

## Grade 5 Exemplars

**Prompt: Describe the effects of the spill on the penguins and the rescue efforts that followed. Support your piece with information from all three sources.**

### **Exemplar A:**

A few years ago near South Africa, the effects of an oil spill and the rescue effort that followed threatened thousands of endangered penguins. A first effect was that just moving their bodies through the water became problematic because the penguins would wobble and roll in the dense oil. This must have threatened their ability to catch the food they require in the water. By the time the humans came to rescue them, the penguins were so frightened that they scratched, bit and attacked the people. This suggests that the oil must have frightened them too, which made the rescue efforts even more difficult because they were so scared. Finally, the rescue work of cleaning and feeding them, the repulsive smell in the warehouse from penguin droppings, dead fish, and sweat must have made people want to give up. No one did. Maybe no one gave up because of how much they cared about the threatened penguins. Overall, this story shows the huge effects of the oil spill and the difficulties in the rescue. It also shows how much everyone cared.

### **Exemplar B:**

The two texts and one video, “Save as Many Penguins as We Can”, “Penguin Under Threat”, and “Endangered Penguins Caught in Oil Spill” all describe the effects of the spill, and the enormous rescue work efforts people took to help and save the frightened penguins. An effect of the spill was that it created enormous work that was not glamorous. As an example, oil is sticky and thick so the 20,000 penguins needed to be washed for at least an hour each. This shows how a major effect of the oil spill was the time it took to help the birds. The rescue efforts must have scared the penguins because of how the birds responded. As the Penguins Under Threat text states, “Powerful wing slaps, sharp spines on tongues, strong jaws and razor-like beaks” met the surprised workers who had just come to help. Imagine if you were a penguin, it would just feel terrible to be ‘scrubbed’ by a possible attacked. Another challenge of the rescue effort was feeding the penguins in order to save their lives. As stated in “Penguins Under Threat,” the penguins had to be “hand fed dead fish” and they had to hold the penguin down and force it to eat the dead sardines. A penguin is used to catching fish alive and eating them live. Without eating, the penguins would die so the rescuers had to do this. These effects and the rescue efforts tell a sad story, though it had a happy ending when the rescue succeeded and they were able to save 90% of the penguins.

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**Exemplar C:**

The articles "Save as Many Penguins As We Can", "Penguins Under Threat", and the video "Endangered Penguins" describe a catastrophic oil spill near South Africa caused by people, but then how people come together in the rescue efforts to help the endangered penguins hurt by the spill.

'Save as Many Penguins as We Can' describes the impact of the oil spill on the penguins as causing these creatures to become "completely shiny black, drenched in poisonous oil", how the oil destroyed their homes, made them unable to catch food in the water, got in their eyes and even how "ingesting the oil could kill them". Since the penguins could not use their arms, they could sink and die. It was people who caused the oil spill that harmed these penguins in these ways. These already endangered penguins now had no safe home, could not move easily and were now in even greater immediate danger of dying if they licked off any of the oil all over them. If people had never gone into this area with their unsafe ship, these birds would have been perfectly fine.

Fortunately, despite people being responsible for this tragedy, other people, including many volunteers, did try to help with a rescue effort – all with one goal now to help these poor penguins. The news article describes the details of the event such as how they built makeshift warehouses to help clean them off, ensuring "the birds had to be washed gently with tooth brushes". It took several people working together to clean off each penguin. Even more, these helpers provided dead sardines to feed the penguins, but they had to force feed them and literally shove the dead fish down their throats because penguins are used to eating live fish. These rescuers even used "specially designed vacuums" to clean up the oil in the water to save their homes. People caused this tragedy, but then people also showed up to help. There are two sides to every coin, even human nature. While this tragedy would not have happened if it were not for people wanting to transport oil, the rescuing people did put together effective plans and work with dedication to save as many of these poor victims as they could.

These sources describe this terrible spill, then hopeful rescue event, in ways that show how people can be both hurtful and helpful. It is frustrating that this oil spill happened, but encouraging that so many people cared enough to help by volunteering at the time, then by writing well about it and by making sympathetic videos. At the end of the three-month rescue operation, about 90% of the oil covered birds survived and were returned to the wild. After lots of hard work, time, pain and handling the stench of the birds, everyone's hard work finally paid off! Hopefully, people can be more careful in the future to avoid such accidents in the first place.

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**Exemplar D:**

**Project: As part of an integrated science and social studies unit, students studied natural disasters around the globe. They then compiled these into a class news blog posted on the web.**

**Penguin Disaster Brings Out the Best**

*Imagine staring into the eyes of a terrified penguin who might die soon. The workers who helped the penguins after the recent oil spill off the coast of Cape Town in South Africa spent heart-breaking days that resulted in heart-warming stories of human selflessness. What exactly happened?*

**Capturing the Spill's Effects:** The authors use varied point of views, pictures and text captions to describe the vast spill. The aid worker emphasized its impact on the volunteers and the penguins. As a concerned animal expert, she describes her emotion during the event, explaining how "my eyes misted" and "my heart beat raced". "Penguins under threat!" emphasizes the details of the event such as the statistics around how many penguins were harmed (14,000 adults and 6,000 chicks) and exactly how they used vacuums and special chemicals to clean the oil off of the penguins. The video and real life pictures of the penguins even further depict how horribly the oil affected their bodies. They show them just covered in oil, looking soggy and sad, suggesting how miserable the penguins must have been at that time. The pictures and the text captions bring the words and the story alive and help the reader understand the impact of the oil spill on the lives of those penguins.

**Challenges of the Spill:** Each author conveys the challenges surrounding how the rescue efforts, again through different lenses. Both articles and the video describe how the penguins lashed out at the volunteers because they didn't understand the humans were trying to help them, not hurt them. In "Save as Many Penguins as We Can", the reader feels right there and perceive the penguins not as dangerous but as to be cared for. For example, the author writes, "I felt overwhelmed with sentiment as I watch the sea of fatigued workers and volunteers leaving the area, and many staying behind to work through the night", which reminds of the emotional side of the experience and gives the angle of helping rather than being afraid of the dangers they posed. "Penguins Under threat also focused on the positive outcomes. Not even listing how many humans were harmed, they celebrate the details of how "90% of the oiled birds were rehabilitated and released. Another 19,500 non-oiled penguins were relocated successfully." The video showed how, "They must restrain the penguin, pry its beak open, and shove the fish down its throat. The warehouse stench is so powerful that many people throw up when they first arrive. But not even the smell keeps people away." Impressively, each text illustrates how the volunteers persisted even when the penguins resisted.

**Island's Environment:** Finally, in the articles and the video it is easy to feel what the island must have been like before the oil spill destroyed it, which highlights the damaging effects, and again given from different perspectives. Once again the differing media and perspectives give alternate angles, but convey the same sense of desperation in the changes to the environment. The video described the habitat as one that would be well suited to penguins, as "a cold and windy rocky beach." Both articles describe how the water had formerly been "pristine blue" and "Deep-blue water and rocky beaches that had just been some of the most breath-takingly beautiful areas in the world were suddenly rendered into frightening, sticky messes." The video shows the beautiful island and the natural habitat as looking a bit like paradise for the penguins prior to the spill. The oil spill changed their environment from safe to dangerous, from beautiful to ugly.

Each author, through differing media and perspective, draws the reader into the story of the spill's effects, the rescue efforts, and changes to their homes from the beautiful place it once was. The descriptive details make the reader feel like as if the reader were right there with those endangered penguins. All of the authors described the event with so much passion not only for the penguins, but for the volunteers who remained so dedicated as well, as well as for the natural beauty that was there beforehand. The authors described the challenges in such details, it makes the reader want to get on a plane and help those adorable penguins!