

Study Guide and Activities

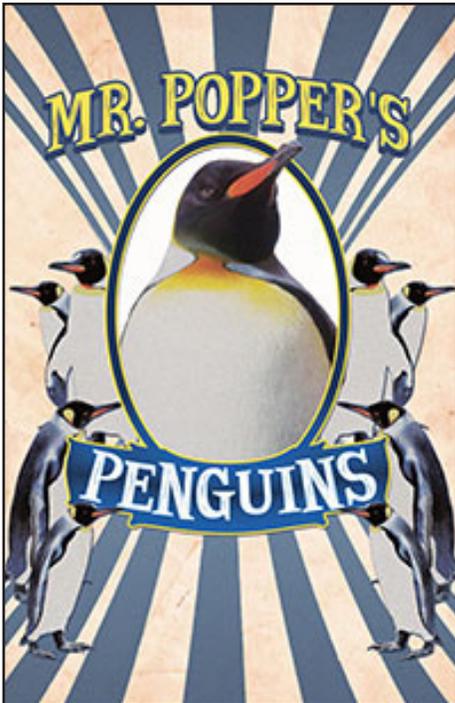
This study guide includes information about our production along with creative activities to make connections in your classroom both before and after the show. We've aligned all activities to both the Common Core Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards. Look for the symbol below throughout the guide for curriculum connections.



NCES-TheaArts.(K-3).T.A.A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances. NCES-TheaArts.(K-3).T.A.A.1.1: Recall the basic parts of a story, such as characters, setting, and events.



Touring production Ages 4 and older



Book by
Robert Kauzlaric

Music and lyrics
George Howe

Based on the novel by
Richard & Florence Atwater

Director and Choreographer
Ron Chisolm

Music Director
Drina Keen

Themes explored

family, vaudeville, science
of penguins, puppetry

Synopsis

In the town of Stillwater, at the end of September 1937, Mr. Popper lives a sensible life as a house painter. 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 heads home to Mrs. Popper and prepares to spend his off-season reading about the Arctic regions. He even writes to his favorite explorer, Adm. Drake. But he doesn't expect the answer Adm. Drake sends: a special delivery. With the arrival of a penguin, Capt. Cook, life at the Popper's will never be the same!

Capt. Cook is big hit in Stillwater. The Poppers take him on walks through the town, and everyone's excited for this strange creature although no one else seems to know exactly what kind of bird he is except for the Poppers. The Poppers must make some other adjustments for their new guest, including taking all of the food out of the refrigerator to make him more comfortable. The penguin begins making a nest in his new home, using hairpins, yarn and whatever else he can find in the house.

When Capt. Cook starts to get sick from loneliness, the big aquarium in Mammoth City sends its lonely penguin, and now the Poppers have two! Soon Capt. Cook and his new mate, Greta, lay eggs, and 10 new little penguins join the crowd. Complications set in as the Poppers, who don't have the money for roast beef or ice cream, start buying shrimp for 12 hungry penguins. They also move the furnace and install a freezing unit in the basement.

There's only one solution Mr. Popper can think of to pay the debts they owe: They'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, and the penguins get into a fight with Sven Svenson and his trained seals. Their fight destroys the theatre and chases away the audience, so the manager has the Poppers taken to jail.

Luckily, as the Popper family languishes in jail, Adm. Drake arrives and rescues them. The family heads for home, but the story isn't over. Adm. Drake offers to take the penguins to the North Pole to start a new colony there, and invites Mr. Popper to accompany them. But Mr. Greenbaum, a bigshot movie producer, wants to take the penguins to Hollywood where they'll become famous. Mr. Popper says he can't give them to either men, but asks if Adm. Drake will take them to the South Pole instead with the Poppers accompanying them. The admiral agrees when Mr. Greenbaum offers to film the journey as a documentary to finance his next expedition. The story ends with the Poppers saying goodbye to the penguins when they arrive at the South Pole. They promise to continue being family, even though they're far apart.

Before the show

About our theatre



Founded in 1948, Children's Theatre of Charlotte has opened young minds to the wonders of live theatre for seventy years. Today, it continues to be one of the most technically imaginative and resourceful theatres in the country. Annually, it reaches nearly 300,000 young people and their families through our Mainstage productions, Resident Touring Company and its Education Department's classes and workshops. Learn more about Children's Theatre of Charlotte at ctcharlotte.org.

Additionally, our touring productions are enjoyed by schools and community centers across the Southeast, bringing high-quality, live theatre to everyone in the region. Contact our Touring Performance and Sales Coordinator, Margot Parrott, at margotp@ctcharlotte.org to book your tour today!

Audience expectations

You may wish to have a discussion with your students about their role as audience members. Live theatre only exists when an audience is present, and your students' energy and response directly affects the actors on stage.

Young audiences should know watching live theatre isn't like watching more familiar forms of entertainment: they can't pause or rewind it like a DVD, there are no commercials for bathroom breaks, nor can they increase the volume to hear if someone else is talking. Encourage your students to listen and watch the play intently, so they may laugh and cheer for their favorite characters when it is appropriate.

At the end of the play, applause is an opportunity for students to thank the actors, while the actors are thanking you for your role as an audience member. Here are some other guidelines to remember while you're watching the performance:

- Respect others during the performance. Stay seated and keep your hands to yourself.
- Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance.
- Photography and video of the performance is prohibited by copyright law.



NCES-TheaArts.(K-3).TA.CU.2: Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form. NCES-TheaArts.3.TA.CU.2.1: Illustrate theatre etiquette appropriate to the performance situation.

Theatre 360 connections



Theatre 360 provides a way to interact with Children's Theatre of Charlotte productions by extending the theatre experience for families and classroom—providing access to all! Best of all, many programs are free. Go to ctcharlotte.org/theatre-360 to view the full list of events throughout the year.

Audience engagement These interactive experiences located around *ImaginOn* are available from the first public performance of a production through the entire run of the show. We change the exhibits to reflect the uniqueness of each show.

Online engagement Whether you're a teacher or a parent looking for quality activities, we've assembled a collection of online games, websites and articles that deepen the connections of elements from the show. [Click here](#) for online content for *Mr. Popper's Penguins*.

Workshops and residencies Teachers, are you looking for a way for your class to make stronger connections with our shows? You can add our workshops, led by our professional teaching artists, before or after you view the performance. Or incorporate the arts into your everyday classroom through a residency created to fit your subject area. Contact our programs coordinator, Tommy Prudenti, at tommyp@ctcharlotte.org to book yours today!

Before the show

Vocabulary enrichment

“penny-pinching” *n.* stingy with money

dawdles *v.* to waste time

quirky *adj.* out of the ordinary, not typical

expedition *n.* a journey or voyage made for some specific purpose

license *n.* a certificate, tag, plate, etc., giving proof of permission

exotic *adj.* of foreign origin or character, strikingly unusual

nook *n.* a corner, as in a room

comfy *adj.* shortened form of comfortable

“suave and debonaire” *adj.* having a sophisticated charm, likable

refund *v.* to give back (especially money), repay

whirlwind *n.* spinning as in a violent action or destructive force

juggernaut *n.* an unstoppable force



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(K-3).4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

The BIG QUESTIONS before the show

1. The story takes place during the Great Depression (1929 to 1939). During this time, families had little money to spend on everyday necessities like food and clothes. Make a list of items you need to survive every day. Now, go through that list and remove three of those items. Why did you decide to remove those and not others? What items were most important?
2. In the play, Mr. Popper wishes he was a scientist rather than a painter. What do you want to be when you grow up and why?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.(K-3).2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. NCES.EEE.CR.2.1: Identify personal preferences and interests that influence career choice and success.

Penguins KWL

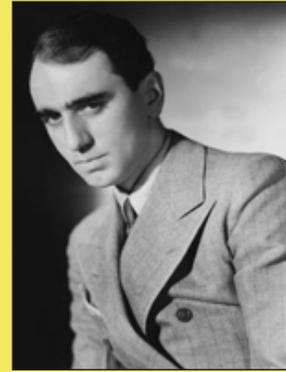
Cut out a picture of a penguin from a magazine and place it in an envelope. Tell the class the contents of the envelope hold a clue to the story. Play a 20 Questions game in which students try to guess what's in the envelope by asking questions answerable by a “yes” or “no.”

Once students see the picture in the envelope, develop a KWL chart about penguins. In the first column, list what students already know or think they know. In the second column, list what students would like to know and in the last column list what they learn after watching the play.

You may want to do additional research about the habits of penguins before watching the play. [Click here](#) for more information about penguins.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. NCES-Inf./Tech.(K-3).TT.1.1: Use a variety of technology tools to gather data and information (e.g., on-line communication tools, etc.).



Busby
Berkeley

Serving in the military during World War One and specializing in troop parade formations, he later worked as dance director for an array of Broadway musicals before going to Hollywood in 1930.

There he was the mastermind behind elaborate dance numbers for projects like *42nd Street* (1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Dames* (1934). Using innovative camera techniques, he revolutionized the genre of the movie musical in the Great Depression era. That phase of his career, which he spent at the Warner Brothers studio, was followed by more sedate films in the 1940s and '50s, and he never regained his early feverish momentum.

Many of the dance numbers in *Mr. Popper's Penguins* were inspired by this director's style of choreography.

[Click here](#) to learn more about his life.

After the show

Making a nest

It's so cold down at the South Pole, and there's not a lot of warm materials for building nests. So penguins have to be very clever and pile together whatever they can find: stones and pebbles and the like.

—Mr. Popper, *Mr. Popper's Penguins*

In the play, Capt. Cook makes a rookery or nest out of materials he finds around the Popper's house. This is a great example of making the most of what is available to you. Look around the room right now. What are some items here that you could use to make a nest to feel safe and warm? As a class, see if you can build one right now. You may need to discuss and vote with the whole class before you add a new item to the nest. Why did you choose the items you did?

Now, think about your home and the people in your family. What are the items that make you feel safe? Who are the people who make you feel safe? Make a list of all the people and things, then find pictures or items that represent them.

After you have collected all the pictures and items, attach them to a paper plate. You may want to add paint, yarn or other items to help fill in the nest and make it look complete.



NCES-VisualArts.(K-3).VA.V.3: Create art using a variety of tools, media, and processes, safely and appropriately. NCES-TheaArts.2.TA.A.1.2: Analyze the relationships between events, characters, and settings.

Ork, ork, ork!

In the play, the penguins speak by making an “ork” sound. Using only the word “ork,” sing a song to your class. See if they can guess the song. Ask for a suggestion from the class a song everyone could sing together using only the word “ork.”



NCES-Music.1.MU.MR.1.2: Recognize melodic patterns, rhythmic patterns, dynamics, and forms when presented aurally.

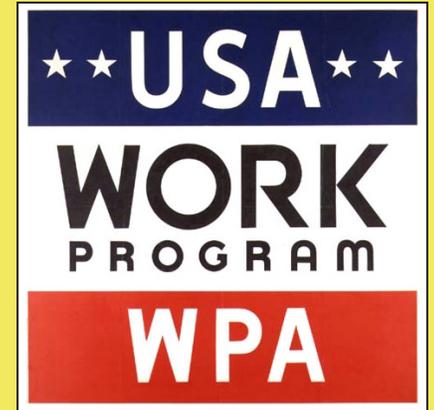
The BIG QUESTIONS after the show

1. 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”? How can you be one every day?
2. In the play, Adm. Drake bails the Poppers out of jail. When you have a problem, who do you call upon for help and why?
3. The Poppers decide it’s better to return the penguins to the South Pole. If you were Mr. Popper, what would you do with the penguins and why?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.(K-3).2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. NCES.P.C.1: Use creative strategies to make decisions and solve problems.

Work Projects Administration



The Work Projects Administration (WPA), created in 1935, was the largest and most ambitious American New Deal agency. It employed millions of people (mostly unskilled men) to carry out public works projects, including the construction of public buildings and roads. In the play, Mr. Popper is hired to paint houses and other buildings.

Almost every community in the United States had a new park, bridge or school constructed by the agency. The WPA's initial appropriation in 1935 was for \$4.9 billion (about 6.7 percent of the 1935 GDP). It was liquidated in 1943, as a result of low unemployment due to the worker shortage of World War II.

[Click here](#) to learn more about this project.

Worksheet for after the show

NAME _____

COPY PAGE

Mr. Popper had no difficulty in thinking of names for the penguin children. What do these names have in common? What do these names tell us about Mr. Popper? Do some research and find out more about the names listed below.

Nelson

Edward W. Nelson

Columbus

Christopher Columbus

Lousia

Isabella Louisa Stanley

Jenny

Legend of an English schooner

Scott

Captain Robert Falcon Scott

Magellan

Ferdinand Magellan

Adelina

Adelia Land

Isabella

Queen Isabella

Ferdinand

King Ferdinand

Victoria

Victoria Land

Check out these recommended books at your local library or order them online.

Recommended for lower elementary

Don't Be Afraid Little Pip

by Karma Wilson

Afraid to swim, Pip the penguin would much rather learn to fly than to swim in the water.

Up and Down

by Oliver Jeffers

Even though the penguin and the boy are close friends and do many things together, the penguin decides he wants to fly and he wants to do it on his own.

Nothing Ever Happens at the South Pole

by Stan Berenstain

When a little penguin receives a blank book in the mail he's eager to fill it with exciting things, but while he's seeking adventure he misses the action right before his eyes.

Grumpy Pants

by Claire Messer

Have you ever had a grumpy day and not known why? Penguin is having a grumpy day like that. No matter what he does, he just can't shake it!

Tacky the Penguin

by Helen Lester

Tacky the penguin doesn't fit in with his sleek and graceful companions, but his odd behavior comes in handy when hunters come with maps and traps.

Recommended for upper elementary

Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle

by Betty MacDonald

Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle lives in an upside-down house and smells like cookies. She was even married to a pirate once. Most of all, she knows everything about children. She can cure them of any ailment.

Stuart Little

by E.B. White

Stuart Little, the small mouse with the large heart and taste for adventure, sets forth into the world with some mighty big plans: to ride a Fifth Avenue bus; to win a sailboat race in Central Park and to find his lost friend, the lovely bird Margalo.

THEATRE CORNER

Every play Children's Theatre of Charlotte produces is created by a talented team of designers, technicians, actors and a director. A play is different from a television show or a movie because it's presented live. As a class, discuss what you experienced when you saw the performance.

1. Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed?
2. What did you like about the costumes? Did the costumes help tell the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
3. What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
4. Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story you forgot you were watching a play?
5. Were there any actors who played more than one character? What are some ways you can be the same person but play different characters?

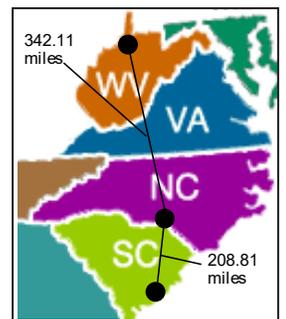


NCES-TheaArts.(K-3).TA.A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances. NCES-TheaArts.(K-3).TA.AE.1.2: Understand how costumes [and technical elements] enhance dramatic play.

Traveling with the tour

The Resident Touring Company (RTC) began in 1972 as the Tarradiddle Players, the vision of theatre educator Constance Welsh. In 1989, the company officially became part of Children's Theatre of Charlotte.

- If the RTC travels from Charleston, South Carolina, to Parkersburg, West Virginia, how many total miles would that be?
- The RTC van gets 15 miles per gallon of gas. How many gallons would it take to drive from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Parkersburg, West Virginia? If the van holds 20 gallons of gas, calculate the cost of travel based on current gas prices.
- The RTC will perform 400 times during the school year. If they perform five days per week, for about 34 weeks, how many average performances is this per day?



CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D.8: Solve two-step word problems using the four operations. Represent these problems using equations with a letter standing for the unknown quantity. Assess the reasonableness of answers using mental computation and estimation strategies including rounding.

Meet the Resident Touring Company



DEVIN CLARK is no stranger to Children's Theatre of Charlotte's stage. His previous shows include *Bud, Not Buddy*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* and *Coraline*. He has also worked with Theatre Charlotte, Carolina Actors Studio Theatre, Central Piedmont Community College and Shakespeare Carolina. He's blessed to be a part of this year's Resident Touring Company. He thanks his mother, family and friends for their continued support.



CLAIRE HILTON is thrilled to return to Children's Theatre of Charlotte as a member of the Resident Touring Company for the 2017-2018 season. Audiences may remember her as the precocious best friend Rose in *Grace for President* or as the empowered teenager Lenny in *Liars*. When not performing, she spends her time choreographing and in the classroom at Children's Theatre of Charlotte as a teaching artist. She has also performed and taught professionally with The National Theatre for Children, Mill Mountain Theatre and The American Shakespeare Center. Claire sends love to the Children's Theatre of Charlotte family for allowing this show (and her career) to go on!



STEVEN JAMES is excited to return to the Queen City after relocating to New York City two years ago! No stranger to Children's Theatre of Charlotte, audiences may remember him as Papa Bear in 2017's production of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* or as Raphael in *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. Along with his performing credits here, you might also know "Mr. Steven" from teaching Summer Camp and School of Theatre Training classes with the wonderful Education department! He sends his thanks to you for supporting the arts and all his love to the usual suspects!



SHELBY RAY appears on Children's Theatre of Charlotte's stage for the first time in these roles, and she couldn't be more excited for her debut. She's a graduate of East Carolina University (Go Pirates!), where she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre arts with a concentration in theatre for youth – performance. She's originally from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and moved to Charlotte after graduation. She started working at Children's Theatre of Charlotte's Education department in 2014, where she did everything from working as a class assistant to stage manager for OnStage. Audiences might also recognize her from working in the front of house for school show performances. She feels blessed to have this wonderful opportunity to spread the joy of theatre to young and old alike. She sends a special thank you to her family and friends for supporting her during this journey.



Write to Us!

Children's Theatre of Charlotte
300 E. Seventh St.
Charlotte, N.C. 28202



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(K-3).1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

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www.ncarts.org