

ONE COOL FRIEND

by Toni Buzzeo
illustrated by David Small



TEACHING GUIDE

WAS THERE A PENGUIN MISSING AT THE NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM?

Begin by introducing the concept of an “urban legend.” Explain that an urban legend is a type of folklore story that is shared widely and seems plausible but quite likely has no basis in reality. To make it seem true, the teller of the tale will refer to a reliable person who is said to have actually experienced the event. An urban legend will often also have an implied moral.

If time allows, present one of the “microwaved pets” legends to your students (see <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/the-microwaved-pet/> for examples). Discuss the plausibility of the tale, its origins, and its implied anti-technology moral.

Then, discuss the origin of One Cool Friend. Tell students that Toni Buzzeo first heard the story in a teacher's room. Because she was uncertain that it was true, she did some online research and uncovered this information by accessing snopes.com's Critter Country pages: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/category/animals/>.

As a fiction writer, Toni didn't feel that she needed the legend to be true in order to write a fabulous book based on the story. Discuss other ways Toni may have written the story after discovering that the urban legend wasn't true.



ILLUSTRATION © DAVID SMALL

URBAN LEGENDS AS FICTION LAUNCHING PADS

After you complete the Urban Legend activity, invite your students, as a group or individually, to create a fictional story from an urban legend of their choosing. Ask students to focus on the plausible nature of facts of the legend and build a story that will entertain its readers.

Because many urban legends online are not appropriate for children, you may want to choose from one of the following:

1. Neiman Marcus Cookies

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/neiman-marcus-cookies/>

2. Crabzilla

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/crabzilla/>

PENGUIN INVESTIGATIONS

[Note: This activity is part of a Picture Book Extender by Toni Buzzeo, originally published by EBSCO/NoveList (<http://www.ebscohost.com/novelist>)]

Magellan is a Magellanic penguin from South America. Like many penguins today, Magellanic penguins are threatened by commercial fishing, oil pollution in the ocean, and climate change.

With your students, undertake an exploration of a variety of penguin species and the threats to their health and safety today. Vulnerable, threatened, and endangered penguins include:

- African penguins
- Emperor penguins
- Erect-crested penguins
- Galapagos penguins
- Gentoo penguins
- Humboldt penguins
- Macaroni penguins
- Rockhopper Penguins
- Yellow-eyed penguins

An excellent source of this status information is the SeaWorld website at: <https://seaworld.org/animals/all-about/penguins/>

If time allows, post a world map on the wall or bulletin board and place a pin at the location of each threatened penguin species with a string attached to a fact card about the problem. Or, if you have a large globe, you may want to use it in the same way.

IT REMINDS ME OF MYSELF

One of the reasons that Elliot likes the penguins at the aquarium is that they remind him of himself. Begin by discussing the similarities between Elliot and Magellan, searching both text and illustrations for as many as you can find.



ILLUSTRATION © DAVID SMALL

Next, supply students with an extensive collection of photographic nonfiction books from the library's collection. Include all families of animals, mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, as well as invertebrates.

Challenge students to find and place a sticky note on the page of any animal that reminds them of themselves. Once they have several marked, ask them to identify the characteristic that makes them similar to this animal. Is it something about the way the animal looks—Red hair/fur? Friendly expression?—or something the animal does well—Swim? Climb? Jump?

If time allows, ask students to create a pair of illustrations—one of themselves and one of their chosen animals. Display each pair of pictures together labeled with the common characteristic.

WHAT WOULD YOU BRING HOME?

[Note: This activity is part of a Picture Book Extender by Toni Buzzeo, originally published by EBSCO/NoveList (<http://www.ebscohost.com/novelist>)]

Something about the penguins “in their tidy black feather tuxedos with their proper posture” reminded Elliot of himself, so he wanted one of his own. But perhaps your students would rather bring home a different animal from the aquarium, aviary, or zoo.

Begin by reading fictional tales of children with unlikely pets. Suggested titles include:

- *365 Penguins* by Jean-Luc Fromental
- *Aaaarrgghh! Spider!* by Lydia Monks
- *Billy Twitters and His Big Blue Whale Problem* by Mac Barnett
- *Buying, Training, and Caring for your Dinosaur* by Laura Rennert
- *Don't Take our Snake for a Stroll* by Karin Ireland
- *No Place for a Pig* by Suzanne Bloom
- *That Pesky Rat* by Lauren Child
- *When Dinosaurs Came with Everything* by Elise Broach



ILLUSTRATION © DAVID SMALL

Next, invite students to brainstorm a list of potential unusual animal pets. Once the list is complete, ask them to complete the matrix below for the four or five of the choicest animals.

| Animal | What does the animal need? | What problems might be caused? | What benefit might be gained? |
|--------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Now, ask each student to choose one unusual animal they'd like to "adopt" and bring home from the aquarium, aviary, or zoo. Ask them to answer each of the three questions as applied to their chosen animal.

EXTENSION

If time allows or you would like to connect this activity to a science unit on animals, consider allowing students to conduct research on their chosen animal so that their answers to the three questions are based on facts about the animal's needs, habits, and extraordinary features, which may be either advantageous or detrimental.

As a final product, consider having each student write a persuasive paragraph from the animal's point of view arguing that it is the perfect pet.