



## A Lesson on Penguins by Sarena Shabetai

**Grade Level:** Grade 4

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 2 hours

**Lesson Keywords:** penguins, birds, mammal, vocabulary

**Lesson Description:** This lesson is designed to test student's reading comprehension and writing skills through an interesting passage about penguins. They will closely read the text to learn new vocabulary and critically think when responding to discussion questions. They will demonstrate that they can back up their opinions with facts and details from the text and from their lives.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1b: Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

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## Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

**Instructions:** Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

### Penguins by

**Content:** The penguin is a bird, but it does not fly. Penguins are not like other birds. They are unique birds, and although they do have feathers, even their feathers are unusual. Other birds have rows of feathers that grow in a specific pattern. A penguin's feathers grow all over, like hair on a mammal. You will not see penguins in the air, and you will not see them in trees. You will see them in the water, in fact you will see them below the surface of the water if you have an underwater video camera.

The penguin is an ocean bird, living in and near the ocean. The penguin spends much time in the ocean, so much of its life is unknown. People only get to know penguins well when they are on land, and the penguin can be at sea for months at a time.

While the penguin is not a great flier as the eagle is, the penguin can out-swim most birds and probably out-swims some other aquatic animals. The penguin has thick strong wings and flippers instead of feet that it uses to push through the water. When the penguin is on land, it walks along slowly, and this limited mobility may be one reason the penguin spends more time in the water. The penguin's food source is in the water, the fish it catches. They have solid bones, while other birds have bones that are not solid.

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## Task 1: Vocabulary

**Instructions:** Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

**Q: 1 WordPhrase:** Unique **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author of our story says, "They are unique birds, and although they do have feathers, even their feathers are unusual." What does the word "unique" mean in this sentence?

- A: Being similar to other birds
- B: Being unlike anything else
- C: Being colorful
- D: Joyful

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "unique" correctly?

- A: The frog was unique in that it looked like all the other frogs.
- B: Her unique hat could be found in every Walmart across America.
- C: He was unique because he wore his pants over his underwear.
- D: Sarah was unique and presented her book report as a rap instead of the more commonly used Powerpoint presentation.

**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** Solid **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author of our story says, "They have solid bones, while other birds have bones that are not solid." What does the word "solid" mean in this sentence?

- A: Hollow or containing spaces or gaps
- B: Strong
- C: Not hollow or containing spaces or gaps
- D: Weak

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "solid" correctly?

- A: My hot tea was solid in my cup.
- B: The ice was frozen solid; there was no danger of it cracking.
- C: The tree branch was solid; it threatened to break at the slightest tug.
- D: The bird's bones were solid; they had pockets of air in them.

**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** Mammal **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author of our story says, "A penguin's feathers grow all over, like hair on a mammal." What does the word "mammal" mean in this sentence?

- A: A warm blooded animal that grows fur or hair
- B: A human
- C: A cold blooded animal that has dry scaly skin
- D: A bird

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "mammal" correctly?

- A: A snake is a mammal because it is cold blooded and lays eggs.
- B: A bird is a mammal because it is warm blooded and lays eggs.
- C: A dog is a mammal because it is warm blooded and grows fur.
- D: A spider is a mammal because it grows fur.

**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** Aquatic animals **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author in our story says, "While the penguin is not a great flier as the eagle is, the penguin can out-swim most birds and probably out-swims some other aquatic animals." What does the phrase "aquatic animals" mean in this sentence?

- A: An animal which must mate near a body of water
- B: An animal which is afraid of the water
- C: An animal which needs to drink water to survive
- D: An animal which lives in the water for most or all of its lifetime

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the phrase "aquatic animals" correctly?

- A: Dolphins are aquatic animals because they spend their whole lives in the ocean.
- B: Puffins are aquatic animals because they nest near the ocean.
- C: Dogs are aquatic animals because they enjoy swimming in water.
- D: Birds are aquatic animals because they must drink water to survive.

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## Task 2: Forum Discussion

**Instructions:** This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

### 1 - Why do penguins have solid bones?

The author says about penguins, They have solid bones, while other birds have bones that are not solid. Why might it be beneficial for penguins to have solid bones? Why is it not beneficial for other birds?

### 2 - What features of penguins guide their movements?

The author says that the penguin has limited mobility on land but can out-swim most birds. What specific features of the penguin help it move through the water and which hinder its movement on land?

### 3 - Penguins can't fly, why?

In the passage, the author says, While the penguin is not a great flier as the eagle is, the penguin can out-swim most birds and probably out-swims some other aquatic animals. How would the penguin's body and features have to adapt for them to be able to fly? Would the penguin still be able to swim as well with these adaptations??

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### Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** Our author says, Penguins are not like other birds. How are penguins alike and different compared to other birds you've learned about? Please use specific examples from the text and your own knowledge, including both physical and environmental differences. This should be a minimum of two paragraphs. The first paragraph will detail how penguins are like other birds, the second will explain how they are different.

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