

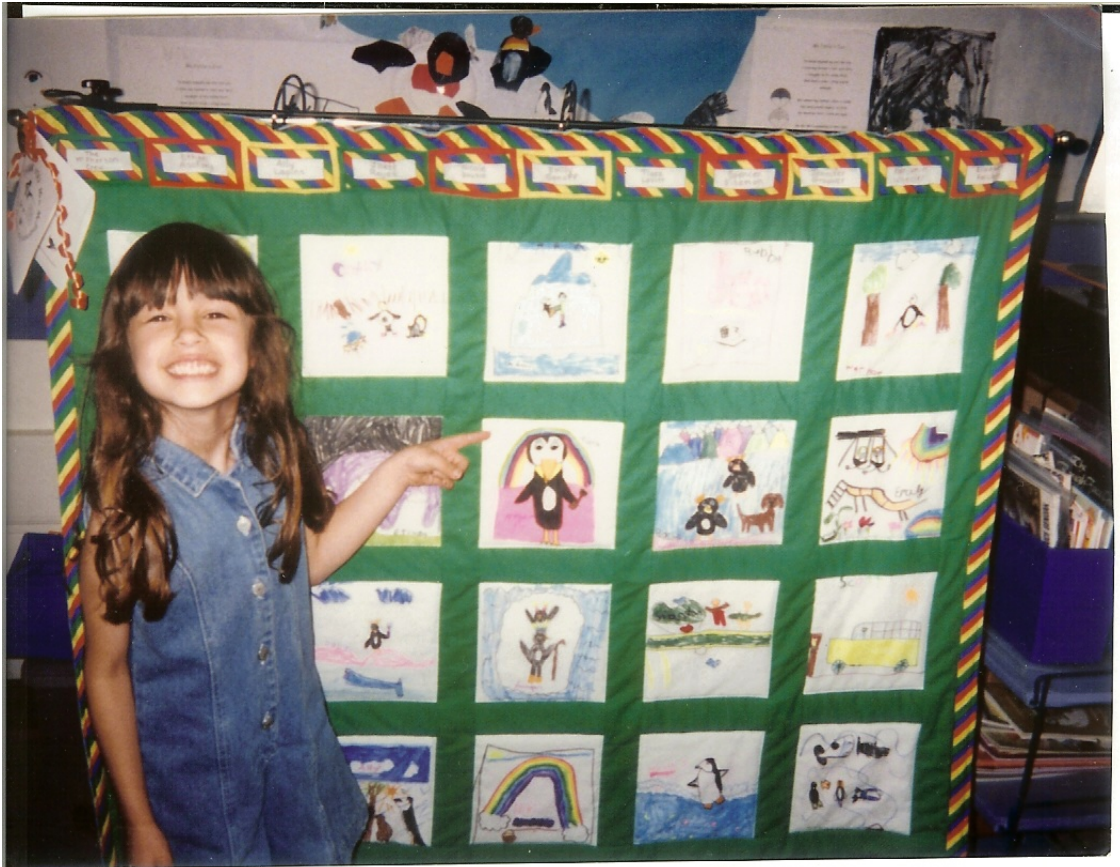
**Mrs McPenguin and The Magic Quilt**  
by  
**Tammy Graham Lavitt, 1998**

Once upon a school year, Mrs. McPenguin had a wonderful first grade class of penguins. She loved her students and all of the little penguins loved her back. They decided to make her something very, very special. One of the classroom helpers, Mrs. Math, had a great idea to make Mrs. McPenguin a quilt! The penguin students loved the idea and they wanted to help. Mrs. Math worked with all of the students when the teacher wasn't there. They made each square of the quilt extra special. Each penguin student drew on a square of fabric with colorful markers and made it unique, just like their teacher. Mrs. Math was very proud of all of the penguins and worked very hard to finish the quilt before the end of the school year.



When the quilt was finished, Mrs. Math asked Mrs. McPenguin if she could bring in some quilts that she had made and show the class how she makes them. Mrs. McPenguin didn't know that the penguin children were going to surprise her with a very special gift! She was so happy that she even cried happy tears! (Mrs. Math had told the little penguins that Mrs. McPenguin might cry because she would feel so loved!)

All of the children got to have their picture taken with the quilt and their teacher. They were all very proud. It was fun to be a part of something that they had all made together. When Mrs. McPenguin was getting ready to have her picture taken with each student, she would tickle them right under their little penguin flippers, and they would kick their flipper feet up and giggle! It made some silly pictures that they would be able to keep forever. Then they all got to have their picture taken next to their very own special square on the quilt.



When all of the children were done posing for their pictures, they noticed that the quilt was moving a little. They all began to stare at it and then it moved away from where it had been hanging! It was like a magic carpet! It flew around the room and the children were a little scared. It seemed to notice that the children were afraid because it came back slowly and lay down on the floor. The children felt it cautiously, and it didn't move for a while. Then they began to wonder if it had only been their imaginations! But, how could 20 penguin children imagine the exact same thing?



The penguin children began to trust the quilt so they all tried to sit on the quilt. But it wasn't big enough for 20 penguins! The quilt must have known this because suddenly there were magical sparkles in the air! The quilt slowly began to stretch to be big enough. The children were enjoying this magical show and wanted to make sure Mrs. McPenguin could fit. They asked Mrs. McPenguin to come and sit in the front and be the driver, and she did! The quilt sparkled and stretched even more to make room for their teacher. Mrs. McPenguin didn't know where they should try to go so she said,

*"Magic quilt take us somewhere  
fun for us all to learn,  
and prove to these little ones  
that there's no need for concern."*

The quilt began to wiggle a little and the children began to giggle. It moved very slowly so they would not be scared. As they flew around the classroom, the children noticed things they had not seen before. It was fun to be up so high. The classroom looked so big from up there. Since the windows were almost always open in Mrs. McPenguin's classroom, the magic quilt began to move toward the window! The children were afraid because they knew they wouldn't be able to fit through it. Then the magic quilt wrapped it's corners around the little penguins like a warm and comforting hug. They saw more magic sparkles and then they flew right through the open window! The quilt opened up when they were safely outside. Everyone laughed and cheered, "Hooray for the magic quilt!"

The class flew over the playground and around the neighborhood and began to pick up speed. No one knew where they were headed except the quilt! The children began to realize that they were traveling to the Lincoln Park Zoo! One of the penguins said, "Hey, this is what I drew on my quilt square!"

They stopped right in front of the "Humans habitat". Mrs. McPenguin had always loved the Humans. She had wanted to have one for her very own! They got there just in time to see the zookeepers feeding the Humans. It was a rare treat to see. They even got to feel a real piece of Human clothing! Mrs. McPenguin got to keep it! She had wanted the whole bag!

Everyone went back to the magic quilt and where do you think they headed next? It looked familiar but only one child noticed who was waving to them from below.

"I see the Beekeeper! And she is taking care of all her bees. Let's wave hello back," said one of the girl penguins.

There must have been a bee drawn on the quilt somewhere. The children were beginning to realize that they were able to go wherever their drawings on the quilt squares would take them.

One of the boy penguins said, "Let's go to my quilt square now, to see real maple syrup!"

So Mrs. McPenguin asked the magic quilt to take them there,

*"Magic quilt if you could,  
take us to Ryerson's Wood."*

It landed right in front of a maple tree where a woman was showing how to drill through the tree's bark to tap into the sap that was flowing down. It looked just like plain water when it dripped out. They all got to taste it and some penguins didn't like it. Then they got to see how they cook it down so it turns into thick maple syrup. The little penguins didn't like all of the smoke from the cooker. They said, "Thank you," to the nice woman and the magic quilt was on it's way again.

One of the other girl penguins asked very politely if they could go to her square next. She wanted to go and see if the penguin children's books were printed yet. So Mrs. McPenguin sweetly asked,

*"Magic quilt could you please  
take us a little farther,  
we want to go to the Publishing Center  
of Thomas Parker!"*

Away they flew to arrive just in time to bind their own stories into books! They were all very wonderful stories. Each one was special and would be cherished by all of the families. The children even got to sign the copies that their families had bought. Mrs. McPenguin was very proud and inspired by their creative and talented stories. The profits from selling these books went to buy new books to donate to Children's Memorial Hospital. The children felt good about this decision.

Next, Mrs. McPenguin was getting hungry for a little snack. She said,

*"Magic quilt, let's all go  
to a place we'd love to see,  
and maybe have a tour  
of the Jelly Belly Factory."*

The children cheered because they loved their teacher's surprises. She always had something up her sleeve even when she seemed to be out of ideas! And they loved this one!

The magic quilt had to wait outside because it wasn't able to wear the funny little net hats that the factory workers made the penguin children wear! They got to see some cool "paintings" made out of jelly beans. And they got to see how the Jelly Belly's were made. The little penguins had so many questions for the jelly people that it took a long time to go through the factory. But at the end of the tour, the jelly people were generous enough to give Mrs. McPenguin a huge bag of Jelly Belly's to take back to school. When everyone returned to where they had left the magic quilt, they were a little surprised to see it had shrunk back to its original size, and they heard what sounded like snoring!

*"Wake up magic quilt!  
We need to stretch you back  
so we can go more fun places  
and share what's in this sack!"*

The magic quilt pointed two corners up and looked like it was stretching! The next thing the children saw were some really beautiful sparklings. Could it be? Yes, they were shaped like Jelly beans! Then the quilt stretched out and let the giggling penguins and their smiling teacher back onto it.

While the children ate their special treat, the teacher thought and thought. Then one little boy penguin said, "How about if we visit my quilt square now? It feels like it's time for the stars to be coming out soon anyway."

A little lightbulb shined above Mrs. McPenguin's head and then she said,

*"Magic quilt if you would be so kind,  
we would like to see the solar system."*

*Stars and planets we could find.  
We're near the Adler Planetarium.  
Hurry, we're almost out of time!"*

So as fast as it could carry them, the magic quilt flew over the skyscrapers of Chicago. The children recognized the Sears Tower and the John Hancock buildings. They had a safe landing and hurried in to see a show. There was a short 3-D movie and they got to wear some funny feeling glasses. Some of the students even thought they could reach out and touch the stars and planets on the screen. Silly penguins! It's just a camera trick! They're really not there!

After the 3-D movie, they all got to go up an escalator that had stars on the walls and it felt kind of strange, like they were really floating in space. When they got to the top, there was a big round room with what looked like a robot in the middle. The lights went out and they learned how to tell where the North Star, called Polaris, is. The robot in the middle turned out to be a bunch of different laser-like camera lenses that spin to show the earth's rotation. They saw some of the constellations and learned how to connect the stars to make different shapes. Then they were off to research the answers to some of their many questions. They even got to have their picture taken behind an astronaut suit, and it looked like they were really in it!

This time when they went out to greet the magic quilt, they saw magical sparkles in the shape of stars! Everyone was getting a little tired. All this talk about night skies was making them sleepy. Their wise teacher said,

*"Magic quilt please take us to  
the place where we first met.  
It's time for all good penguins  
to end this busy day... and yet,*

*I wonder if tomorrow  
will be that special day,  
when we will get to visit  
our very good friend Ray."*

The penguin friend that the children had been "talking" to with their class computer would love for them to visit. They had been sending emails back and forth, to and from Antarctica and had made a special friend with an electrician penguin they nicknamed, "Electric Ray." He was so kind to teach them things he'd seen. They felt as if they were really there and couldn't wait to see it. They had made "dream pockets" and many penguin children added to their dreams that they had wanted to visit Antarctica some day. Would tomorrow be that day?

Many of the little penguins had fallen asleep on the magic quilt during the ride back to school. This adventure had seemed like a whole school year, but really it was just a small part of their special time with Mrs. McPenguin. And thanks to the magic quilt it

would be forever kept alive and remembered in each and everyone of their hearts. They all have pictures and stories to remember this year and how much they were loved, and how fun it was to learn.

*“Penguins” are special people  
that know how to have alot of fun.  
They learn from others around them,  
and appreciate each and every one.*

And Mrs. Math would like to say, “Thank you,” to all the little penguins and the special teacher penguin that shared all of these things with her. And remember, it’s not THE END, but only the BEGINNING!



*In loving memory of Mrs. Cynthia McPherson, beloved wife of Mark, loving mother of Damira and Timur who passed away after a brave battle with cancer July 2, 2001. This was written for her magical 1998 first grade class at Wayne Thomas Elementary School, Highland Park, Illinois, as a tribute to her love of penguins and to honor all the extraordinary field trips she took her students on. She was the most wonderful, compassionate teacher. The penguin quilt and the memories are very real and she is dearly missed.*