

Unit 2 Storytelling

2a March of the Penguins

Reading a film documentary

1 Read the interview with a film director and answer the questions.

1 What is unusual about the lives of the penguins?

2 What is the theme of the film?

Glossary

breed (v) /bri:d/ have children

hatch (v) /hætʃ/ be born from an egg

chick (n) /tʃɪk/ a baby bird

2 Read the interview again and choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

- 1 The penguins make the long journey across Antarctica to *find food* / *have chicks*.
- 2 The mother penguins must hurry back from the ocean to feed *their young* / *the males*.
- 3 The director thinks the penguins' story was suited to film because it is *dramatic* / *romantic*.
- 4 It was easy to film the penguins because they are *friendly* / *predictable*.
- 5 The interviewer is surprised that the penguins can survive *out of water* / *in such hard conditions*.

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March of the Penguins tells the remarkable story of emperor penguins who each year journey for hundreds of miles across the ice of Antarctica to reach their traditional breeding ground. After laying a single egg, the females return to the ocean for fish, leaving the males behind to guard the eggs, which they balance on top of their feet, even during snowstorms. After two months, during which the males eat nothing, the eggs begin to hatch. But if the mothers are late returning from the ocean with food, the chicks will die. French director Luc Jacquet spoke to us about the challenges of making *March of the Penguins*.

Your background is as a biologist. How did you become interested in penguins?

In 1992, I spent fourteen months at the French scientific centre in Antarctica doing research. In my career, I have also worked as a cameraman. I helped to shoot another film, *The Congress of the Penguins*, in 1995. I was also inspired by the sheer beauty of Antarctica, and I felt this was a great story for the movies. It has all the elements of great drama – love, life, death.

In the film, the narration comes from the penguins' perspective – we hear their thoughts. Why did you choose this storytelling technique?

I wanted to get away from the documentary genre and to write a story that made the viewer feel like he or she was really right there with the penguins.

How did you approach the penguins?

It was easy to get near them. They have never experienced any form of colonisation, so they're not scared of humans. They are also easy to work with because it's possible to anticipate everything they do – the route they will take, or how they will act in any given situation.

How would you describe the overall theme of the movie?

I wanted to tell things as I felt them, rather than as a scientist. It's about the struggle between life and death. The penguins have learned to live where no other creature can. This is what struck me the most. How do they do that? How do they manage?

The penguins are bad walkers. How did nature allow them to make this terrible trek across the ice?

That's a good question, and I haven't found an answer for it. But I think if you gave the penguins the option of spending all their lives underwater, they would take it.

3 Look at the interview again. Find words that mean:

- 1 to film _____
- 2 motivated _____
- 3 a type of film _____
- 4 to predict _____
- 5 made an impression on _____

Grammar past simple and present perfect

4 Look at the film-maker's answers in the interview. Find examples of the following:

- 1 his experience in general (present perfect) _____
- 2 something he did at a specific time in the past (past simple) _____
- 3 something the penguins did in the past that has a present result (present perfect) _____

5 Complete the final part of the interview using the verbs in the present perfect simple and past simple forms.

Some would say you have to be crazy to spend more than a year in such an inhospitable environment.

I ¹ _____ (met) many explorers and adventurers in my life. Some of them ² _____ (spend) their careers climbing mountains, others like to cross the desert or the sea. I ³ _____ (always / feel) comfortable in the polar environment. On this visit, I ⁴ _____ (get) a particular sense of adventure. Yes, I ⁵ _____ (encounter) a lot of difficulties. But once I had been there for a while, my body ⁶ _____ (adapt) to the environment. Over time, I ⁷ _____ (learn) to deal with the terrific wind, which in some ways is worse than the cold temperatures. Everyone who ⁸ _____ (visit) the polar regions for any length of time will tell you this. What you have to do is to learn to minimise body movement. So I ⁹ _____ (not / run) anywhere when I was there. I just ¹⁰ _____ (do) everything carefully and slowly.

Vocabulary books and films

6 Complete the review of *March of the Penguins* using these words.

audience accurate cast director
gripping location sentimental scenes
storyline touching

The ¹ _____ Jacquet has made a visually stunning film. But some people may find his approach to the penguins is too ² _____, because he has romanticised their story by giving them a human voice.

I found it more ³ _____ than many thrillers, and more ⁴ _____ than many romantic films. And all without a ⁵ _____ of human actors.

Filmed on ⁶ _____ in Antarctica, *March of the Penguins* paints an ⁷ _____ picture of how harsh life can be for these creatures. Behind the basic ⁸ _____ of the struggle for survival is a message for the ⁹ _____ about modern family life. It contains some extraordinary ¹⁰ _____, such as the males protecting their eggs in a raging blizzard.

7 Pronunciation the letter /

1.11 Look at these words. Write S if you think the letter 't' is silent. Then listen and check.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1 talk _____ | 6 installed _____ |
| 2 silk _____ | 7 folk _____ |
| 3 bold _____ | 8 wild _____ |
| 4 could _____ | 9 calm _____ |
| 5 calf _____ | 10 film _____ |

8 Dictation describing books and films

1.12 Listen to someone describing the book *A week at the Airport*. Complete the sentences.

- 1 The _____ Alain de Botton's _____, *A Week at the Airport*, is Heathrow airport.
- 2 The _____ that passes through the airport.
- 3 The _____ with travellers and airline staff.
- 4 _____ is that if you are looking for somewhere that _____, you don't need to look any further than an airport.