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# Teachers' Notes

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## AMANDA COMMANDER: THE BLUES-DAY TUESDAY

Coral Vass

**ISBN:** 9781761111266

**Recommended retail:** \$12.99

**Reading level:** 6 to 8

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### BOOK SUMMARY

When Amanda returns to school after having a sick day, she finds fitting back into the friendship group trickier than she imagined. Amanda makes a plan, with the help of the Dolphin Squad, to go out of their way and include anyone. But when Eve is sick and has a few days off school, how will Amanda ensure Eve doesn't have a blues-day back at school just like she did? It's OPERATION WELCOME BACK!

Amanda tries everything to make Eve feel included, even if it means being left out herself.

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### THEMES

Inclusion, Consideration, Creativity, Kindness and helping others, Friendships

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**Coral Vass is available for author talks and workshops.  
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

*Amanda Commander Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Coral Vass is an award-winning Australian children's author. She has always loved telling stories and has been writing books for over ten years.

Her awards include the 2018 Speech Pathology Awards for Best Book for Language and Literacy Development Indigenous Children, the 2019 CBCA Book of the Year Eve Pownall Award and the 2021 Caleb Picture Book of the Year Award. Coral has also been shortlisted for the 2020 REAL Awards.

Coral loves to visit schools, where she runs writing workshops and shares the power of story. She is an ambassador for Reading Out of Poverty and is passionate about giving all children an equal opportunity to read.

### AUTHOR NOTE

I remember when I was at school, after taking a few days off for a simple cold or flu, I returned to school to find some friendships had changed in the short few days I was away. I remember it took a day or two to integrate myself back into my friendship group. I have seen it happen in lots of friendship circles as well as with my own children too, especially with girls' friendships. When we want to be welcomed back with open arms, sometimes the reality is very different. I wanted to write about this, to encourage young people to consider others. It's hard being the 'new person' at school, whether you are starting out at a new school or whether you are trying to integrate back into a friendship group after being away for a period of time. I think we can all learn to be a better friend, no matter how old or young we are.

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## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

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The Amanda Commander is a series promoting kindness, loyalty and friendship. It models positive friendships and behaviour. They provide examples of practical and creative problem solving and helping others. And the series celebrates creativity, art and craft.

The series is great for beginner readers and aims to help children understand concepts that can otherwise seem complex. Amanda Commander wishes to instil the values of inclusion, compassion and empathy in children. and celebrates diversity and multiculturalism. It also wants to encourage outdoor activities and fun; canoeing, surfing, kayaking, boating. The smaller chapters will boost confidence in young readers.

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

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Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

### YEAR ONE

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	ACELA1454
ACHASSI022			

### YEAR TWO

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1461	ACELA1463	ACELT1833	ACELA1454
ACELA1462	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	
ACHASSI038			

### YEAR THREE

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1594	ACELY1676	ACELA1488	ACELY1675
ACELT1596			
ACHASSK093	ACHASSI059	ACHASSK070	ACHASSI080
ACHASSI060	ACHASSI056		

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## TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

## KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

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### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

### AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if Amanda or her friends remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
2. Has Amanda changed from any of the previous books until now?
3. What lessons does Amanda learn throughout the course of the story?
4. Ask students how they perceive Amanda's situation. Do they agree with her actions or disagree? Why?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### GENERAL

- Discuss some of the following terms and what they mean: inclusion, consideration, kindness, empathy, bullying, judgement.
- Reflect as a class on what it feels like to be excluded and included.
- One way for young people to think about how they would feel in certain situations is by using the approach: If this... then that. Here are some examples:
  - a)** If a classmate isn't included in the class circle and is sitting outside of it, then that student may feel like they don't belong and aren't part of the class.
    - How can we make sure that classmate feels included?
  - b)** If a student is always the last to be chosen for teams in PE class then they might feel unwanted or left out. This might mean they won't do well in class.
    - What can we do to make this student know they are wanted?
- We can also reflect on our own experiences in tough situations. Discuss a time where you were a new student, joined a new team or club, had to be part of a group where people were friends and you were unfamiliar, or had to rejoin somewhere after time away and felt out of place.
- What are some ways that you feel you could handle the events of the book? Do you agree with how Amanda or Rosie dealt with the feelings of exclusion?
- Think about times you've stepped in and helped someone if you felt they were lonely or upset. How did you notice they were feeling down? Has anyone done that for you too? How did it feel?
- What do you do when you feel unwanted? What other feelings might come with feelings of exclusion? See if you can label some of those feelings. Once labelled think through how you might tackle those feelings.
- Take some time today to practice friendly invitations and be an includer! Friendly invitations means seeing if there's someone left out in your class or on the playground and offering for them to join in. Some examples are:
  - Do you want to join us?
  - We need extra players! Want to play?
  - Do you like handball? We were just about to play.

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## INCLUSION

- Have you ever felt left out? How did it make you feel?
- What sort of things do you do, to try to fit in? Fill in the table below with things that are positive and things that are negative. Example of positive things: Ask to join in, listen to others. Example of negative things: Lie to impress others, gossip about others.

Positive Things We Can Do To Fit In	Negative Things We Can Do To Fit In

- Have you ever felt like Rosie and Amanda after being away from school for a few days?
- Draw a comic strip scene of what happened.
- Can you remember a time you did this? What happened and how did it feel?
- How do you think Eve felt when Amanda and the girls came to visit her at home?
- When Eve said: "To be honest, I was going to come back today, but I was scared I'd be left out...because I've missed out on so much," (page 57), what do you think she meant?

## CONSIDERATION

- What do you think it means to 'put others first'? What does it mean to be considerate of others?
- In what ways did Amanda 'miss out' so that Eve felt included?
- Have you ever been in a situation when you have sacrificed something/ missed out on something in order to help someone else? What was it and how did you feel?
- What does it mean to 'always treat others how you want to be treated'?
- What does it mean to 'put others first'? Do you find this an easy or a hard to do?

## CREATIVITY

- Amanda described she felt 'ANGRY RED' in Chapter One. What colours would you use to describe how Amanda was feeling in Chapter Four, Seven and Nine?
- How can colours describe feelings? If you were to describe your feelings with colours what would you choose?
- How does creativity allow Amanda and her friends to express themselves?
- How does their creativity make their friendship stronger?

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## KINDNESS AND HELPING OTHERS

- List three ways Amanda and her friends showed kindness to Rosie.
- Re-write Chapter Nine and Ten to reflect a different ending. Describe how your ending would make Amanda feel. Describe how your ending would make Eve feel.
- Think of someone you know who may be sick or just needs cheering up. Make them a special card.
- Find different verbs represent what Amanda is doing, thinking and saying in Chapter Four.
- List at least ONE kind thing Amanda does in each chapter of the book.
- How is kindness contagious? How does Amanda's kindness inspire others to be kind? Describe a time when you have shown kindness to others and then they have been encouraged to show kindness themselves

## FRIENDSHIPS

- In what ways is Amanda's friendships impacted over the course of the story?
- Are there any ways in which Amanda could have communicated with her friends about how she was feeling? What would you have done?
- How does Amanda's view of her friends and friendships change throughout the book?



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## ACTIVITIES

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### DRAW A MAP

Look at the Map on page 60. Draw a map of your house and neighbourhood in relation to your school and your friend's houses. Decorate it and label it, or add fun facts.

### ORIGAMI BUTTERFLY

[Follow these instructions](#) to make an origami butterfly mobile, just like the one in Eve's bedroom.

### DAISY CHAINS

Collect as many dandelions or daisies as you can. Try to make the longest 'daisy chain' you can without it breaking.

1. Look for daisies with thick stems at least 4 inches (10 cm) long. Look for healthy, fully open flowers for a more beautiful chain.
2. Slit the stem with your thumbnail. Cut a small slit through the middle of the stem, without breaking it in half. You can cut this just below the flower, or halfway down the stem. If your fingernails are too short, use a plastic knife.
3. Thread the stem of another daisy through the slit. Push the base of the stem through, until the flower is snug against the slit.
4. Repeat with any number of daisies. Make a slit in the next daisy and push the third stem through it. Repeat until you've made a bracelet, crown, or necklace. When you think your daisy chain is long enough, cut a second slit through the first stem. Push the last daisy through this slit to make a loop.

### MAKE MAI'S MUM'S VIETNAMESE RICE BALLS

Ingredients:

- 180 g glutinous rice flour
- 20 g rice flour
- 200 ml warm water (approx)

Filling -

- 100-150 g dark palm sugar, chopped into 1.25 cm squares
- Pan-roasted sesame seeds, to sprinkle

Method:

1. Prepare the dough first by mixing the two types of flours together. Slowly add in warm water, mixing until the dough comes together and is smooth and elastic. If you are after the green colour, add extract or colour until desired amount. Cover and rest.
2. Pinch a little dough, put 1 piece of sugar in the middle, and then roll into a small ball about the size of a marble. Repeat until all dough is used.
3. Boil some water in a large pot. Fill another bowl with cold water. When the water is boiled, add the sticky rice balls in batches. Bring the water to the boil. Once the rice balls rise to the surface, remove from boiling water using a slotted spoon.
4. Place them into the bowl of cold water immediately. Repeat until all are cooked.
5. Arrange the balls onto small plates. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve immediately.