

# Emily and Alfie

TEACHERS' NOTES

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

Written by Meredith Hooper

Illustrated by Emma Quay

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## Author notes from Meredith Hooper:

On my first trip to Antarctica, as a writer, I was flying in a helicopter over an expanse of glittering sea ice when the pilot spotted, amongst a cluster of icebergs, an emperor colony. No one knew it was there. And ever since that day I have wanted to write a story about the emperor penguins.

Emperor penguins raise their chicks in a big colony on fast ice, often anchored by grounded icebergs. The sea—where one parent goes in turn, leaving the other to guard the chick—can be a great distance across the ice. The chicks have to wait a long time between meals.

The story is set in summer. The chicks are growing. Emily and Alfie are beginning to be able to go off by themselves. Their fathers are on guard duty, their mothers are off getting food to feed them. Ice caves in icebergs are majestically beautiful, but they are genuinely dangerous, especially when the sun shines.

Emily and Alfie live in a landscape that is manageable and explorable. Their world is a colony of adult penguins guarding chicks, with the icebergs as a backdrop, and the sea too far away to know exactly where it is. When they go inside the iceberg they discover a mysterious hidden world.

- Students can find out more about Meredith Hooper online by visiting her literary agent's website at: <http://www.davidhigham.co.uk/html/Clients/Hooper>

## Some useful websites about emperor penguins:

[http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/creature\\_feature/0101/penguins.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/creature_feature/0101/penguins.html) - includes audio and video clips

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/birds/printouts/Emperorpenguin.shtml> - B&W worksheet

<http://www.emperor-penguin.com/emperor.html> - beautiful photographs

<http://www.antarcticconnection.com/antarctic/wildlife/penguins/emperor.shtml> - many facts

## Illustrator notes from Emma Quay:

In creating the characters of Emily and Alfie, I was aware that it is often very difficult to tell one emperor penguin chick from another. I had to stay true to this reality, and yet make it possible for readers to tell

which character is which. Emily and Alfie do look similar, but their differing sizes and black head markings along with fitting body language help us to tell them apart. I researched emperor penguins, Antarctica, icebergs and ice caves at my local library and on the Internet, and also received valuable information from Meredith Hooper, who has first hand experience of the birds in their natural environment.

I used charcoal lines, chalk pastel textures and some watercolour washes for the illustrations. These were scanned onto my PC and layered together in Photoshop to create full colour artworks. This process enabled me to create the effect of using many layers of different colours of pastels, but without the blending and 'muddying' which can come from overworking. The artworks have been kept clean and crisp—fitting for the Antarctic subject.

In keeping with the nature of the penguins' environment and markings, I limited my palette to the white of the page, blue, black, grey, mauve and (to a lesser degree) the orange and yellow of the adults' plumage. The warm colours disappear from the page when Emily and Alfie leave the safety of their penguin colony. As the two chicks venture into the unknown, cool colours dominate—the grey of Emily and Alfie's fluffy down amid the icy blues of the caves and tunnel. We only see the warmth return when the pair are eventually reunited with their mothers; their homecoming being celebrated in a sunset which brings together the same oranges, yellows and mauves in a jubilant burst of colour.

The playful and sympathetic placement of the type throughout the book is a result of Ana Vivas and me working closely with the designer, Georgie Wilson, from the very early stages, so the type and illustrations would work together on the page as harmoniously as possible.

This is my second collaboration with author Meredith Hooper, and I am pleased that our joint projects look so different to one another. The rich rainbow palette and painted moonlit scenes of *Thank You for My Yukky Present* are in complete contrast with *Emily and Alfie's* brightly-lit, stark, ice-dominated world. Both picture books took about nine months to illustrate.

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## Emma Quay's Illustrative Technique:

Charcoal, chalk pastels and occasional watercolour wash on cartridge paper, scanned and manipulated on a PC using Photoshop.

- For insights into the illustrative process and to see some of the pencil roughs for *Emily and Alfie* visit the [illustrating picture books](#) page of Emma Quay's website.
- Students' activity sheet (spot the difference) on the [fun stuff](#) page of Emma Quay's website.