

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Main Idea & Supporting Details

Read the short story and answer each question.



Why Do Penguins Waddle?

Penguins may not be fast runners, but their funny waddle has an important purpose. Their bodies are built for swimming, not walking. Because of this, they move differently on land.

A penguin's legs are set far back on its body. This makes walking straight difficult, so they rock from side to side as they move. Scientists call this waddling. It might look clumsy, but waddling actually helps penguins save energy.

Researchers have found that penguins use less energy waddling than they would walking with flat steps like people. The rocking motion lets them shift their weight easily and glide forward with each step. This is important in cold places where energy is needed to stay warm.

Penguins also use their strong feet and claws to grip ice and snow. In slippery places, waddling gives them better balance than running would.

So even though penguins look silly when they waddle, it's actually the perfect way for them to move on land.



Name: _____

Why Do Penguins Waddle?

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Penguins waddle because their bodies are built for swimming, not walking.
- B. Penguins are birds that live in the ocean.
- C. Penguins can run fast on land.
- D. Penguins only waddle when it is warm.

2. How does waddling help penguins?

- A. It saves energy and helps them balance on slippery ice.
- B. It makes them taller than other birds.
- C. It helps them swim faster.
- D. It makes their legs stronger.

3. Fill in the blank:

Penguins use their feet and claws to _____ the ice and stay balanced.

4. What are two key details from the text that explain how waddling helps penguins survive?

5. How do those details support the main idea about why penguins move the way they do?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: N

Lexile Level: 530L-680L

Grade Level: 3rd Grade, Beginning of the Year

Genre: Informational / Animal Science

Introducing the Text

"Today we're reading about penguins and their unusual way of walking—called waddling. As we read, we'll look for the main idea and find supporting details that explain how waddling actually helps penguins survive in their environment."

Vocabulary: waddle, balance, energy, grip, slippery

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever seen a penguin walk or waddle?
 2. Why do you think some animals move differently than others?
 3. What would it be like to try walking on slippery ice?
-

During Reading Discussion Questions

1. Why are a penguin's legs placed differently than ours?
 2. What does the text say about energy and the cold?
 3. How do penguins use their feet to help them stay safe?
-

After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is the main idea of the passage?
 2. What two details helped you understand why waddling is useful for penguins?
 3. How does this new information change the way you think about penguins?
-

Activity Idea

Let students act out different animal walks—like waddling, hopping, crawling, or gliding—then write a sentence about how each movement helps the animal survive in its environment. They can draw themselves waddling like a penguin and label the motion and body parts used.

