



Classroom Guide for
Puffling Patrol
Written and illustrated by
Ted Lewin and Betsy Lewin

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grades 4–5

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: R

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.4/.5

Lexile™ Measure: 910

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Animals (puffins), Environments and Habitats, Environmental Change, Animal Rescue and Preservation, Animal Science, Childhood Experiences, Societal Customs

Synopsis

Every April, the Westman Islands off the coast of Iceland become home to hundreds of thousands of puffins, small black-and-white seabirds with colorful bills. They spend the summer on the rocky cliffs of the islands, caring for their newly hatched chicks. By the middle of August, it is time for the young puffins, called pufflings, to make their way to the sea. And that is when the children of The Puffling Patrol are called to action.

Ted and Betsy Lewin journey to Heimaey, one of the Westman Islands, to experience The Puffling Patrol's endeavors firsthand. But first the Lewins join a research team that is monitoring the puffins' burrows to check how well the chicks are growing. Then, with their guide, they visit the Natural History Museum, where they meet eight-year-old twins Dáni and Erna, members of The Puffling Patrol, who are helping care for the first rescued puffling of the year. Finally that night, the Lewins accompany Erna, Dáni, and their father as they drive through town carefully searching for confused little birds that have glided down onto the streets instead of out to sea. The race is on to find the pufflings before the birds encounter danger. After Dáni finds a puffling, the children take it home and care for it overnight. The next day the puffling is checked and deemed big enough to survive at sea. The Lewins and their guide go with the children to a cove, where on the count of three the puffling is released into the sea to spend its life with other puffins in the North Atlantic Ocean.

The back of the book contains additional interesting facts about Atlantic puffins, as well as information about the volcano that erupted on Heimaey in 1973 and the current status of the puffins of the Westman Islands. Suggestions for further reading about puffins and a glossary and pronunciation guide are also appended.

Background

Iceland is a Nordic European island country located northwest of the United Kingdom. It is the most sparsely populated European country. The Westman Islands are located off the southern coast of Iceland and are comprised of nineteen small, rocky islands, of which only one, Heimaey, is inhabited. Heimaey translates as “Home Island” in English and is located about four miles (6.4 kilometers) off the Icelandic coast. The island’s population is small (roughly 4,300) and the island’s main industry is fishing.

Puffins tend to breed and nest in coastal cliffs, among them the cliffs along the shore of Heimaey. The birds develop highly colored beaks during breeding season and feed on small fish by diving in the water. When pufflings are ready to emerge from their burrows, their instincts tell them to fly out to sea, but they can become confused by the lights of the town in Heimaey and fly the wrong way. The Puffling Patrol is comprised of local people, mostly children, who rescue the pufflings from the streets of the town and release them back into the sea during the day so they fly in the right direction. As of 2010, there were about 800,000 breeding pairs of puffins on Heimaey. In recent years the number of puffin chicks that survive has been declining, so the number of pufflings rescued has also gone down.

Additional information about Iceland can be found on the introductory page in *Puffling Patrol* and on [National Geographic Kids](#) and other websites. Additional information about Atlantic puffins can be found at [National Geographic Kids](#) and other websites.

Ted and Betsy Lewin are an award-winning husband-and-wife writing and illustrating team. They have traveled the globe to bring back interesting stories that open up new worlds for the children who read their books. Readers will also notice two distinct styles of art within the pages of *Puffling Patrol*. This combination has become a trademark of the Lewins’ collaborations. Alongside realistic paintings by Ted are whimsical field sketches by Betsy. *Puffling Patrol* is based on actual events the Lewins experienced on a trip to the Westman Islands in 2008.

BEFORE READING**Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Have you ever rescued or cared for a lost or injured animal? What happened to the animal? What did you do to help it?
2. What do you know about puffins? What do they look like? Where do they usually live? How big are they?
3. Have you ever heard of the country of Iceland? Let’s find it on a map of the world (or a globe). Iceland is an island. What countries are closest to it? What is the capital?

Exploring the Book

Write the title of the book on the chalkboard. Ask students what they think a puffling patrol might be. Encourage students to use the illustration on the front cover of the book as a clue in making their predictions about the title and what the story as a whole might be about.

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: illustrated end papers, half title page, title page spread with dedications, map, introduction, illustrations, backmatter (Atlantic Puffin Facts, The Volcano of 1973, Vestmannaeyjar's Puffins Today, sources For More Information About Puffins for readers), and Glossary and Pronunciation Guide.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students read to find out what pufflings are, what a Puffling Patrol is, and what the children of Heimaey do to help pufflings survive. Have students also read to determine who is narrating the story, how the story is structured, and how the information is presented.

VOCABULARY

In addition to the vocabulary below, it would be helpful to go through the vocabulary in the glossary at the back of the book. There is also a pronunciation guide there, which will be helpful before a read aloud.

Have each student write his or her own sentence using each word or, where appropriate, create a simple illustration to depict the meaning.

rugged	colonies	flutter	mist-shrouded
jutting	survey	inflatable	bucking bronco
cove	wingspans	sheer	droppings
land legs	cradling	foul	aggression
billing	gaping	chunky	spewing
evacuate(d)	harbor	bacteria	emerged
threshold			

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and illustrations in the book to support their responses.

Literal Comprehension

1. Who is telling the story? How do you know?
2. What did you learn about Iceland? What is the weather like? The geography? The wildlife?
3. What are puffins? What are pufflings?
4. How did the Lewins get to Heimaey? Why did they have to use this form of transportation? Describe their trip to the island.
5. How do the scientists study the puffins? What tools do they use? What information are they gathering?
6. What did you learn about puffins and pufflings? Cite five facts about puffins that you learned from the story.
7. What is The Puffling Patrol? What is its purpose? When does it occur?
8. Who are Dáni and Erna? What is their job? What kinds of things do they do as members of The Puffling Patrol?
9. What do Erna and Dáni do with their puffling the night it is rescued? Why?
10. What happens to the pufflings after they are rescued?

11. How do the scientists know when a puffling is ready to be released?
12. Where are pufflings released back into the wild? How are they released? Describe what Dáni and Erna do?
13. What happens to the pufflings after they are released? How do you know? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.
14. How do Erna and Dáni feel about their duties? How do you know? Find passages in the story that show how they feel.

Extension/Higher Level Thinking
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1. This story is an example of narrative nonfiction. What are some elements of narrative that you can find in the text? What are some elements of informational text that you can find in the text?
2. The authors are very good at creating vivid images with their words. What are some of the strongest images they've created in this story? What are some adjectives and verbs they use to create precise images? Cite passages from the story to support your answer.
3. Why do you think the authors chose to include the description of their trip via Zodiac to the island? What effect does this have on the reader? Cite evidence from the story to support your answer.
4. Why is the job of a puffin researcher so important? Is this a job you might like to do? Why or why not?
5. How do the people of Heimaey feel about pufflings? How do you know? What does this tell you about that community?
6. Why do you think it is mostly children who rescue the pufflings?
7. How do Dáni and Erna feel about being part of The Puffling Patrol? Find parts of the story that support your ideas.
8. What is the tone of the authors' voice? Is it formal or informal? How does the voice make a difference when reading the story?
9. How did the authors choose to end the story? How did the ending image leave you feeling? Why?

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for the passages that describe the surroundings, focusing on the five senses.
- The **Illustrator** might create a poster about the approach of the time for the puffling rescue, or a countdown "clock" to count the days until the rescue will begin.
- The **Connector** might look for other books (fiction and nonfiction) about puffins.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might find information about other puffin colonies around the world and how they survive in their specific environments.

*There are many resource books available with information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *GETTING STARTED WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *LITERATURE CIRCLES: VOICE AND CHOICE IN BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *LITERATURE CIRCLES RESOURCE GUIDE* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work, if they wish to.

1. Why do you think the authors chose to write about their experiences in Heimaey as a travelogue, instead of as an informational text? What were the advantages of writing the story as a travelogue? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.
2. How did this story make you feel? Were you nervous for Dáni and Erna? For the pufflings? Why or why not?
3. Which parts of the authors' experiences did you connect to the most? Enjoy reading about the most? Why? Would you like to visit Heimaey, Iceland, and participate in a puffling patrol? Why or why not? What would you most like to see and experience? Cite passages from the text to support your answer.
4. Imagine you are helping members of The Puffling Patrol release pufflings back into the wild. What does the scene look like? Sound like? Smell like? What is the weather like? Use the text and illustrations as well as your imagination to write a short descriptive passage about your experience.
5. The book contains two very different styles of illustrations. Why do you think the authors chose to use both? What is the purpose of each style? How do both the nonfiction text features and the illustrations help you understand the information presented in the text?
6. If you could take a trip anywhere in the world, where would you go? Why? Research the place you choose and write a piece in the narrative style the Lewins used, pretending you have taken the trip and are writing about your experiences.
7. Have students write a book recommendation for this story explaining why they would or would not recommend this book to other students.

ELL Teaching Activities

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners.

1. Assign ELL students to read the story aloud with strong English readers/speakers.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about a character or central figure in the story.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas.

Social Studies

1. Iceland is an island country. Have students find out more about Iceland. Where is it located? What continent does it belong to? Describe the culture. What are some important traditions, festivals, foods, and so on? What language(s) do the people speak? Split students into small groups and ask each group to research a different part of Icelandic history and culture.
2. The Puffling Patrol members are traditionally children. Are there traditions, festivals, or holidays in other cultures that are specifically for children or are performed by children? Students may enjoy a detective search to see what they can uncover about traditions, holidays, and festivals specifically for children from around the world, such as Rakhi in India and Girl's Day in Japan

Social Studies/Science

Using information in this book and online research, have students make a list of the major environmental problems the puffins of Heimaey face, plus the goals, tasks, and responsibilities of The Puffling Patrol. Also have students research the National Audubon Society's [Project Puffin](#), established to help restore puffin populations in Maine. Students can then create a chart or lists comparing the environmental problems in each area and the goals and methods of the two programs. There are also suggested activities on the Audubon Society's online [educators page](#).

Science

1. In the back of the book are two pages of Atlantic Puffin facts, with information about the puffins' size, lifespan, appearance, and behavior. Have students find similar information about Tufted Puffins and Horned Puffins. Students may chart the similarities and differences among the three species of puffins.
2. In 1973, a volcano erupted on Heimaey. Have students reread the page at the back of the book that talks about this volcano. Interested students may wish to find out more about volcanoes. To start, there are some interesting facts about volcanoes online at sites such as [Science Kids](#). With adult guidance, students may also enjoy making their own exploding volcano. Simple directions can be found online at [Science Kids](#), [funschool.com](#), and other sites.
3. Research Iceland's climate and geography. After reading the authors' other travel stories—*Horse Song* and *Balarama*—ask students to compare and contrast Iceland's climate and geography with that of Mongolia and India.

Science/Math

In the backmatter section entitled "Vestmannaeyjar's Puffins Today," the authors talk about recent changes in the puffin population on the Westman Islands. Have students research current thinking about why the population is decreasing. They may also be interested in looking for statistics about the number of pufflings rescued by The Puffling Patrol since 2010, the last year cited in the book. Students may then graph the current statistics they find along with statistics from past years.

Art

1. Younger children may enjoy coloring pictures of puffins, using either realistic colors or imaginative ones. Several images that can be printed and colored are available online at [Puffinpalooza](#).

2. Have students draw a picture of a scene from the story that is not already illustrated. Ask students to search the text as well as the illustrations for clues as to which key details they should include.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS/ILLUSTRATORS

Ted Lewin and **Betsy Lewin** have been traveling the world together for decades and have chronicled many of their wide-ranging adventures in books for young readers. In addition to *Puffling Patrol*, their most recent collaborations were *Horse Song: The Naadam of Mongolia* and *Balarama: A Royal Elephant*.

Ted and Betsy Lewin have both won countless awards and honors for their books. Ted was awarded a Caldecott Medal Honor in 1994 for *Peppe the Lamplighter*. Betsy was the recipient of a Caldecott Medal Honor in 2001 for *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*. When not teaching, visiting with young fans, or traveling, the Lewins are usually drawing and painting in their Brooklyn, New York, home studios. You can visit Ted Lewin online at tedlewin.com and you can visit Betsy Lewin online at betsylewin.com.

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Puffling Patrol* at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/437/hc/puffling_patrol

Order Information

On the Web:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/order> (general order information)

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