
Teachers' Notes



AMANDA COMMANDER: THE GREAT ORANGE BAKE-OFF

Coral Vass / Heidi Cooper Smith

ISBN: 9781761112195

Reading level: 6 to 8 years

BOOK SUMMARY

Amanda and her friends have been preparing for the school bake-off, but their plans are derailed when Amanda is separated from them and paired up with Eve instead.

The Dolphin Squad concoct a plan to get back on the same team, but is working with Eve really so bad?

It's OPERATION TEAMWORK!

Time to bake some delicious treats!

THEMES

Friendship • Teamwork • Trust •

Adaptability & Growth • Inclusivity

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**Coral Vass is available for author talks and workshops.
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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



Coral Vass is an award-winning children's author, presenter, editor and reviewer. With a background in Media, Coral has more than 25 published children's books. Many of her books have appeared on ABCTV's Playschool, UK's Story Den on Milkshake TV, Storytime with Fergie and Friends, as well as on Australia's StoryBox Library. Coral loves to visit schools, where she runs writing workshops and shares the power of story. Coral is an ambassador for Reading Out of Poverty and is passionate about giving all children an equal opportunity to read.

AUTHOR NOTES

Teamwork is a common element of assessments throughout Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education. As a parent and observer, I've seen, more times than I can count, students (including my own children) groan and complain when placed in groups they didn't choose. Sometimes these groups work well together, and other times, they don't. But I believe no experience is ever wasted. We can either complain or choose to see each situation as a chance to grow and learn.

When writing this book, I wanted to place Amanda in a challenging situation; one where she has to make a choice. She can either complain and try to manipulate things to go her way, or she can accept the circumstances and make the best of them. Learning to collaborate with people we wouldn't normally choose as friends is an important life skill. It's something we all need to learn, no matter how old we are.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



At an early age, Heidi Cooper-Smith knew she wanted to write and illustrate picture books. But during a Visual Arts degree, she fell in love with ceramics and spent the next twenty years covered in clay. Heidi rediscovered her passion for drawing in 2014 when she joined the online 52-week illustration challenge. Six months later, she was offered her first illustration contract with Koala Books for *Two Birds on a Wire*. This wonderful experience inspired her to start writing, and in 2015 and 2016, she won the CYA illustrated manuscript competition. She wrote and illustrated *Kate and the Thing* and was also the illustrator of *The Other Brother*.

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

The Amanda Commander series is one that promotes kindness, loyalty and friendship. This story models positive friendships and behaviour while exploring what happens when friendships are tested. It provides examples of practical and creative problem solving, collaboration and learning to work with others. The series continues to celebrate creativity, art and imagination. With shorter chapters designed to build reading stamina and confidence, the Amanda Commander series supports young readers while promoting positive values, inclusion and understanding of others.

This book is ideal for beginner and emerging readers and helps children understand social situations that can otherwise feel complex. Through Amanda's experience of being placed in an unexpected team, the story explores inclusion, empathy, trust and adaptability. It encourages children to see challenges as opportunities to grow. The book highlights the importance of teamwork in classroom settings and models respectful communication, compromise and cooperation. It reinforces the message that strong friendships are built on trust and that working with different people can strengthen confidence and resilience.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

YEAR ONE

English

AC9E1LE01 – Discuss characters and events in literary texts.

AC9E1LE02 – Share personal responses to texts and make connections to own experiences.

AC9E1LY02 – Use comprehension strategies to understand texts.

Humanities and Social Sciences

AC9HS1K02 – Explore how people interact and care for places and communities.

AC9HS1S03 – Share ideas and opinions respectfully.

Health and Physical Education

AC9HP2P04 – Identify how friendships support wellbeing.

AC9HP2M01 – Practise personal and social skills when interacting with others.

YEAR TWO

English

AC9E2LE02 – Discuss characters, settings and events in literary texts and share responses.

AC9E2LY02 – Identify how texts reflect contexts and experiences.

AC9E2LY05 – Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.

Humanities and Social Sciences

AC9HS2K03 – Identify how people cooperate to achieve shared goals.

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AC9HS2S03 – Participate in discussions and decision-making respectfully.

Health and Physical Education

AC9HP2P04 – Explain how friendships support wellbeing.

AC9HP2P05 – Practise strategies to manage relationships and interact respectfully.

AC9HP2P06 – Describe ways to include others.

YEAR THREE

English

AC9E3LE02 – Discuss how characters are represented and how language is used to describe them.

AC9E3LY05 – Use comprehension strategies to interpret ideas and make inferences.

AC9E3LY06 – Create texts that adapt language features for purpose and audience.

Humanities and Social Sciences

AC9HS3K04 – Explain how people work together to achieve shared goals.

AC9HS3S03 – Develop questions and participate in discussions to explore viewpoints.

Health and Physical Education

AC9HP4P04 – Practise strategies for working cooperatively in groups.

AC9HP4P05 – Investigate how respect and inclusion strengthen relationships.

TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the class the front cover. What clues can you see about what the story might be about? Look at the colours, the characters and their expressions.
2. What do you think the "Great Orange Bake-Off" might involve?
3. Read the back cover blurb aloud. Does this give you more information about the story? Were your predictions correct?
4. Where do you think the story is set? How can you tell from the cover illustration?
5. Have you ever been part of a competition or group activity at school? What was it like?

Encourage students to justify their answers using evidence from the cover and blurb.

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. What was your first impression of Amanda at the beginning of the story?
2. Why was Amanda upset about being partnered with Eve?
3. How did Amanda's feelings change as the story progressed?
4. What challenges did Amanda face during the Bake-Off?
5. Did Amanda solve her problem in the way you expected? Why or why not?
6. Do Amanda or her friends remind you of anyone you know — a friend, sibling or even yourself? In what ways?
7. What lesson do you think Amanda learned by the end of the story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- What does the cover suggest about the story and the characters?
- Amanda chooses the colour orange. What might orange symbolise?
- Why didn't Amanda want to be partnered with Eve at first? Give two reasons.
- What changed that made Amanda more willing to work with Eve?
- How did the Dolphin Squad react to the new teams being announced?
- What was the main problem in the story?
- How was the problem solved?
- Which part of the Bake-Off was most important to the team's success? Why?
- What lesson do you think the class learned from the competition?
- If you could give Amanda advice at the beginning of the story, what would you say?
- How did Eve contribute to the team's final result?

FRIENDSHIP

- How was the Dolphin Squad's friendship tested in this story?
- In what ways did Amanda show she trusted her friends?
- "A triangle is the strongest shape." What are the advantages and challenges of having a friendship group of three?
- How did the Dolphin Squad support Amanda during the competition?
- Did Amanda always make the best choices for her friendship? Why or why not?
- How did Eve feel about being outside the Dolphin Squad?
- What makes a strong friendship? Can you find examples from the story?
- How did the girls show forgiveness or understanding?
- What could have happened to the Dolphin Squad if trust was broken?
- Have you ever worried about losing a friendship? What helped you feel better?

TEAMWORK

- How did Amanda learn to collaborate with Eve?
- Give two examples that show why teamwork is important in the competition.
- Have you ever worked in a team you didn't choose? What did you learn?
- What strengths did Amanda bring to the team?
- What strengths did Eve bring to the team?

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- How did the girls divide the jobs during the Bake-Off?
 - What might have happened if Amanda refused to cooperate?
 - How did listening to each other improve their results?
 - Why is it important for everyone in a team to feel valued?
 - What are some ways you can be a good team member in class?
 - How can disagreements in a team be solved respectfully?

TRUST

- What does the quote *"Friendship without trust is like building a house without a foundation"* mean?
- How did this idea appear in the story?
- What colour would you use to represent TRUST? Why?
- Draw a picture of a time you trusted a friend, even when things felt uncertain.
- Why is trust important in both friendship and teamwork?
- Did Amanda trust Eve at the beginning of the story? What changed?
- How did Eve show that she could be trusted?
- What might have happened if Amanda didn't trust her friends?
- How can you tell when someone trusts you?
- What are some ways we can build trust with others?
- Can trust be broken? If so, how can it be repaired?

ADAPTABILITY & GROWTH

- How did Amanda grow by stepping out of her comfort zone?
- How did her reaction to being paired with Eve change from Chapter One to Chapter Three?
- What might have happened if the Dolphin Squad had stayed together?
- What does it mean to step outside your comfort zone?
- Why was it hard for Amanda at the beginning of the story?
- What helped Amanda adjust to the new situation?
- How did Amanda's thinking change as the competition went on?
- What did Amanda learn about herself?
- How can trying something new help us grow?
- Have you ever had to adapt to a change at school? What happened?
- Why is being flexible an important skill in friendships and teamwork?

INCLUSIVITY

- How did Amanda show open-mindedness during the competition?
- How might Eve have felt at the beginning of the story?
- Describe a time you included someone new. How did it feel?
- Why is it important to make everyone feel included in group activities?
- Did Amanda feel included at all times in the story? Explain your answer.
- What small actions can make someone feel welcome?
- How did the class environment change as the competition continued?
- What could Amanda have done differently at the start to be more inclusive?
- How might Eve's feelings have changed by the end of the story?
- What does inclusion look like in our classroom?
- How can we show kindness to someone who feels left out?

ACTIVITIES

DESIGN A BAKE-OFF POSTER

Create a bright, eye-catching poster for the Great Orange Bake-Off.

Include:

- A title
- Date and location
- Decorations using orange tones
- A slogan to encourage participation

CREATE YOUR OWN ORANGE RECIPE

Invent a new recipe for the Great Orange Bake-Off. Include:

- A name for your dish
- Ingredients
- Simple steps
- A short description explaining why it should win

CREATE A NEW BOOK COVER

Design an alternative cover for the book.

Think about:

- Which characters you will include
- The mood you want to show
- How you will represent teamwork and friendship

NAME THAT ORANGE

Paint companies create imaginative names for colours. Create your own creative name for the colour orange.

Examples:

- Sunset Splash
- Zesty Glow
- Mango Magic

WRITE AN ALTERNATIVE ENDING

Imagine Amanda chose to leave Eve and rejoin the Dolphin Squad.

- How would Eve feel?
- Would the story still have the same message?
- What lesson might change?

Explain why your name suits the colour.

ORANGE CREAM CUPS

Follow the recipe provided to create your own Orange Cream Cups.

Recipe

- 3 Oranges
 - Orange Juice
 - Milk
 - Condensed milk
 - Cream
 - Cornflour
 - Orange Food Colouring
1. Cut the three oranges in half. Scoop out the filling.
 2. Squeeze and make juice
 3. Strain the juice
 4. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cornflour and mix well
 5. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of condensed milk
 6. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cream
 7. Add 1 cup of milk
 8. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of orange food colouring (optional)
 9. Stir well
 10. Cook in a saucepan, on low stove heat, until thickens
 11. Continue to whisk to avoid lumps as the mixture thickens
 12. Pour into orange halves
 13. Cool in refrigerator for 20 mins
 14. Add whipped cream and orange slithers on top for decoration

Extension -

Before you begin:

- Predict how the ingredients will taste together
- Discuss how teamwork will be important during the cooking process.

Afterwards:

- Reflect: What worked well in your team?
- Would you change anything next time?

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