

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Amber Brown Is Feeling Blue by Paula Danziger

Book Information

Paula Danziger, Amber Brown Is Feeling Blue
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Book Level: 4.0
Interest Level: MG

Nine-year-old Amber Brown faces further complications because of her parent's divorce when her father plans to move back from Paris, and she must decide with which parent she will spend the holiday.

Award: ABC (Assoc. of Booksellers for Children)
Choice Aw; Misc./Other

Topics: Family Life, Divorce; Family Life, Parenting;
Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular
Authors/Starred Reviews; Series, Amber
Brown

Main Characters

Amber Brown a colorful nine-year-old girl from
New Jersey
Brandi Colwin Amber's friend
Brenda Amber's caretaker, the "Amber-sitter"
Dad Amber's father, who has been living in Paris
Hannah Burton a mean girl at school
Kelly Green a new girl at school who becomes
friends with Amber
Max Mom's fiance
Mom Amber's mother
Mrs. Holt Amber's school teacher

Vocabulary

"J'aime Paris" "I love Paris"
intentionally on purpose
supervision guarding or watching over
unique one of a kind

Synopsis

Amber Brown is excited because her father will be

moving back to America in a couple of weeks. Amber's parents are divorced and her father has been living in Paris. Amber's mother has a boyfriend named Max. Max invites Amber and her mother to spend Thanksgiving with him in Walla Walla, Washington.

Shortly after, Amber's excitement is dampened when her life becomes a bit more complicated. Amber's father calls from Paris and asks her to spend Thanksgiving with him in New York when he returns. Amber tells him she, her mother, and Max already have a trip planned. Amber is frustrated and does not know what to do. She must choose one parent over another and, either way, she loses.

Amber must also work through changes at school with a new girl named Kelly Green. Amber is dumbfounded to meet another person with a "totally colorful name." Amber has always prided herself on her unique name and her originality. At first, Amber is annoyed by Kelly, but they soon become friends.

The days quickly pass and Amber's father returns from Paris. Amber is thrilled to see him, but her mother is cold and distant. Her mother and father have agreed that Amber alone must decide which parent she will spend Thanksgiving with, and she knows whatever she decides her parents will support her. After much deliberation, Amber makes her decision. She will spend Thanksgiving with her father because she is the only family her father has. Amber's mother is sad, but she understands. Amber then spends a pleasant Thanksgiving holiday in New York City with her father.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

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Initial Understanding

While Amber is giving Kelly a tour of the school, Kelly remarks that she thinks it is sad that Amber is an only child. Why would she think this is sad?

Kelly probably thinks Amber's life is lonely without any siblings. Kelly has siblings, and it is probably difficult for her to imagine a life without them. She might think Amber has no one to talk to or that she must be bored without siblings around.

Literary Analysis

Amber insists that she is a colorful person. In what ways is she colorful?

Amber is colorful because she is a unique individual. Her name is unusual compared to other names and she is proud of it, often saying "I, Amber Brown...." She dresses as a crayon for Halloween to show the world how colorful she is. Amber has a new view of the world at the end of the story. She accepts her various moods and looks forward to a colorful life.

Inferential Comprehension

How does Amber's view of her life change at the end of the story?

At first, Amber wishes her life could be like it used to be. If Mom and Dad were married, she thinks things would be fine. By the end of the story, she realizes that her life is the way it is supposed to be. She focuses on the positive aspects of her life. She likes having Max in her life, she realizes she is very important to both her parents, she will have two places to live, and she will have many new, exciting experiences ahead.

Constructing Meaning

This book is titled *Amber Brown is Feeling Blue*. What does blue mean in this title? How is Amber blue?

Blue describes the overall mood for someone feeling sad, gloomy, or depressed. Amber is blue because there are things happening in her life that she cannot control. A new girl arrives at her school who also has a color name. At first, Amber feels her originality is somehow threatened. Then, her excitement over her father's return turns to anxiety and confusion when she must decide which parent she will spend Thanksgiving with. She struggles with this decision because she does not want to hurt either parent. This makes her blue.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Amber decides to write a newspaper titled "The Olden Times" for her school project on the Middle Ages. Have students choose their own topics, or choose from a list of selected topics, and create a newspaper for that specific subject. Students might choose an animal, a sport, a cartoon character, a movie, or even a musical group. Students can create headlines, articles, editorials, and even advice columns for their newspapers.

Understanding the Author's Craft The author of *Amber Brown is Feeling Blue* uses a great deal of color imagery in her book. Color is used to describe characters as well as feelings and emotions. Have students write questions relating to color. Offer the following sample questions: Which person reminds you of the color red? What color describes how you are feeling today? What does the color green make you think of? Students can read questions aloud while their classmates respond.

Describing Actions or Events In this story, Amber's father sends her a "Countdown to Dad" book, which is filled with pictures and days for her to check off as they pass. Students can make their own "Countdown" books as a fun project. Have them choose any future event. For

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example, they could count down to a holiday, to their birthdays, to a sporting event, or to a vacation. Students can make a calendar of days and include pictures, articles, drawings, and other things. Have them check off days as time passes.

Responding to Literature Amber creates a very interesting and informative "Book Report in a Bag" about a book on civil rights. She draws on the bag and includes paper dolls of the characters. Have students do their own Book Report in a Bag on a favorite book. Students can draw or decorate the bag in any fashion. Along with their oral book report, they can fill the bag with items that correspond to the book. These can be toys, gadgets, dolls, pictures, trinkets, or maps.