



# The Penguin — An Extreme Survivor of the Frozen South

Reading Worksheet — Level F | [tahricteaches.com](http://tahricteaches.com)

The penguin is one of the most fascinating birds on Earth. Although it has wings, the penguin lost the ability to fly millions of years ago. Instead, its wings became powerful flippers that allow it to "fly" through the water. Penguins have **adapted** to live in some of the harshest places on the planet, from the icy shores of Antarctica to the rocky islands of Africa and South America.

There are about 18 different kinds of penguins, but the most famous is the emperor. The **emperor** penguin is the largest of them all, standing more than a meter tall and weighing up to 40 kilograms. Emperors live on the frozen **continent** of Antarctica, where temperatures can drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius. To **survive** in such **extreme** cold, they grow a thick layer of fat and several layers of **feather** coverings that trap warm air close to the body.

Penguins are excellent swimmers. Some species can dive more than 500 meters deep and hold their breath for over 20 minutes. They hunt fish, squid, and tiny shrimp-like animals called krill. A single emperor penguin can swallow several kilograms of food in one trip to the sea, building up energy for the long months on land.

Penguin life is built around the **colony**. Thousands of birds gather together to breed, raise their young, and **protect** each other from freezing winds. Emperor parents share the work in a remarkable way. After the mother lays one egg, she returns to the sea to feed, while the father balances the egg on his feet under a special flap of skin. He goes without food for two months until the egg can **hatch** and his partner returns with a full stomach to feed the chick.

Sadly, the penguin's frozen world is changing. Rising temperatures, melting sea ice, and ocean pollution are damaging the cold **environment** these birds depend on. Some scientists warn that emperor penguin colonies could disappear by the end of this century if global warming continues. Protecting penguins means protecting the oceans and polar regions — a challenge that connects every part of our planet.

## A. Vocabulary

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|-------------------|---|
| 1. adapt ____     | a. one of the light, soft coverings that grow on a bird's body      |
| 2. emperor ____   | b. to keep safe from harm or danger                                 |
| 3. continent ____ | c. to continue to live, especially in difficult conditions          |
| 4. survive ____   | d. the natural world; the surroundings in which living things exist |

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|----------------------|---|
| 5. extreme ____      | e. a male ruler of an empire; here, the name of the largest penguin species     |
| 6. feather ____      | f. one of the seven great land areas of the world, such as Africa or Antarctica |
| 7. colony ____       | g. very great in degree; far beyond what is usual                               |
| 8. protect ____      | h. a large group of animals or insects that live together in one place          |
| 9. hatch ____        | i. to come out of an egg; or to cause an egg to break open                      |
| 10. environment ____ | j. to change in order to fit a new situation or environment                     |



### B. True or False

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1. Penguins lost the ability to fly millions of years ago. \_\_\_\_
2. There are about 18 different kinds of penguins in the world. \_\_\_\_
3. Emperor penguins can stand more than one meter tall. \_\_\_\_
4. Antarctica temperatures can drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius. \_\_\_\_
5. Some penguins can dive more than 500 meters deep. \_\_\_\_
6. Penguins only eat plants and seaweed. \_\_\_\_
7. The mother emperor penguin keeps the egg warm on her feet for two months. \_\_\_\_
8. Penguins gather in colonies of thousands to breed and stay warm. \_\_\_\_
9. Rising temperatures and melting sea ice are threats to penguin colonies. \_\_\_\_

### C. Fill in the Blanks

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**Word Bank:** adapt, survive, extreme, colony, environment

1. Penguins have \_\_\_\_\_ to live in some of the harshest places on the planet.
2. To \_\_\_\_\_ in such cold, emperor penguins grow a thick layer of fat and many feathers.
3. Antarctica is so cold that penguins must endure \_\_\_\_\_ temperatures of minus 60 degrees.
4. Thousands of birds gather in one large \_\_\_\_\_ to breed and protect each other.
5. Rising temperatures are damaging the cold \_\_\_\_\_ that penguins depend on.

#### **D. Comprehension Questions**

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1. Why can penguins no longer fly, and how do they use their wings instead?
2. Describe how emperor penguins survive the extreme cold of Antarctica.
3. What do penguins eat, and what makes them excellent swimmers?
4. Explain the role of the father emperor penguin during the breeding season.
5. What are the main threats to penguins today, and why does this matter for the planet?

#### **E. Discussion Questions**

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1. Some people say that the disappearance of emperor penguins would be a warning sign for the whole planet. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. What can ordinary people do in their daily lives to help protect cold-weather animals like penguins?
3. If you could design one new law to protect penguins and their environment, what would it be? Explain your reasoning.



# Answer Key

## The Penguin — An Extreme Survivor of the Frozen South

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**A. Vocabulary:** 1-j, 2-e, 3-f, 4-c, 5-g, 6-a, 7-h, 8-b, 9-i, 10-d

**B. True/False:** 1-T, 2-T, 3-T, 4-T, 5-T, 6-F, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T

**C. Fill Blanks:** 1-adapted, 2-survive, 3-extreme, 4-colony, 5-environment

**D. Comprehension:**

1. Penguins lost the ability to fly millions of years ago, but their wings became powerful flippers that allow them to 'fly' through the water as expert swimmers.
2. Emperor penguins grow a thick layer of fat and several layers of feathers that trap warm air close to the body, allowing them to survive temperatures as low as minus 60 degrees Celsius.
3. Penguins hunt fish, squid, and krill. They are excellent swimmers because they can dive more than 500 meters deep and hold their breath for over 20 minutes.
4. After the mother lays one egg and returns to the sea to feed, the father balances the egg on his feet under a flap of skin and goes without food for two months until the chick hatches.
5. The main threats are rising temperatures, melting sea ice, and ocean pollution. This matters because penguins depend on cold polar environments, and damage to those regions is a warning sign of larger global changes.