

Open Forum 2

Web Site Transcript

Chapter 5

A = Man

B = Woman

A: Whenever I come here, I can never decide which movie to rent.

B: Well, what do you feel like watching? Romance . . . comedy . . . romantic comedy?

A: None of the above. How about we watch something exciting.

B: Oh, I know! Here . . . have you seen this? March of the Penguins.

A: Penguins??? Who wants to watch a movie about birds and snow?

B: OK, it might sound boring, but this is one of the best family films I've seen in a long time. It's funny, it's exciting, it's even painfully sad at times.

A: Is it new?

B: No, it came out in 2005. You've never heard of it?

A: I've heard the title, but I never watched it. What do the penguins do anyway?

B: The movie tells the story of how Emperor Penguins—they're the big ones—find a mate and have babies.

A: Oh . . . so it's a love story.

B: Yes . . . in a way, it is. The story is really beautiful. Every winter, the adult penguins begin a journey across Antarctica—the frozen continent around the South Pole. They leave their home in the ocean and travel really far . . . through extremely harsh weather conditions. I mean, it's winter at the South Pole! That's really cold! And there are terrible blizzards—these are the worst snow and wind storms you can imagine. Nothing else lives there at this time of year . . . but for thousands of years, penguins have made this journey to the same place.

A: Why do they do it?

B: To reproduce—they travel to a special place where they form couples and have a baby.

A: Wow! But why do they go to the same place every year? And how do they know how to get there?

B: No one knows for sure how it is that they find the place. They just follow their instinct. They already seem to know where they're going. In fact, they're going back to the place where they themselves were born.

A: And once they arrive, they meet a mate?

B: Yes! But it's a very complicated process. It involves what looks like dances and ritual ceremonies. This scene in the movie is just wonderful—it looked to me like a high school dance.

A: Did you say that they go back to the ocean to give birth?

B: Oh, no. They stay at the breeding ground until each female lays one single egg. Then the male stays with the egg while the female goes back to the ocean to get food—fish of course.

A: So, the male stays with the egg?

B: That's right. His job is to protect the egg and keep it warm. Did I mention that it's getting even colder all this time?

A: I'm glad I'm not a penguin.

B: Me too. Well, once the females have reached the ocean, they start the return journey with fish for the new baby, who will be born while they're gone. If they're late, the baby will die of starvation, because it has no food to eat. It's quite a suspenseful movie, really.

A: I can see that . . . I'm worried about the males! When do these fathers get to eat?

B: As soon as the females return, the males leave for the ocean so they can eat and bring back more fish. They repeat this many times, taking turns to get food, until the chick—that's a baby penguin—is older and ready to make the journey back home . . . and by that time, the winter is over and the ice is starting to melt.

A: Well, if it's so cold and dangerous out there, who filmed the movie?

B: A remarkable team of filmmakers and biologists, led by the French director Luc Jacquet. His crew spent one year in Antarctica and took over 120 hours of film in order to make this movie.

A: Wow!

B: Well, since you know the whole story now, I guess we don't have to get the movie.

A: No, wait. I think I'd like to watch this—that is, if you don't mind watching it again . . .

B: Not at all. March of the Penguins it is!