



Paula Danziger

Suggested Activities For Specific Books

Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon

1. Ask students to brainstorm what it means to be a friend and list the qualities of friendship.
2. Ask students to write what it would mean if a best friend moved away.
3. Plan a class trip to a country the class might be studying, for example, China.
 - a. Ask students to research the country and prepare a travel brochure that would include the weather, places to see, foods to eat, and special facts about the country
 - b. Direct the class in plotting the trip on a map, using the atlas, or mapping software.
 - c. For the class trip, develop a passport that includes a picture from school picture or a picture from a digital camera. (Passports can be used for students reading books from different countries. Every time a student reads a book about a country, fiction or non-fiction, a stamp could be placed on the passport.)
 - d. Ask students to write postcards from the country visited, including messages about things seen there and stamps that illustrate the country.
4. Write about how it would feel to lose a best friend who moved away.

Amber Brown Wants Extra Credit

1. Amber was to do a “how-to” project. Direct each student to select a “how-to” project and to write directions for it. Students may present their projects using computer programs such as Hyperstudio or PowerPoint, or they may practice oral skills by explaining the projects to the class.
2. Amber begins a list of likes and dislikes similar to Anastasia’s list in Lois Lowry’s book *Anastasia Krupnik*. Compare these two lists and ask students to develop their own list of likes and dislikes.
3. Ask students to produce different kinds of brownie recipes—just as Amber and Max were doing in the story.
4. Ask students to use ads in newspapers or other grocery stores advertisements to determine the cost of ingredients they would use in a cookie recipe.

Amber Brown Sees Red

1. Skunks invade Amber’s school. Ask students to research skunks and how to get rid of the irodor.
2. The children at Amber’s school make fun of the scents from skunks, comparing them to the sense they are using to smell. Lead students in making a list of homophones.
3. Ask students to write about the invasion of some kind of animal that might cause the school to be closed.
4. Amber and Max play skee ball and build up points. Discuss games that students might play at amusement parks or stores and ask the students to graph their favorites.

I, Amber Brown

1. Amber wants her ears pierced and uses her father to help her. Compare the family response to this to the response in *Ramona’s World* by Beverly Cleary when Beezus got her ears pierced.
2. Amber receives a letter from her friend who had moved away. Lead the students in writing friendly letters by hand or using a word processing program.

It’s Justin Time, Amber Brown

1. Written for younger readers, this book can be used to introduce the character Amber Brown. Books such as *Pinky and Rex* and parts of the *Junie B. Jones* books could be used to compare characters.



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2. Time and dates are important in this story. Use this book to introduce clocks and watches and to supplement a study of time.
3. Amber wants a watch, which she does get for her birthday. It is a very fancy watch and is illustrated in the story. Direct students to invent their own watches or other devices that they would find useful in their lives.
4. Locate the idioms in the story such as “time flies” and “watch dog” and use these as the beginning of a study of word play.

Make Like a Tree and Leave

1. Matthew and his class are studying Egypt. This would be a good tie-in to a study of Egypt. The students are planning an Egyptian festival that could be the basis of a class festival as well, although probably not with a mummy such as the boys made in the story.
2. The children in the book are involved in saving a farm from being turned into a shopping center, so this is an opportunity for a T-chart of pros and cons for such a plan as well as persuasive writing for and against the project.
3. One of the projects the children do is to describe what their hometown means to them. This could be used as a prompt for class writing.
4. The children raise money for their efforts. Ask the class to list various ways they could raise money. Compare this story to *Richest Kids in Town* by Peg Kehret, in which two boys try to raise money in similar ways.

Not for a Billion Gazillion Dollars

1. Compare this story with one by Claudia Mills, *You're a Brave Man, Julius Zimmerman*, in which the protagonist is involved in similar summer projects.
2. Discuss with students ways of raising money
3. Matthew and his friend try a project that could be dangerous. Discuss with students safety concerns and the pros and cons of different money-raising ideas.
4. Matthew is involved in baby-sitting. Students may develop a how-to book about baby-sitting.
5. Matthew makes up cards as another money-raising scheme to buy a computer program. Students can design their own cards by hand or with computer graphics and fonts. Using rhyming dictionaries, students can write verses that would be used on the cards.
6. Matthew advertises his business. Direct students to write ads, using newspapers as samples, for similar businesses.

P. S. Longer Letter Later: A Novel in Letters and Snail Mail No More

1. Direct students to compare the different letters sent by snail mail and e-mail.
2. Lead the students in comparing other books written in diary or journal form, such as the *Dear America* books or *Out of the Dust*.
3. Ask students to compare the two characters in these books, using a Venn diagram.

You Can't Eat Your Chicken Pox, Amber Brown

1. Amber catches chicken pox, so the class can graph how many students had chicken pox and when. Students can also include how they were affected by this.
2. When reading several books in the series, the class can continue their world travels, concentrating on Europe.



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3. Students may take an Internet trip to England using web sites such as:
http://www.yahooligans.com/Around_the_World/Countries/United_Kingdom
<http://londontown.com/> (a travel site that has places of interest to students)
4. Some British terms are used in the book: students can list and define them as well as search for other words. Examples are:
 - a. Flat (apartment)
 - b. Boot (truck)
 - c. Jumper (sweater)
 - d. Loo (toilet)
 - e. Tube (subway)
 - f. Queues (lines)
 - g. Circus (circles)
5. Ask students to research English money and compare it to United States money as well as to money used in other countries.
6. Direct each student to write about a disappointing event in his or her life, such as Amber not being able to go to France.

Suggested Activities for Books by Paula Danziger

1. Discuss with students what makes Danziger's books humorous. Introduce the subject by reading humorous poetry. List things that make students laugh or use a web design to discuss types of characters, settings, and events that make the students laugh.
2. Many of Danziger's books are in a series. Discuss the definition of a series with students, note the various ones that the students have already read, and determine what must occur in a series, such as same characters, similar plot, etc.
3. Use a Venn diagram and compare Danziger's main characters to other characters the students are familiar with such as *Ramona* by Beverly Cleary, *Anastasia Krupnik* by Lois Lowry, or *Angel* by Judy Delton
4. Use a circle sequence organizer to plot the Amber stories. Or use a storyboard to chart important events in the story.
5. Matthew and the young adult books can be plotted by using a plot diagram.
6. Using a T-chart, ask students to plot the problems characters face in the stories and the solutions they find.
7. Direct students to plot a pro and con chart for choices that the characters make in the young adult stories.
8. Danziger uses idioms and word play in a number of her Amber and Matthew books. Direct students to develop a word wall of such phrases and to search for others in their reading and writing. Dictionaries of idioms can be used.

This student activity guide was written by:

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