A facilitator’s guide for youth workers, leaders, educators and families to accompany the movie, *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*.

Ages 6 to 12

Mr. Popper’s Penguins official website: www.popperspenguins.com/main.html

youthFILMproject.org
Dear Group Facilitator:

This F.I.L.M. curriculum for *Mr. Popper's Penguins* is structured for use in conjunction with watching the movie and reading the book by Richard and Florence Atwater.

Both the movie and the book are appropriate for ages 6-12. The themes of many of the questions and activities in the guide are appropriate for all ages, but may need to be reworded if used with younger youth.

The guide offers discussion topics, activities, and service-project ideas for youth. Celebrating reading, family relationships and memories, and animals and their environments are key themes in this guide.

**Synopsis**

Growing up in Brooklyn, New York, young Tommy Popper looks forward to the moments when, on his tiptoes to reach a ham radio in his bedroom, he can talk to his world-traveling father. Years later, Tommy is now Mr. Popper (Jim Carrey), a highly successful real estate developer in Manhattan. Amicably divorced from Amanda (Carla Gugino), with two children (Madeline Carroll and Maxwell Perry Cotton) he sees on alternate weekends, Mr. Popper lives the life of luxury in his ultra-modern Park Avenue apartment and is well on his way to becoming partner at his prestigious firm. That is, until the morning a final gift from Popper’s late father, a souvenir from Antarctica, arrives in a crate at Popper’s front door.

Inside the wooden box, nestled amongst ice packs, is a two-foot tall penguin with bright orange feet. Not a toy penguin, or a stuffed bird from the taxidermist, as Popper at first assumes, but a real, live penguin, who scampers across Popper’s floor and emits loud honks. Eager to be rid of this wild creature, Popper contacts every city and state agency imaginable, but no one is willing to take a pet penguin. His call to Antarctica to try to ship the bird back instead results in the arrival of another five penguins at Popper’s door.

As he gets acquainted with – and increasingly attached to – his winged roommates, Popper’s life quickly unravels: his swanky New York apartment is turned into a snowy winter wonderland, the deal he’s long been working on is derailed, and he almost lands in jail. But thanks to his new charges, Popper comes to understand the importance of family – human and otherwise.

F.I.L.M. curriculum is made possible through the partnership between Heartland Truly Moving Pictures and the National Collaboration for Youth. Heartland is a non-profit arts organization that seeks to recognize and honor filmmakers whose work explores the human journey. The National Collaboration for Youth is a non-profit organization providing a unified voice for its coalition of more than 50 national, non-profit, youth development organizations and concentrates on improving the conditions of youth in the United States and enabling youth to realize their full capabilities.
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The pencil icon designates pages of the curriculum that can be distributed to youth as worksheets.

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*Heartland is proud to partner with Kiwanis International on this F.I.L.M. guide. Kiwanis International is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time.*
Objectives for Youth

• Celebrate the journeys you can take while reading
• Explore animals and the environments in which they live
• Examine ways to preserve memories of your family and also the places you live and visit
• Take action towards bettering the lives of people and animals

Step 1.) Read the book and see the film.

The new movie, *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*, distributed by Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

It is rated PG for mild rude humor and some language.

Reading Materials:

*Mr. Popper’s Penguins* is based on the novel, also titled *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*, by Richard and Florence Atwater, first published in 1938. The book, which was awarded the Newberry Medal in 1939, tells the very funny yet touching story of a humble, small-town house painter and his family who inherit twelve penguins. It has become a classic through the generations, and remains a staple on elementary school shelves all over America. The most recent edition of *Mr. Popper’s Penguins* was published in 1992 by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Step 2.) Participate

Take part in meaningful discussion and activities

• Compare and contrast the text and film
• Develop ways to preserve family memories and start making new ones
• Discover and explore exotic animal environments

Step 3.) Take action to help others

After learning about animal environments, engage in work that might help to protect those animals. Also learn how to preserve some of our own environments, such as important historical locations, valuable for our own national memory and identity.
Note to the Facilitator:

In the book *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*, Tom Popper is a painter who loves to read. He always dreams of visiting exotic places around the world and reads all about the places he’d like to visit. Once he receives the penguins his life actually changes and he is able to visit all of these places that he had once read about. Though the film is quite different, there is still a focus on adventures one can have, especially with an open mind.

Objectives for Youth:

- Compare and contrast the film and text version of *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*
- Consider reading as a potential adventure
- Create a poem using alliteration
Directions: The Mr. Popper in the book is very different from the Mr. Popper in the movie. Use the discussion questions below to help explore these differences and similarities between the two characters.

Discussion

1. Mr. Popper in the film is very different from the Mr. Popper in the book. What are all the differences that you can think of?

2. In what ways are the two characters similar?

3. One Mr. Popper lives in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and one lives in New York City. Which place do you think would be easier to keep penguins? Why?

4. Mr. Popper dreams about visiting distant places and reads all about them. Once he gets the penguins, where are some of the places he gets to go?

5. Where are some of the places in the world that you would most like to go? Where are the places you would definitely not want to go?

6. In the film and the movie the Popper family is very happy to have the penguins. What exotic animal would you find the most fun to have as a family pet?

7. The film and the book both have interactions with a zoo/aquarium. What are the differences and similarities between the way they help or hurt the penguins?

8. In the book Mr. Popper is eager to have adventures in faraway lands. In the movie Mr. Popper has no desire to do any such thing. Why do these characters feel so differently?

9. This book was written in 1939. Do you think they could have made a movie based on the original book’s story that takes place today? Why or why not? What sorts of things from the book would seem out of place in today’s world?
Alliteration is repeating the sound of the first syllable of words, usually the sound of the first letter. Mr. Popper’s assistant, Pippa, loves using alliterations with the letter ‘P.’ This also happens to be the first letter of her name and the first letter of Mr. Potter’s last name. How convenient!

Directions: Write your own poem using as much alliteration as possible - in Pippa-speak! An easy poem structure to follow is one called a “Parts of Speech Poem.” Follow the directions for each line and check the example before you start your own. Pick any letter you want to use.

Line 1 – one article (a, an, the) + one noun
Line 2 – one adjective + one conjunction + one adjective
Line 3 – one verb + one conjunction + one verb
Line 4 – one adverb
Line 5 – one noun that relates to the noun in the first line

Sample:

Popper’s Penguins

A Penguin
Plucky and Proud
Prances and Plops
Playfully
Popper
Note to the Facilitator:

The film dives deeply into the environments of animals and where they thrive. In the movie, the zookeeper informs Mr. Popper that he shouldn’t keep the penguins in his apartment because they could become sick. We learn that animals are in specific environments for specific reasons and thrive in those places. Most humans wouldn’t do well living at the South Pole, but that’s where penguins are completely happy and healthy.

Objectives for Youth:

- Explore your own environment and those that you wish to visit
- Delve deeper into the workings of penguin life and communities
- Have fun exploring the environments of exotic animals
While penguins thrive in one environment, people thrive in another. The environment you live and thrive in may be entirely different than the environment other people you know live and thrive in. Take time to explore your own environment.

**Directions:** Participate in the activity below, then as a group use the discussion questions that follow to discuss the environment that surrounds you.

Go sit outside and then write down everything that you notice about the place you live. Try using each of your five senses - sight, smell, sound, touch and taste.

- What does it look like? Is it green and lush?
- What do you smell? Is there grass or is there pavement?
- What do you hear? Do you hear birds or cars?
- What does it feel like? Is it hot and muggy?
- You probably won’t want to taste anything, but what do you imagine some things might taste like? Are there plants or garden vegetables in your environment?

**Discussion**

1. How would you describe the environment where you live?
   a. What is the weather like?
   b. What is the temperature in the summer and winter?
   c. Does it rain a lot or not very much?
   d. Are there lots of houses in a small space or a few houses in a big space?
   e. Are there a lot of trees?
   f. What are the other plants like?
   g. What other animals do you see in your area?

2. What sort of effect do you think the answers to your questions have on the way you live?  
   Example: Think about the types of clothes you wear and about some of your favorite activities.

3. What are some other types of environments that other people and animals might live in?

4. Why do you think people live in the place where you live? What is good about it? What is something bad about it?
Penguins live in a very different environment than most people. Mr. Popper had to learn a lot about Gentoo Penguins to properly care for them. Do some of your own research and try to find the answers for as many of these questions as you can:

1. Where do Gentoo penguins live?

2. What do they eat?

3. What sorts of animals can cause the Gentoo penguins harm?

4. What do they look like? How can we tell Gentoo penguins from other types of penguins?

5. How did the Gentoo penguin get the name Gentoo?
Directions: When you’ve learned as much as you can about the Gentoo, draw it in its natural environment using the space below. Remember to include details you learned doing your research on the previous page.
Access to exotic animals is not available to many people throughout the world, especially people who live in cities. This is why zoos are so important. Zoos are places that allow people to view and study animals up close so that we can come to better understand these amazing animals that exist in the world. At zoos, sometimes you can come within inches of an animal! Try some of these activities to make your next visit to the zoo a memorable one.

**Activities**

- Walk like an animal – just like Charlie Chaplin walked like a penguin, try imitating some of the other animals after studying their walks.
- Play I Spy.
- Try to find at least one animal from each of the seven continents.
- Have a contest with your zoo companions on who can spot the most animals with stripes. Choose other categories, such as the most animals with webbed feet or the most animals with hooves.
- Have an adult create a scavenger hunt for you.

**Activity Extension**

After you’ve had a day of fun at the zoo, think back to all the animals you enjoyed seeing, then select your favorite one. Write a short report on that animal in the space below, using the information you learned while visiting it at the zoo.

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
Note to the Facilitator:

In the film, Mr. Popper had a hard time selling the Tavern on the Green. Part of it was that he was preoccupied with penguins, but he also had memories associated with the restaurant that were nostalgic and heartfelt. We learn that his father used to bring him there as a child. Like Tavern on the Green is important to Mr. Popper, there are many places that hold special meaning for us as individuals, as a community and as a nation. There are also many ways to hold onto special memories that we all have.

Objectives for Youth:

- Develop ways to preserve your own history and memories
- Discover preservation efforts in your community and around your home
- Create new memories with family and friends
Tom Popper has let go of a lot of memories of his father. One thing that brings them all pouring back is when he visits the Tavern on the Green, a famous landmark in New York City’s Central Park. There are many ways that you can also revive or hold onto family memories and be able to see them every day.

Making a Scrapbook

Create a scrapbook! A scrapbook is a personalized book that you fill with your very own memories of yourself, your family, and friends. While some people go out and buy fancy pre-made scrapbooks, you can make your own by using brown paper sacks or construction paper!

Materials:
- 3-5 small paper sacks or pages of construction paper
- Hole Puncher
- Ruler
- Pencil
- A binding material (yarn, string, brads, etc)
- Scissors
- Coloring materials
- Memories!

Directions

1. Stack the paper sacks so they are lying back and forth with alternating ends. Or stack construction paper.
2. Fold the bags or stack of paper in half. Look, you already have your spine! If you have someone at home who has a sewing machine, have them sew up the spine to make it easier to work with. If you don’t, no worries! Just move on to step 3.
3. Use the hole-punch to punch holes along the spine. Try doing it evenly so they are all either one half inch or one inch apart from each other. Using a ruler to measure and marking the spot to punch out will help.
4. Finish out your binding with whatever you’d like to use: metal brads, yarn or colored string.
5. Decorate! Use your imagination to design, color, and paste on the cover of your scrapbook. Make sure to write that this is a “Book of Memories” across the front.
6. Decide what the theme of your book will be: family vacation, friends on your street or your best summer ever. Start collecting ideas and pieces you can use in your book: photos, magazine and newspaper clippings, stickers, drawings.

Note: When filling your scrapbook with memories an photos, make sure if you use photos that aren’t yours that you ask an adult first.
Section Two: Preserving History

ACTIVITY

We learn history because it helps us know where we came from and how we got to where we are now. Sometimes history can feel kind of boring because it is so often full of dates and names of people that we don’t know anything about. However, history can be amazing when you see artifacts and stories that have come from people of the past.

Creating a Time Capsule

Try creating your own box of artifacts, known as a time capsule, to bury for a person in the future to find, and to help them learn about you and the time in which you grew up.

Important note before starting: You should work with an adult on this project. You can use their opinions about what they think is important in this time. You’ll also be doing some digging, so you’ll need advice on where to bury your capsule.

Directions

1. Find a box about the size of a shoebox (metal is preferable, but wood or cardboard will work) and a sealable plastic bag or multiple smaller bags that will fit inside.
2. Collect an assortment of objects, pictures, photos, and general “artifacts” that you think represent what is popular and important today. Make sure to collect some from the adult who is helping you as well.
3. Write a list of what the artifacts are and a description of what each looks like.
4. Write a note to the people who will be opening up your time capsule. Tell them what daily life is like for you. Describe some of the places that you like to go (restaurants, museums, etc.).
5. Put everything inside a plastic bag and seal it as much as you can.
6. Put the bag inside the box and find a spot where you can bury it. This should be on your own property, or the property of someone you know and who does not mind.
7. Create a specific time for people in the future to open your time capsule.
8. Bury it near a tree or other building in the area so that it is well marked.
9. Register your time capsule with the International Time Capsule Society at Oglethorpe University.

www.oglethorpe.edu/about_us/crypt_of_civilization/international_time_capsule_society.asp
The best way to learn about history is to learn it from the people who experienced it first-hand. After creating a time capsule to celebrate your history, take the time to learn more about someone else’s history.

**Directions:** Interview the oldest person that you know about what their life was like well before you were born. You can write down the answers to these questions, or if you have access to a video camera or audio recorder, you can preserve the interview digitally.

1. When were you born?
2. Where did you live and grow up?
3. What was it like there?
4. What was your school called?
5. What was school like?
6. Who was your first best friend?
7. Who was a person of influence in your life?
8. How did you meet these important people in your life?
9. What sorts of things did you do together?
10. What was the first car you owned or drove?
11. What was the first movie you saw?
12. What TV shows do you remember from when you were younger?
13. What was the first current event (or news event) that you remember?
14. What has changed most in the country or world since you were my age?

Thinking of questions that you would be interested in knowing will help make the interview more personal. After conducting the interview and recording the answers, give it to an adult for safe-keeping. These memories you have helped preserve can be shared with others in the future.
Directions: After you’ve conducted your interview, take the time to reflect on some things that you learned using the discussion questions below.

Discussion

1. What was the most interesting thing you learned from the interview?

2. Did you know any of this information they told you before the interview? Or was most of this new information?

3. What do you think the biggest difference is between what your life is like and the life of the person you interviewed?

4. What do you think is the most similar?

5. Did the person remember their past in details, such as names of people and years that events took place?

6. Do you think you’ll remember the answers to all these questions when you are their age?
Tom Popper lived by himself, but had two children who would stay with him every other weekend. When he was growing up he lived with married parents, but his father was always away on an expedition.

For some people family is the group of people that you live with and for some people family includes mentors, teachers or friends. Families look very different in every household. Many people even consider their best friends a part of their family. What does your family look like? How can you create new memories with them?

Directions: Use the discussion questions below to explore what family means to you.

**Discussion**

1. Who are the people that you live with?
2. How many people live with you in your house?
3. What are their ages?
4. How are they related to you?
5. Are there other people you consider close or “family” who don’t live in your house? If so, why are you close with these people?
6. Does your family remind you of another person’s family that you know? Or a family on TV or in a movie?
7. What are the fun things that you do together as a family?
8. Who are the people that you think are members of Mr. Popper’s family? Do these people live with him? Why are these people his family?

Spending time with family and friends is the best way to make new memories. Find some ideas of great ways to spend time on the following page! These activities can help you develop new memories and help you fill a scrapbook to record wonderful things. Don’t forget to bring a camera, or at least take mental snapshots that you can remember to draw when you get home. Pick up any brochures of places you visit.
Activity Ideas

• Go on a hike in a park where you’ve never been.
• With a friend or relative, take a walk through an area you know well, but look for new details along the way.
• Have a picnic! This can even be in your own yard.
• Visit a museum that you love or that you’ve never visited before.
• Enjoy an ice-cream cone outside and watch the people go by.
• Go ice skating.
• Enjoy an amazing sunset when one comes along.
• Go firefly catching in your yard or neighborhood.
• Plan a game night.
• Have a scavenger hunt in your neighborhood.
• Join a club with a friend or relative and participate in activities you really enjoy.
• Get involved with a volunteer group and make friends and make a difference all at the same time!

Fill a scrapbook with the memories you create on these adventures.
Note to the Facilitator:

Mr. Popper was moved to act in the interest of preservation and conservation. He was motivated by his own memories of the Tavern on the Green to preserve it, and motivated by his children’s love for penguins which were in danger of being shipped off to a zoo to take care of these creatures.

Oftentimes children see problems in their community and around the world and want to make changes for the best. They can be some of the most spirited proponents of making change for the better. With a helping hand from an adult, kids have a great opportunity to help in preservation and conservation efforts both locally and globally.

Objectives for Youth:

• Help exotic animals in your community and around the world
• Help to preserve historic places
Mr. Popper realized by the end of the film that he needed to take the penguins back to their original habitat, which was in Antarctica. Many people keep exotic animals out of their natural environment which can be both dangerous to the animal and sometimes dangerous for the owner.

Take Action

Many areas of the country have their own exotic animal rescue centers. Plan a fundraiser for either your local center or the International Exotic Animal Sanctuary (IEAS) and help fulfill their wish list in order to best care for the animals!

The mission of the IEAS is, “to provide a permanent sanctuary for exotic animals that have been abused, abandoned, neglected, confiscated, or previously owned by people unwilling or unable to provide for these magnificent beings.” They also work diligently on educating the public about exotic animals.

Some options for fundraisers include:

- A lemonade stand (selling a themed lemonade such as Lion Lemonade)
- Plan a bake sale at school or church with an animal-based theme – Penguin Peppermint Patties, anyone? Or maybe sell treats for pets? Homemade dog biscuits are always a big hit.
- Try to get sponsorship and advertising from a local pet shop, and plan a Dog-Walk-a-Thon
- Have a canned food drive! Many of the animals at the IEAS eat canned fruits and vegetables too. It’s even on their wish list.

Visit the IEAS site for their wish-list needs and more information about making donations. www.bigcat.org/howtohelp/pages/how_to_help

Activity Extension

Become a Junior Zookeeper. Many zoos and petting zoos require the help of volunteers to help with the animals. Check with your local zoo to find out if there is a Junior Zookeeper program.
Mr. Popper had a special place in his heart for the Tavern on the Green, which is a very famous spot in New York City's Central Park. Most people have a place that is very dear to them, whether it is a building, a park or an entire town. There are ways to protect these places to make sure that you and other people will continue to enjoy them.

Take Action

Plan a beautification day of an outdoor area that is dear to you. Keep America Beautiful, and its local affiliates, plans a Great American Clean Up every year from March through May. If you don’t have access to a nearby affiliate, try creating your own Great American Cleanup group.

1. Set your time and date for the Great American Cleanup and make sure people know about it.
2. Make a to-do list. What do you want accomplished in this effort?
3. Find other people who would be interested in helping to clean up this area. You might find these people at school, in your after school club or in your neighborhood.
4. Ask an adult to help you pass out flyers to local businesses that are in the neighborhood. They can promote your clean-up activity! They might also be glad to donate some clean-up or beautification materials.
5. Contact your local sanitation (trash) company to find out if they can provide large bags or receptacles for your cleanup efforts.
6. Get started!

Visit the Keep America Beautiful website to find out more information about how to create your own Great American Clean-Up crew:

www.kab.org/site/PageServer?pagename=gac_organizeyourown
Dear Group Facilitator,

Please take a few moments to answer the questions in the evaluation for the *Mr. Popper’s Penguins* Discussion Guide at www.youthFILMproject.org and click on “Evaluations.”

We value your feedback, and your comments and stories can help inspire others and keep the F.I.L.M. Project alive.

Please visit www.youthFILMproject.org at the completion of this curriculum and tell us what you think. You can also send your stories to FILMinfo@trulymovingpictures.org.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely yours,

The FILM Team

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