

The Penguin Lessons – Reading Group Questions

- This story takes place in the '70s in Argentina. How would things have played out differently had Tom rescued a penguin today?
- Diego is a shy and underperforming student until he meets Juan Salvador. How do animals bring out different traits in people than other humans? Would it be a good idea, and a practical one, to ensure all children have access to animals from a young age?
- Tom toys with the idea of taking Juan Salvador to a zoo where he would be with others of his kind, but he changes his mind after seeing the conditions. Would this have been the better course of action? What role do zoos play in society and is it a good one?
- Everyone at the boarding school, both student and teacher, gained a lot from their relationships with Juan Salvador who, in turn, seemed to genuinely love everyone there. Who gained the most from this unusual situation?
- In taking Juan Salvador from the beach when he knew nothing about penguins it could be said that Tom was interfering in nature, and in a country that was not even his own. Do you think that it was right to take the penguin or should we leave nature to its own devices, or the experts?
- Juan Salvador or Juan Salvado? Saviour or Saved?
- How does Tom use the political and economic situation in Argentina at the time to contrast with his penguin story?
- *The Penguin Lessons* is being translated into over 20 languages around the world. Why are people of all nationalities so enamoured by penguins? What is it about this particular creature that attracts us so?