

An Educator Guide

and
tango
makes
three



With special resources
for educators



by Justin Richardson
and Peter Parnell
illustrated by Henry Cole

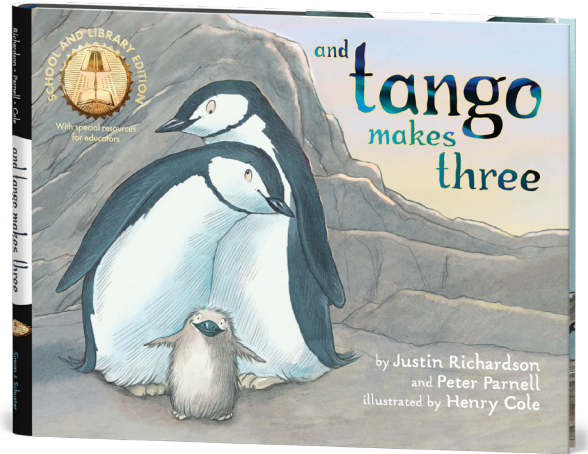
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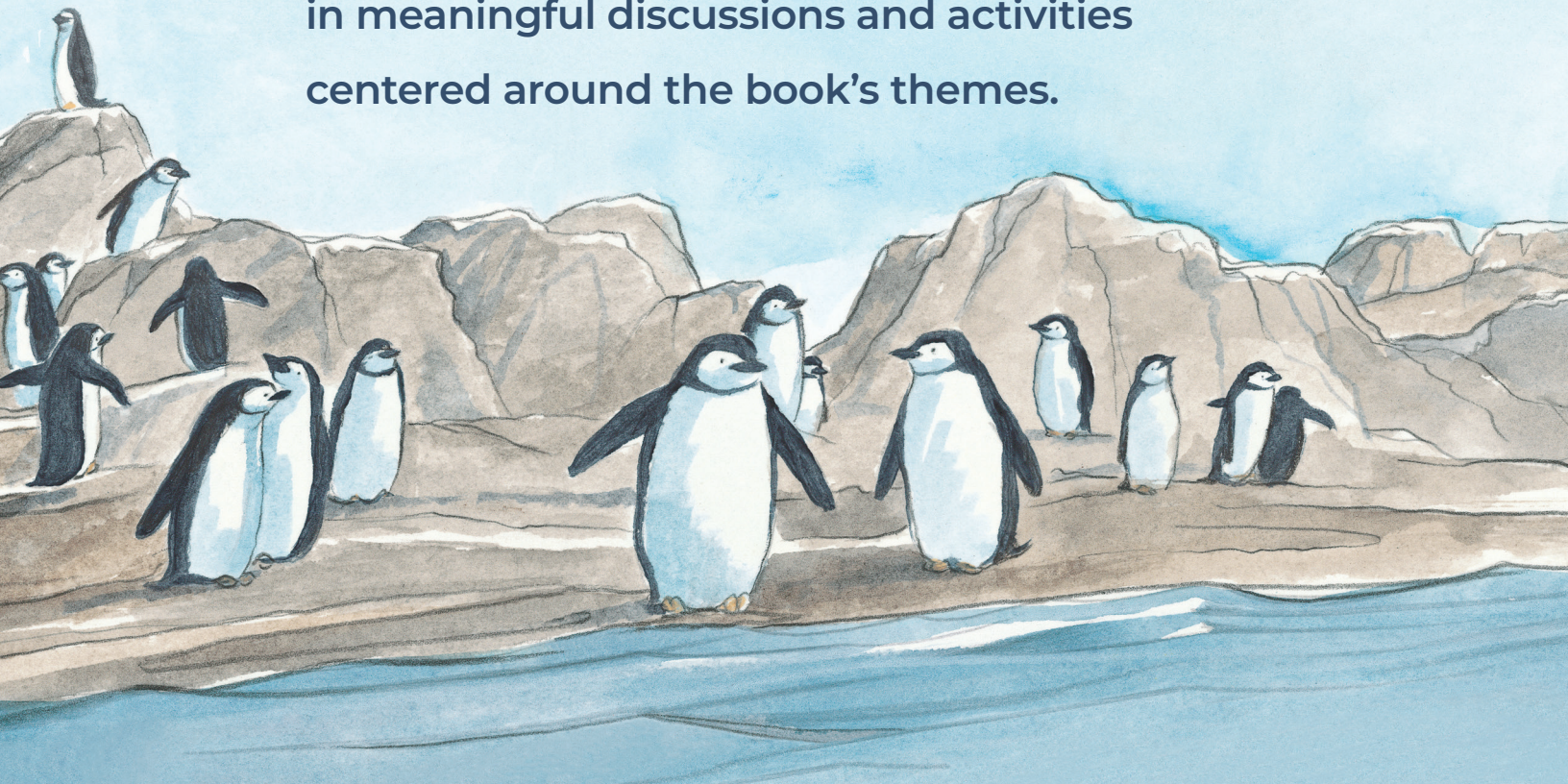
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Afterword by Eliot Schrefer

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WELCOME! This page aims to provide Pre-K through 8 educators with a variety of thoughtfully crafted lesson plans using *And Tango Makes Three* to teach themes of family, diversity, and love. Whether you are exploring social studies, science, language arts, or social-emotional learning, our curated lesson plans offer a number of ways to engage students of different ages in meaningful discussions and activities centered around the book's themes.



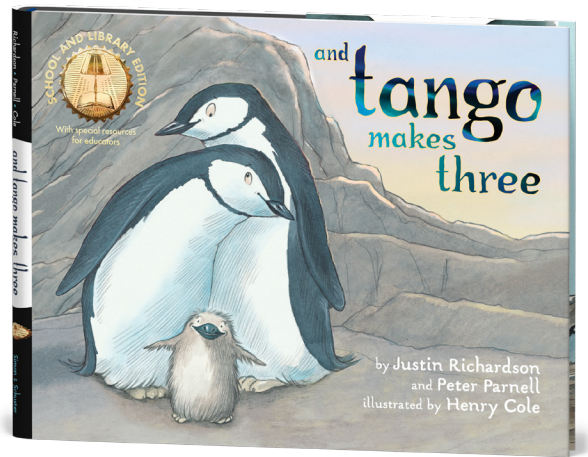
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Synopsis

The Central Park Zoo is filled with all kinds of families. Roy and Silo, two male penguins who live there, are about to make a family of their own. They become a couple, build a nest, and, unable to lay their own egg, try to hatch a rock. An observant zookeeper steps in, offering the couple a real egg. Roy and Silo take turns incubating their egg, and soon their very own chick makes her way into the world. Tango is the first penguin in the penguin house with two fathers.

One book for all ages

A staple of preschool and elementary school libraries for nearly 20 years, this simple, heartwarming, and true tale offers an age-appropriate introduction for children of all grade levels to the diversity of family structures and the notion that love makes a family.

As you'll discover when you read *Tango* with your students, the simplicity of the story allows children to bring their own level of understanding to the book, as they find a lesson they can ponder, understand, and enjoy at every stage and every age.

Kindergarteners will cheer when Tango hatches. They may want to talk about their own trips to the zoo and will be happy to name who "hatched" them. Second graders might wonder where Roy and Silo's egg came from, and that may give them a chance to talk about adoption. They might also share some thoughts about the differences and similarities between love, friendship, and family sparked by the story. A fifth grader might consider the uses of fiction and non-fiction in storytelling and will have some interesting thoughts about why *Tango* has been one of the most banned or challenged books in America.

To some young readers, *And Tango Makes Three* tells the story of a different family—perhaps a kind of family they have seen or heard of before, perhaps not. To others, it may be the first book they've ever read that celebrates a family like their own—albeit in the guise of adorable penguins.

There are so many different uses for this book in your classroom. To focus your lesson, start by considering what you hope your students will gain from the class. The following examples of discussion questions and activities may help you prepare for classes with students across a wide range of ages and experiences. For simplicity, we've divided children into three rough age groups: preschool through kindergarten, early elementary school, and late elementary and middle school. These groups are meant as suggestions, not rules.

PRESCHOOL THROUGH KINDERGARTEN

Discussion Questions

- ▶ What did you learn about penguins from this story?
- ▶ Roy and Silo are a couple. What makes them different from other penguin couples in the zoo?
- ▶ Why did Roy and Silo sit on a rock?
- ▶ Together, Roy, Silo, and Tango become a family. What makes a family?
- ▶ Have you ever seen animal families? What did you notice?
- ▶ Who is in your family?

Extension Activities

NOTICING AND NAMING FEELINGS

Select several illustrations from the book. Consider using the following:

- ▶ the image of Roy and Silo looking at the other penguin couples and their chicks
- ▶ Roy and Silo looking at the rock that didn't hatch ("But nothing happened.")
- ▶ Roy and Silo with their newly hatched chick
- ▶ Roy, Silo, and Tango together in their nest at night

For each image, ask the children to imagine and name how the penguins might feel at that moment of the story. Invite them to share times that they felt those feelings.

FAMILY PORTRAITS

Show the cover of the book depicting Tango's family together in their home. Ask the children to imagine that a book was written about their family. Have them draw a picture of their family members all together as it would appear on the cover of that book.

EARLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Discussion Questions

- ▶ In the story, what did you learn about penguins and how they form couples and families?
- ▶ What do you think made Roy and Silo choose each other to become a couple?
- ▶ After observing Roy and Silo, Mr. Gramzay gives them a real egg to incubate. Why did he decide to do that?
- ▶ How do Mr. Gramzay and the families that visit the zoo react to Roy and Silo being parents?
- ▶ In what ways are Roy, Silo, and Tango shown love and kindness in the story? What are ways that we show love and kindness to the families around us?
- ▶ *And Tango Makes Three* is based on a true story. Why do you think the authors chose this story to make into a picture book?
- ▶ What is your favorite part of the story or your favorite illustration? Why?

Extension Activities

WHAT MAKES A FAMILY?

Ask the children to consider how Roy, Silo, and Tango are like other families they know. How are they different? Create a chart with two columns. Ask the class to offer aspects of families that are different and write those in the left column. Then, in the right column, enter their ideas of what all families have in common. Ask the class to decide together what makes a family.

WHAT CAN BOOKS DO?

By exposing us to new ideas, books influence the way we think about ourselves and the world. Ask the class if they think that this book could affect children and families who read it. What effect could that be? Then ask the children to think of a book that affected them. Have them describe the book and its effect on them to the class.

LIFE AS A PENGUIN

Ask your students to imagine themselves as penguins. Ask them what they think they would look like, where they would want to live (A zoo? Antarctica?), and what they would do for fun. Have them draw an image of their penguin selves. Invite them to present their drawings and talk about the choices they made. You might focus on their self-expressions, such as the emotions they depict in the drawings. Or you can use this as an opportunity to dig into more research about penguin behaviors and habitats as a class.

UPPER ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Discussion Questions

- ▶ What do you consider to be the main themes of *And Tango Makes Three*?
- ▶ Can you describe what the word “equity” means? How do you think the concept of equity applies to Roy and Silo’s story?
- ▶ How do people in your school or community practice equity?
- ▶ As the authors explain in their note, all the events in this story are true. Some of the facts they include in the note aren’t included in the story. The artist visited the zoo and studied penguins, but the drawings of specific events are imagined. Do you consider the book a work of fiction or nonfiction?
- ▶ *And Tango Makes Three* has received numerous awards and has been published in many languages around the world. At the same time, some people have objected to the book and have tried to have it removed from school libraries. Why do you think some people think this book should not be in school libraries? And why do others think it is important to include?
- ▶ Where do these differences of opinion come from? What are some of the challenges of living in a community where people disagree? How do we deal with those challenges?

Extension Activities

BOOK CHALLENGES

When we say that a library book is challenged, we mean that someone has objected to the book and has asked that it be removed from the library. For many years, *And Tango Makes Three* was the single most frequently challenged book in America. Most times, although not every time, schools and libraries responded to these challenges by reviewing the complaint and deciding to keep *Tango* in the library.

Imagine someone has complained that *Tango* should be removed from your school library. There will be a meeting of parents and teachers at the school to discuss the matter. You will be asked to state your opinion as a student. Write a brief, persuasive speech explaining why you think *Tango* should or shouldn’t be kept in your school library.

ADAPTATION

And Tango Makes Three was inspired by an article in *The New York Times* by Dinitia Smith called “Love that Dare not Squeak its Name”. After reading that article, the authors interviewed Mr. Gramzay for more details. Share the *Times* article with your students. After they read the article, the book, and the authors’ note, ask them to consider what details the authors included in the story, what they left out, and what they added. Talk about why the authors may have made the choices they did in telling their story.

Next offer the students a few options of news stories suitable for adaptation to a children’s book (such as the story of Flaco the owl that escaped from the Central Park Zoo). Have your students work in groups to outline a children’s book based on one of these stories. Ask them share their story structure with the class and explain the choices they made in adapting their story.

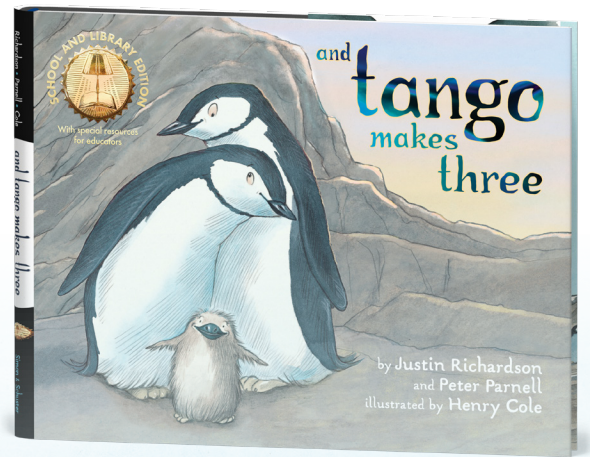
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MIRRORS, WINDOWS, AND SLIDING GLASS DOORS

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop talks about books as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Ask your students if they see things in the book that remind them of themselves or the world around them. What do they notice that is similar, and what do they notice that is different? You can make a table to use at the front of the class or to pass around for students to consider on their own or in small groups. Ask them how they might change parts of the book to reflect their own community, city, or classroom more directly. You can expand on this by asking students to illustrate a new page for the book, or to choose an existing illustration and reimagine it.



Guide written in 2024 by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, with special thanks to Dr. Rob Bittner, Vice President/President-elect of the Association for Library Services for Children (ALSC) and Director-At-Large for the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN).

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