetic. The reporter on the Morning Chronicle stopped in to inquire about the penguin. The neighbors brought in all sorts of broths and jellies to try to tempt the little fellow. Even Mrs. Callahan, who had never had a very high opinion of Captain Cook, made a lovely frozen custard for him. Nothing did any good. Captain Cook was too far gone." (Chapter 10, page 65)

"Both Greta and Captain Cook were tremendously pleased with all that ice. They would go up on the snowdrift at one end of the living room, and run down, one behind the other, onto the ice, until they were running too fast to keep their balance. Then they would flop on their stomachs and toboggan across the slippery ice." (Chapter 11, page 72)



"Often, too, [Mr. Popper] thought how different his life had been before the penguins had come to keep him occupied. It was January now, and already he dreaded to think of the time when spring would come, and he would have to leave them all day and go back to painting houses." (Chapter 12, page 80)

"'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. And so we will build our act around those tricks.'" (Chapter 13, page 83)

"The birds soon became so famous that whenever it was known that the Popper Performing Penguins were to appear at any theater, the crowds would stand in line for half a mile down the street, waiting their turn to buy tickets." (Chapter 17, page 108)

"It was very dull for the birds in jail. Wednesday came and there was still no word from Mr. Greenbaum. Thursday, and the birds began to droop. It was soon apparent that the lack of exercise, combined with the heat, might prove too much for them. There were no more tricks or merry games. Even the younger birds sat all day in dismal silence, and Mr. Popper could not cheer them up." (Chapter 19, page 124)

"First [Mr. Popper] said good-by to all the younger penguins. Then to Greta, who had saved Captain Cook. Then, last of all, he leaned over and said a special good-by to Captain Cook, who had come and made life so different for Mr. Popper." (Chapter 20, page 136)

## Topics for Discussion

How are Mr. Popper and Mrs. Popper alike? How are they different?

Why is Mr. Popper fascinated with the North Pole and South Pole, and with penguins? What is the appeal of these things for him?

Describe how the Poppers change their home in order to accommodate the penguins.

How are the penguins characterized? What are their behaviors and motivations?

Describe the three-act show that the Poppers develop for their penguins.

Why do you think Mr. Popper made the decision he did in the final chapter, to give the penguins to Admiral Drake?

Did Mr. Popper do the right thing in leaving with his penguins to the North Pole? Why or why not?