

A Teacher's Guide to  
***And Tango Makes Three***

By Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, illustrated by Henry Cole

**About the Book**

The Central Park Zoo is home to all kinds of animal families. But Tango the penguin's family is a bit different—she has two fathers. This heartwarming story will open the minds of readers, resonating long after the story has finished.

*"A touching and delightful variation on a major theme."  
—Maurice Sendak*

*"This wonderful story of devotion is heartwarming proof that Mother Nature knows best." —Harvey Fierstein*

*"Charming! And Tango Makes Three proves that all kinds of love can create a family." —Wendy Wasserstein*

*"A little miracle for children. Funny, tender, and true, the story of Tango will delight young readers and open their minds." —John Lithgow*

"Cole's pictures complement the perfectly cadenced text . . . Those who share this with children will find themselves returning to it again and again . . . for the two irresistible birds at its center and for the celebration of patient, loving fathers who "knew just what to do."  
★ *Booklist*, starred review

"In this true, straightforwardly (so to speak) delivered tale, two male chinstrap penguins at New York City's Central Park Zoo bond, build a nest and-- thanks to a helping hand from an observant zookeeper-- hatch and raise a penguin chick . . . Readers may find its them of acceptance even more convincing for being delivered in such a matter of fact, non-preachy way."  
★ *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"[A] heartwarming tale. Older readers will most appreciate the . . . larger theme of tolerance at work in this touching tale."  
★ *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"This joyful story about the meaning of family is a must for any library."  
★ *School Library Journal*, starred review

"*And Tango Makes Three* is bound to raise eyebrows, but for those of us eager to encourage our children to include, rather than exclude, it's a welcome addition to the library of families. The well-written, perfectly placed text is delivered with a deft touch . . . Happily, and surprisingly, *And Tango Makes Three* rises above the message it carries and becomes the rarest of birds, a 'message book' that's also a really good story." —*New York Times Book Review*

## **Discussion Questions**

1. *And Tango Makes Three* is a true story. What does this mean? Do you know of other true stories that have been made into books?
2. “Family” is a prominent theme in *And Tango Makes Three*. Discuss the concept of a “family.” What constitutes a family? Tango’s family is different, but how is it the same as any other family in the zoo? In the world?
3. Roy and Silo are a little bit different from the other penguins in the zoo. What does it mean to be different? Why is it sometimes good to be different?
4. The Central Park Zoo, where *And Tango Makes Three* takes place, is home to all kinds of animal families. But Tango’s family is unlike the other families in the zoo. Tango has two fathers instead of the traditional mother and father. Do you have a nontraditional family, or do you know someone who does? Do you think that Tango is missing out by not having a mother?
5. Mr. Gramzay, the penguin keeper at the Central Park Zoo, is very sympathetic to Roy and Silo. He is accepting of their differences and wants to help them become a family. How can you learn from Mr. Gramzay’s actions in the book? Who else is accepting of Roy, Silo, and Tango in this story?
6. Mr. Gramzay decides to give Roy and Silo an egg to hatch in their nest. Why do you think he does this? What does he see in Roy and Silo that makes him decide that they would be good at raising a baby? Do you think that Roy and Silo are good parents? Why?
7. Responsibility, devotion, caring, and persistence are all important themes in this book. How so? Can you identify different parts of the book where these themes are obvious?
8. Think about Roy and Silo and their behavior in the book, both with each other and with Tango. How is penguin behavior similar to the behavior of humans? How is it different?
9. If you had the opportunity to visit a zoo what would you like to see? Why do you think zoos exist in the world?

## **Activities, Projects, and Research**

1. With a parent or teacher’s help, find out more about Central Park and the Central Park Zoo by visiting the library or consulting the Internet. Here are some questions you should consider while conducting your research: How

and when was Central Park created? When did the Central Park Zoo open? What other places are there to visit in Central Park? How is this park important to the residents of New York City?

2. According to the author's note in *And Tango Makes Three*, there are over ten million chinstrap penguins in the world. Complete a research project on chinstrap penguins. To get started, find out the answers to the following questions: Where do chinstrap penguins live? What do they eat? What is their natural habitat like? How does their habitat in a zoo differ from their natural habitat? After finding out the answers to these questions and more, talk to the other students in your class about your findings. Share your answers with each other in written and illustrated reports, or collaborate to design a collective bulletin board with your information.
3. Did you know that chinstrap penguins are just one of eighteen different species of penguins found around the globe? Find out about the other types of penguins that live in the world. How do these penguins differ from the chinstrap penguins? How are they alike? How do penguins differ from other birds?
4. Mr. Gramzay is the penguin keeper in the story. Learn more about what it means to be a penguin keeper. What are the daily responsibilities of a penguin keeper? What kind of education do penguin keepers need? Would you like to be a penguin keeper one day?
5. Pretend you are a penguin! Collect small stones around your school or home and build your own miniature penguin nest. Designate a round object as your penguin egg and take turns sitting on it. You can also practice walking, bowing, and singing like a penguin.
6. *And Tango Makes Three* shows how Roy and Silo became a family. Now it's your turn to find out how your family got started. How did your family come to be? Where did your parents and grandparents meet? How many children do they have? Have a classroom discussion about the origins of families.
7. In addition to penguins, there are many other animal families that make their homes in zoos. Learn more about the animals mentioned in the book, such as red panda bears, monkeys, toads, toucans, and cotton-top tamarins. Choose a zoo near your home to visit with an adult. Do the same animals that live in the Central Park Zoo live in the zoo near your home? Or are they different?

### **About the Authors**

**Justin Richardson, M.D.**, is an assistant professor of psychiatry at Columbia and Cornell. He is also the coauthor of *Everything You Never Wanted Your Kids to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid They'd Ask)*. His advice to parents has

been featured in the *New York Times* and on *The Today Show*, *20/20* and NPR's *Morning Edition*.

**Peter Parnell** is a playwright whose most recent play, *QED*, was produced on Broadway. He was a coproducer of the television show *The West Wing*. He lives in New York City.

### **About the Illustrator**

**Henry Cole** is an extremely versatile artist who has illustrated numerous picture books, including *The Sissy Duckling* by Harvey Fierstein. He lives in Florida.

### **Further Resources**

[www.familypride.org](http://www.familypride.org)

[www.antarcticconnection.com](http://www.antarcticconnection.com)

[www.penguintag.org](http://www.penguintag.org)

[www.wcs.org](http://www.wcs.org) (Wildlife Conservation Society – the Web site of New York City zoos and aquariums)

[www.nyzoosandaquarium.com](http://www.nyzoosandaquarium.com)

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