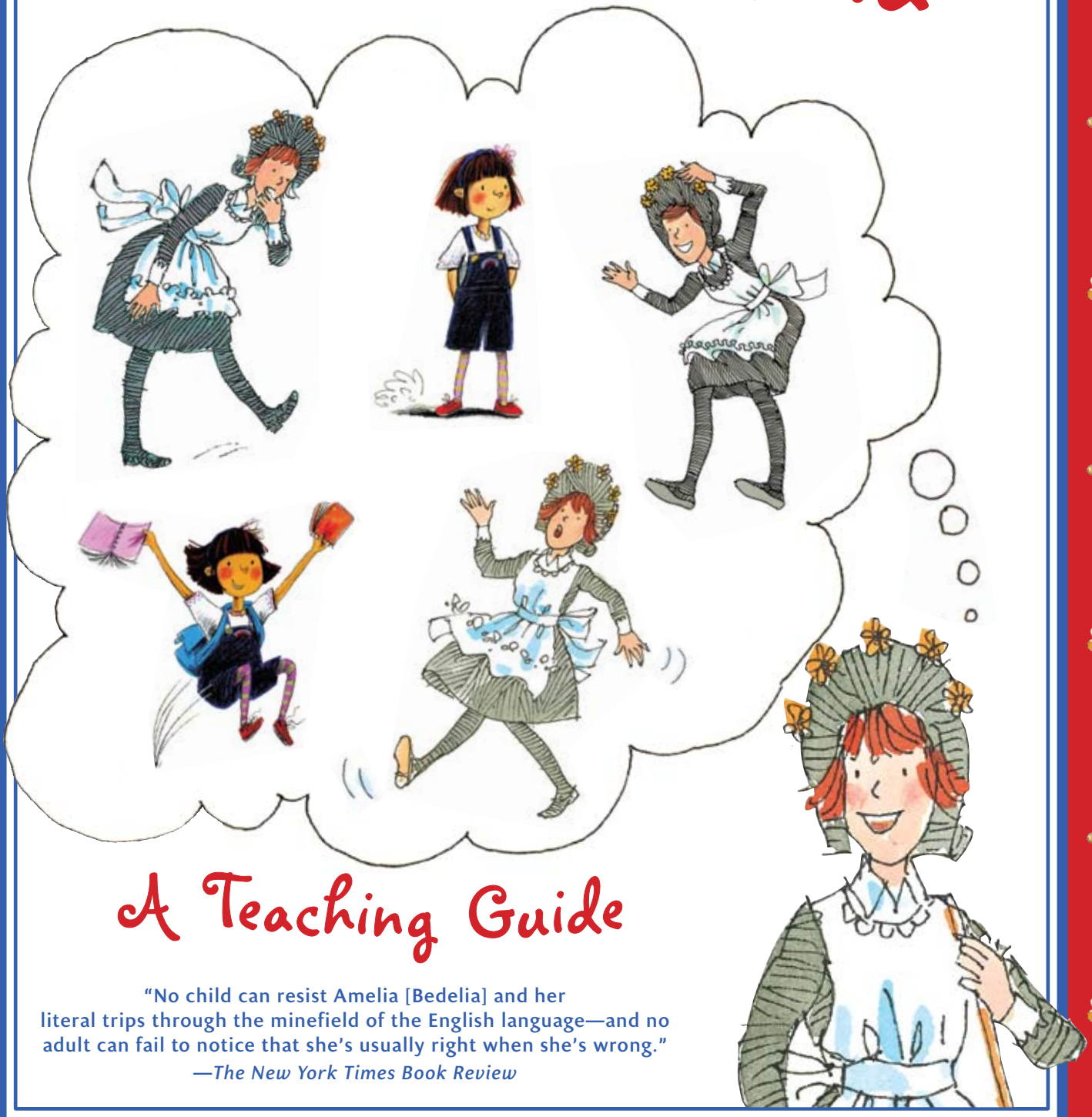
The World of Amelia Bedelia



A Teaching Guide

"No child can resist Amelia [Bedelia] and her literal trips through the minefield of the English language—and no adult can fail to notice that she's usually right when she's wrong."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

About the Amelia Bedelia Books

Herman and Peggy Parish, 1985

When *Amelia Bedelia* was first published in 1963, Peggy Parish was teaching the third grade in New York City. "Oh, Miss Parish," one of her students exclaimed, "you're not doing a thing but writing about yourself!" Peggy admitted that even *she* found similarities between herself and her famous creation. "I guess that loving mischief as much as Amelia Bedelia and I do shows. I simply enjoy laughing at life." More than forty years and twenty-one million Amelia Bedelia books later, the literal-minded housekeeper is still going strong.

In addition to her twelve Amelia Bedelia books, Peggy wrote nearly two dozen other books on a variety of subjects, for different age levels. Over the years, teachers and librarians have loved putting her books into the hands of children. They would not be surprised by Peggy's favorite letter from a young fan: "I hate reading, but your books are changing my opinion."

After living in New York for many years, Peggy Parish returned to her native South Carolina. She died in November 1988, but Amelia Bedelia lived on. Fan letters flowed in, and many readers asked when the next book would be out. In 1995, demand for more adventures prompted Peggy's nephew, Herman Parish, to continue the series. He has just finished his fifteenth Amelia Bedelia book. Herman visits schools across the country, like his aunt Peggy did, to help young readers discover that reading and writing can be fun.

According to Herman, the nicest reward for continuing this family tradition came in the form of another fan letter to Peggy. "A child wrote to Peggy," he said, "to tell her that my first book was the best book she had written. To me, that was the highest compliment I could hope for."

About the Authors

Herman Parish was in the fourth grade when his aunt, **Peggy Parish**, wrote the first book about Amelia Bedelia. The lovable, literal-minded housekeeper has been a member of the Parish family ever since. Peggy would be proud and delighted to know that her nephew is carrying on—for a new generation of readers—the tradition she began years ago. Herman has added fifteen books to the series, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Amelia Bedelia, Bookworm* and his latest, *Amelia Bedelia's First Day of School*, the picture book prequel that Amelia Bedelia fans have been waiting for.

www.ameliabedeliabooks.com

Black-and-white illustrations copyright by Lynn Sweat

Getting to Know Amelia Bedelia

Themes for Discussion

LANGUAGE

As young readers develop their reading fluency and comprehension, these books offer an opportunity to think about words and expressions. Facilitate a discussion about the language used in the Amelia Bedelia books. Ask for examples of words or phrases that Amelia Bedelia misunderstands. Amelia Bedelia often says that she did just what she was told to do. Is that true? Why or why not?

COMMUNICATION

Most of Amelia Bedelia's mix-ups originate in instructions or requests. What happens if instructions are not clear? Has there ever been a time when your students didn't understand instructions? What happened? What can your students do if they don't understand something they're asked to do?

HUMOR

Amelia Bedelia's mix-ups leave children in stitches! Engage your class in considering humor more deeply. What makes the books funny? Does Amelia Bedelia think she is funny? Do other characters think she is funny?

PROBLEM SOLVING

How does Amelia Bedelia solve her problems and fix her mistakes? Does Amelia Bedelia get frustrated? Do other characters get frustrated? What advice would you give Amelia Bedelia about solving her problems?

Character Study

AMELIA BEDELIA IN AND OUT

This activity prompts children to distinguish between a person's appearance and his or her other qualities. Have small groups of students work together using two large pieces of butcher paper. On one, they draw and color in what Amelia Bedelia looks like. On the other, they draw an outline of Amelia Bedelia, but rather than coloring it in, they fill it with words that explain who Amelia Bedelia is as a person—things that people wouldn't know just by looking at her. Each group then hangs the drawing of Amelia Bedelia's outward appearance in front of the page with deeper insights, so that viewers need to lift the top drawing to find out more.

AMELIA BEDELIA AND YOU

Explore Amelia Bedelia's character by having students compare and contrast her with themselves. Hand out copies of a Venn diagram and ask students to label one end with Amelia Bedelia's name, the other end with their own name, and the overlapping middle section with both of their names. Students should then fill in the diagram by writing similarities and differences in the appropriate sections. Encourage children to consider physical appearance, personality, likes and dislikes, and anything else they know about Amelia Bedelia from reading the books.

Book Study

GUESS WHAT AMELIA BEDELIA DID!

After each student reads a different Amelia Bedelia book, create a bulletin-board guessing game. Have each student draw a picture of a key incident from his or her book in which Amelia Bedelia misinterprets a word or phrase. On a separate piece of paper, ask each student to write a caption explaining the picture. Hang the illustrations in front of their accompanying captions, so that students may guess what Amelia Bedelia has misunderstood and then check to see if they're right by lifting up the picture to read the caption.

READER RECOMMENDATIONS

Set up a binder for student reviews of Amelia Bedelia titles. Ask students to review each Amelia Bedelia book they read with a summary of the story, their opinion of the book, and a drawing of their favorite mix-up. Keep reviews of each title together so that students can look at multiple opinions when they select the next book they want to read. Challenge students to read and review all the Amelia Bedelia books!

Connecting with Amelia Bedelia

Language Arts Activities

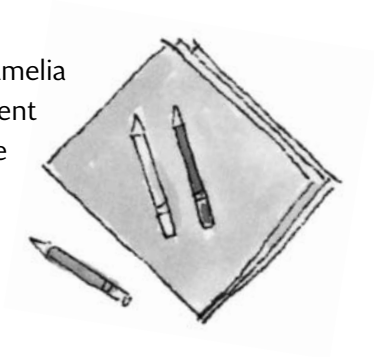
HOMOGRAPHS AND HOMOPHONES

Homographs are words that are spelled and often sound the same but have different meanings, such as *cast* (performers in a play) and *cast* (what someone wears to fix a broken leg). Homophones are words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings, such as *flu* and *flew*. Both are sometimes called homonyms. Create a homograph and homophone T-chart by asking students to provide examples of each from the Amelia Bedelia books. Have each child choose pairs of words to define and illustrate for two class books: *Amelia Bedelia's Dictionary of Homographs* and *Amelia Bedelia's Dictionary of Homophones*. Keep the dictionaries in the class library and add to them throughout the year.

FAVORITE IDIOMS

Idioms are figures of speech or common expressions that can easily be misunderstood by someone who has not heard them before. Generate a list of idioms that students find in the Amelia Bedelia books. Then assign each student the task of learning a new idiom by asking a family member for a favorite idiom and what it means. Provide art materials for children to illustrate the meanings of their new expressions. Also have them illustrate how Amelia Bedelia might misinterpret the words. After students write captions for the drawings, display the work around the classroom so that everyone can learn lots of new idioms!

NAME GAME



Following the pattern of Amelia Bedelia's name, have each student make a funny or clever rhyme for his or her own name. Generate a new class roster to hang on your wall, with all of the rhyming names.

AS EASY AS 1-2-3

For Amelia Bedelia, even the most basic instructions can be confusing. Stress the importance of clear, easy-to-read writing by having students write step-by-step instructions for a common task—like making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Once they're finished, ask students to exchange papers and test them out. If they follow the instructions exactly as written, will their sandwiches turn out okay? Examine the results and have students report on what was clear and what was confusing. Then eat the final products!

Creative Writing Activities

WHAT WOULD AMELIA BEDELIA SAY?

Ask students to pretend to be Amelia Bedelia writing a letter to her family after her first day of work in *Amelia Bedelia*. Taking Amelia Bedelia's perspective, students should write about Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, their house, and the day's list of chores. In writing their letters, students should consider whether or not Amelia Bedelia is aware of her mistakes. Do they think she knew that Mr. and Mrs. Rogers were unhappy with her job performance—until they tasted her lemon meringue pie?

MORE AMELIA BEDELIA

Challenge students to write their own Amelia Bedelia stories. As a class, decide on a location to serve as the setting, such as the beach or the zoo. Have students list words, phrases, and idioms associated with that setting that could cause typical Amelia Bedelia mix-ups. After students write rough drafts and then revise, edit, and illustrate their stories, have volunteers share their Amelia Bedelia adventures with the class.

Connecting with Amelia Bedelia

Curriculum Connections

MANY AMELIA BEDELIAS

Guide students in examining the ways that Amelia Bedelia is depicted by different illustrators of the series—Lynne Avril, Lynn Sweat, Fritz Siebel, Barbara Siebel Thomas, and Wallace Tripp. How are the various Amelia Bedelias similar? How are they different? Ask students to draw their own versions of Amelia Bedelia. Display the drawings as a portrait gallery. *(Art)*

THE AMELIA BEDELIA SONG

Assign small groups of students the task of developing a theme song for the Amelia Bedelia books. Begin with a class discussion of what a theme song is, and think of some popular theme songs that your students know. What should a theme song about Amelia Bedelia convey to listeners? Break the class into small groups to continue exploring this question. Have each group write an Amelia Bedelia theme song to the tune of a well-known song, such as "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Give the groups time to practice before performing for the rest of the class. *(Music)*

CONSIDERING COOKING

Amelia Bedelia is an accomplished cook and baker. Facilitate a discussion with your students about how science and math are involved in cooking. Ask students to consider the different kinds of cooking Amelia Bedelia does: baking bread, making cakes and pies, popping popcorn, filling cream puffs, candying apples, and even grilling. Find a recipe for an Amelia Bedelia treat to make with your class. As your students go through the cooking process, have them keep track of the math and science involved. Enjoy the math and science involved in eating, too! *(Math and Science)*

WHO KNOWS AMELIA BEDELIA?

As a class, create a web that displays all the people in Amelia Bedelia's life. Put Amelia Bedelia's name in the center of the web. Based on the books your students have read, ask them to contribute the names of people Amelia Bedelia knows. As the web develops, categorize the connections. For example, designate different shapes or colors on the web for family, friends, neighbors, employers, adults, and children. As the web expands, Amelia Bedelia's world and interactions become clearer. Lead a discussion about the web. How are Amelia Bedelia's relationships with other people important? *(Social Studies)*

AMELIA BEDELIA IN YOUR COMMUNITY

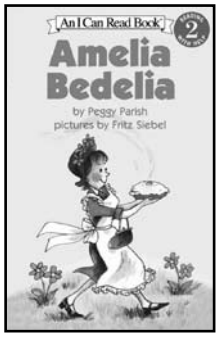
Engage students in finding out how well known Amelia Bedelia is in your school community. Let the class know that the first Amelia Bedelia book was published in 1963, and that more than twenty-one million Amelia Bedelia books have been sold since then. Involve them in creating an Amelia Bedelia survey to find out how many people have heard of Amelia Bedelia, how many have read an Amelia Bedelia book, and the average number of Amelia Bedelia books that people have read. What other questions should your students ask? When the survey has been completed, help students interpret their findings through graphs and tables. *(Social Studies and Math)*

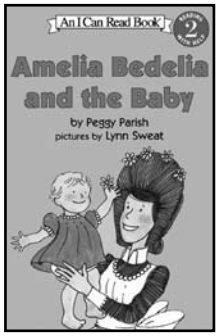
THE AMELIA BEDELIA WAY

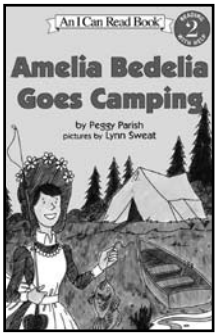
Have small groups of students think of sports and recreational activities that involve words or rules that Amelia Bedelia could misinterpret. For example, heading the ball in soccer, serving in tennis, braking on a bike, or doing the backstroke when swimming. Instruct each group to prepare a skit showing how Amelia Bedelia might do one of these activities and how other people might react. *(Physical Education and Drama)*

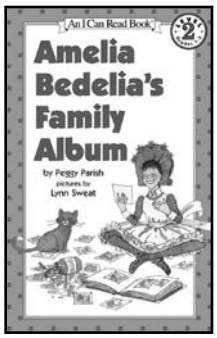
The Amelia Bedelia Books

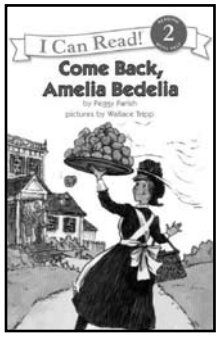
Created by Peggy Parish . . .

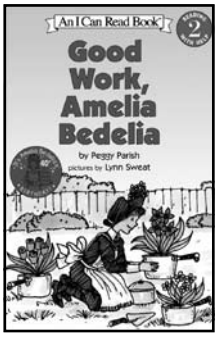


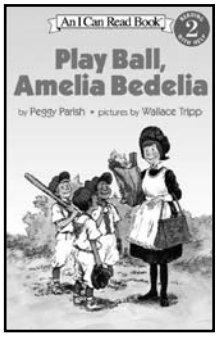


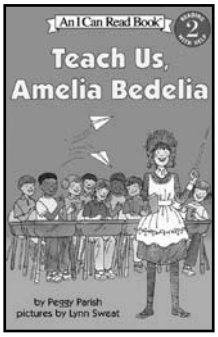


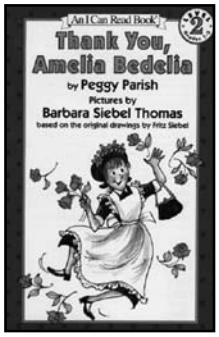


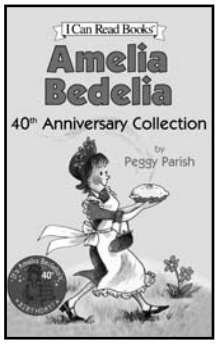


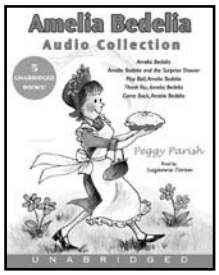












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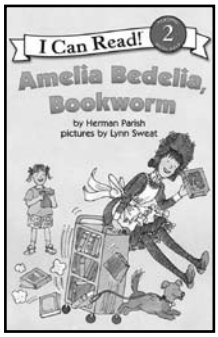
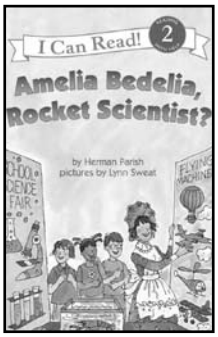
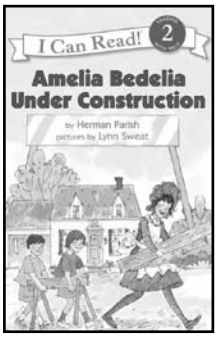
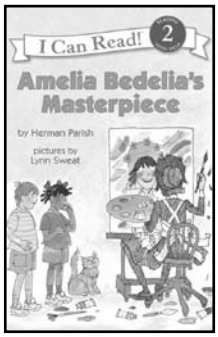
The Amelia Bedelia Books

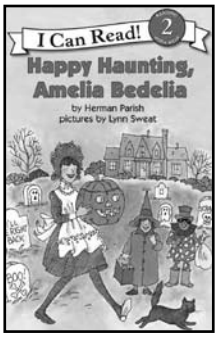
Continued by Herman Parish

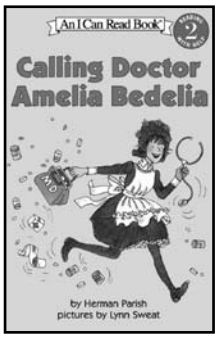


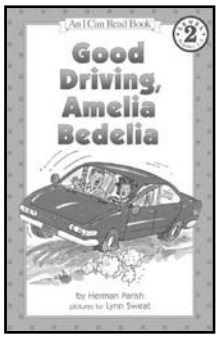


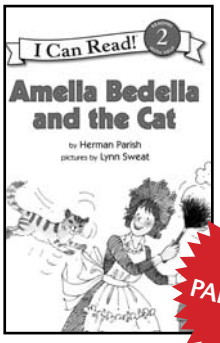












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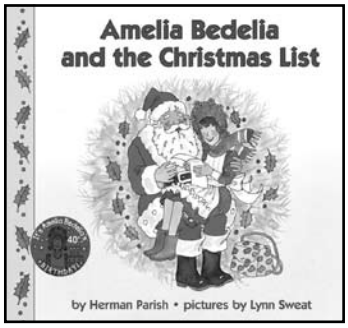

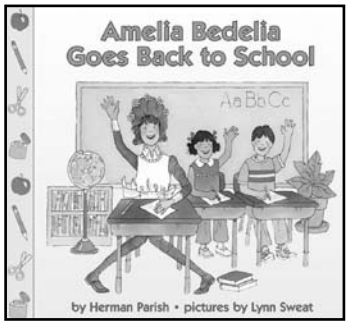

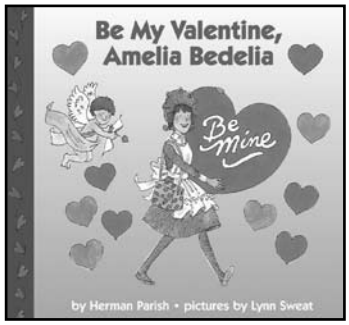

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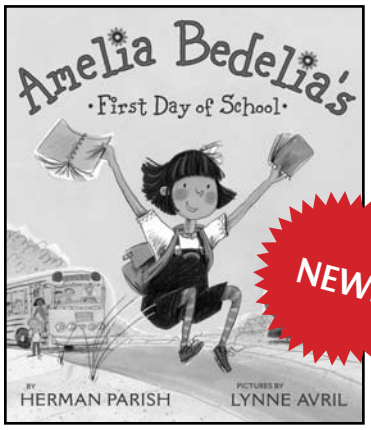

NEW!

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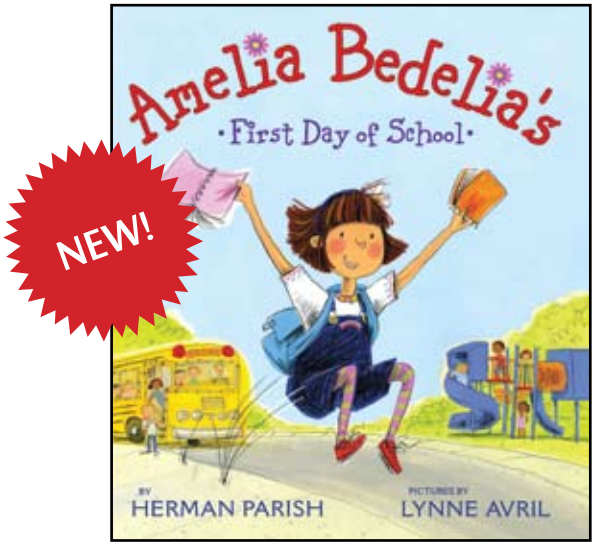
The World of Amelia Bedelia



A Note from Herman Parish

"Why does Amelia Bedelia take everything literally—did she always act like that?" Kids ask me this question whenever I visit schools. I explain that that's just how Amelia Bedelia sees the world. She has always been like that and always will be.

However, it got me thinking: How would Amelia Bedelia have gotten along when she was growing up? A young Amelia Bedelia would be prone to all kinds of mix-ups. And what better catalyst than her first day of school?

First days can be very scary. That's why *Amelia Bedelia's First Day of School* is filled not only with misunderstandings but also with sympathetic teachers and the notion that this is the beginning of a fun and exciting adventure.

Classroom Activities

YOUR FIRST DAY

After reading *Amelia Bedelia's First Day of School* to your group, facilitate a conversation about how Amelia Bedelia's first day was similar to and different from your students' first day this year. How does Amelia Bedelia feel about school? How did your students feel about school on their first day, and how do they feel about it now?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Amelia Bedelia's class engages in activities that let them express themselves and get to know each other. You might also provide clay for your students to use, the way Miss Edwards does in the book. Ask them to sculpt their favorite animals. Finish the activity by having partners talk with each other about their animals and why they like them.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Illustrator Lynne Avril displays the double meanings of the names of many children in Amelia Bedelia's class when Miss Edwards calls the roll. Using the library, the Internet, and children's families as resources, help each child find the meaning of his or her name. Have students create pictures that show themselves and the meaning of their names. Display the pictures in the classroom or hallway as a beginning-of-the-year student showcase.

AMELIA BEDELIA'S SECOND DAY OF SCHOOL

In small groups, have students create a story about Amelia Bedelia's *second* day of school. What might she mix up during the assembly? She's already gotten confused during art, music, and recess, as well as on the bus, in the library, and in the cafeteria. What funny situations might arise during other parts of the school day, such as in math or science class? Encourage students to illustrate their stories.

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