ArtsPower
NATIONAL TOURING THEATRE
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Study Buddy™

A one-act musical based on the book by Paula Danziger

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ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

Gary W. Blackman • Mark A. Blackman
Executive Producers

Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon
Based on the book by
Paula Danziger

Adapted from
"Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon,"
by Paula Danziger.
Text copyright © 1994 by Paula Danziger.
Published by Penguin Group (USA), Inc.

Book and Lyrics by
Greg Gunning

Music by
Richard DeRosa

Original Direction by
Greg Gunning

Costume Design & Construction by
Fred Sorrentino

Set Construction by
Tom Carroll Studios

Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon
Performance Study Buddy

Written by
Dr. Rosalind Flynn

Designed by
Tony Gibson

Please photocopy any or all of the following pages to distribute to students.

What Happens in Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon

Photo by Carol Rosegg
Amber Brown (Jennifer Kersey) and Justin Daniels (Maxwell Glick) share a light moment at school.

Amber Brown and **Justin Daniels** are best friends. They work together in **Mrs. Cohen's** class at school, play together after school, save their chewed gum in one big ball, and laugh at the same jokes. They are a team of two, even though their classmate, **Hannah Burton**, thinks they are immature. They are a team of two, even though Justin is moving to Alabama.

Justin's mom, **Mrs. Daniels**, often watches Amber when her mom, **Mrs. Brown**, works late. When **Mrs. Bradley**, comes to see about buying the Daniels' house, Amber and Justin work hard to make her hate it, but their plan fails.

The house is sold, and the two friends must deal with lots of changes they do not want to face. For the first time in their friendship, Amber and Justin are fighting and might not ever speak to one another again.

TEACHER INFORMATION

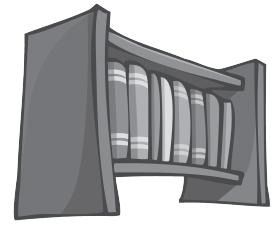
This study guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss ArtsPower's one-act musical play **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon**. This guide contains background information and cross-curricular activities to complete both before and after the performance.

To help students understand the action of the play, read the plot summary in "What Happens in **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon**" on this page. The main characters' names appear in boldface type.

*Note: To guarantee that your students understand the significance of the title, make sure they know that Amber is more than a girl's name. It is also the name for a brownish-yellow color.

Other *Amber Brown* Books written by Paula Danziger:

- *Amber Brown Goes Fourth*
- *Amber Brown Is Feeling Blue*
- *Amber Brown Is Green With Envy*
- *Amber Brown Sees Red*
- *Amber Brown Wants Extra Credit*
- *Forever Amber Brown*
- *Get Ready for Second Grade, Amber Brown*
- *I, Amber Brown*
- *Orange You Glad It's Halloween, Amber Brown?*
- *Second Grade Rules, Amber Brown*
- *What a Trip, Amber Brown*
- *You Can't Eat Your Chicken Pox, Amber Brown*



For more information on these books, visit:
www.scholastic.com/titles/amberbrown/amber1.htm

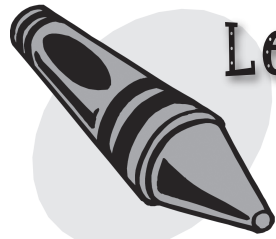
Coloring Amber Brown

Extra Colors for Amber on Stage

The musical **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon** is based on Paula Danziger's novel. "Based on" means that the book provides the story for the musical. Some characters and events remain the same, but there are some changes and additions. The changes and additions are like extra colors added to the story by the **theatre company**, ArtsPower National Touring Theatre.

Important Theatre People

- The **playwright** writes the lines of dialogue the actors speak.
- The **composer** writes the music.
- The **lyricist** writes the words to the music.
- The **actors** audition for roles in a play, memorize lines, songs, and stage direction, and then perform on-stage.
- The **designers** create sets, costumes, and lighting.
- The **director** rehearses the actors and makes artistic decisions.
- The **stage manager** oversees all backstage elements of a show and supervises the actors before and after the performance.
- The **producers** raise the money and manage the entire production.



Learning Activity

Coloring the Page for the Stage

Here are some changes or different "colors" to watch for in the musical **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon**. Fill in the blank lines below after you see the performance.

1. In the novel, the teacher is Mr. Cohen. In the musical, the teacher is

_____.

2. In the novel, there are classmates named Bobby, Jimmy, and Brandi. In the musical, the classmate is

_____.

3. In the novel, Justin has a little brother named Danny. In the musical,

_____.

After the performance, discuss:

- Why do you think ArtsPower National Touring Theatre may have made these changes?
- How else did the work of the theatre company color the novel's story to present it on the stage?

Coloring Amber with Characters

In the theatre, actors who play characters tell the story on stage. In **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon**, four actors play seven characters. Two actors play Amber and Justin. Two other actors play the mothers, the teacher, the home buyer, and Hannah.

Doubling

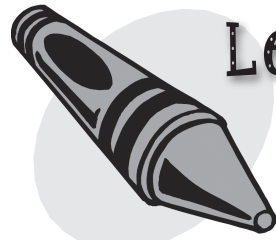
When an actor plays more than one character, it is called "doubling." You will know that actors are doubling—have become new characters—when they change the ways they use their voices and bodies.

During rehearsals, the director works with actors who double to "color" characters differently by making them:

- seem younger or older.
- speak differently.
- move differently.

Photo by Carol Rosegg

Amber and Justin are the only two characters in the musical who do not "double" as other characters.



Learning Activity

Double Trouble

Imagine that you are an actor who must double as 10 different characters! Color the way you play a character by making changes in your body, movement, and voice. Work in pairs and say this line:
"You're not going to Alabama."
as spoken by:

- **a snobby know-it-all**
- **a sad child**
- **a scolding teacher**
- **a cool teenager**
- **a disappointed parent**
- **a tired airplane pilot**
- **an army sergeant**
- **a sweet grandparent**
- **a bratty brother or sister**
- **a mean boss**

Share the ways you changed your body's movements and voices for each character with the whole class. During the performance, look for the changes the actors make when they double. Why do you think theatre companies like ArtsPower have actors double in roles?

Coloring Amber with Lines

Playwrights are people who write plays. They add color to a story on stage with their lines of dialogue. The audience receives information about the plot (story) and the characters through the lines. Actors add color to the story by the ways they speak or "deliver" their lines.

Learning Activity

Colorful Deliveries

To learn more about Amber and Justin, read their lines below.

Deliver each line aloud with colorful expression.

Try different ways of delivering the same line.

AMBER

- Excuse me. Amber Brown is a person. Amber Brown is not a crayon.
- See? It's good having a best friend. We help each other out - keep each other organized - work together!
- I've come to realize that I, Amber Brown, hate change.
- Fine! You throw that out and I'm never going to speak to you again.

JUSTIN

- We might as well face it. We are the biggest gross-out kings of our whole school!
- Between us, we'll make sure no one ever buys that house!
- How come whenever parents tell you they're treating you like an adult, they always make you feel like a baby?
- Man, I wish I didn't have to move.

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Coloring Amber with Lyrics

Because **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon** is a musical, the story is told in words and songs. The music and songs tell the audience about the characters, plot, and setting. Lyrics are the words of songs. They add color to the story on stage.

What do these lyrics that Amber sings tell you about her feelings and the story, in general?

Guess I'll be the one who'll say
I'm sorry.
But I'm not the one who should say
I'm sorry!
He's the one who should say
He's sorry.

So I'm not just brown and dull,
I'm ev'ry color you can see.
A crazy technicolor rainbow–
That's me!

We're the gross-out kings.
We're the best!
Look out world—
Don't get too close!
Ee-ew!!!
They're gross!

I'm tired of people walking out the door!
So to be my friend, here's my rule:
Better plan to stay! Cause no one's gonna
Leave me anymore!

Learning Activity

You Color with Lyrics

After the performance, write some lyrics for a colorful song about Amber. Use the tune to "Yankee Doodle."

Begin with:
"Amber Brown is not a crayon.
Amber is a person...."
and create all new words.

(Challenge: Make your lyrics rhyme!)

Coloring Amber with A's - Audience, Author, and ArtsPower

The Audience

How does an audience add great color to a performance?

- Watch closely. Reading, writing, or talking takes your focus away from the performance.
- Listen carefully.
- Become quiet the moment you see an actor or hear the music begin.
- Laugh or applaud if you enjoy the play.
- Remember that you and the actors are in the same room.
- Talking, whispering, or making noise during the performance makes it hard for actors to do their best.
- Help other audience members with your quiet attention.

The Author

If it weren't for Paula Danziger, there would be no performance! In 1994 she wrote the book that became the musical. She wanted to be a writer ever since she was in second grade.

Ms. Danziger passed away in 2004, but her colorful characters and stories live on in more than 25 books and now in ArtsPower's musical.

To learn more about Paula Danziger, visit

- www.scholastic.com/titles/paula/index.htm
- www.penguinputnam.com/static/packages/us/yreaders/amberbrown/aapd.html

Paula Danziger

ArtsPower

Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon is brought to you by ArtsPower National Touring Theatre, an Actors' Equity Association theatre company based in Montclair, New Jersey.

Why is ArtsPower called a national touring theatre?
The actors and a stage manager:

- present performances all over the United States.
- pack the set, costumes, lights, and recording equipment in a van.
- set up, change, and pack the set.
- take care of costumes and props—objects such as backpacks, passports, paper lunch bags, and chewing-gum balls—handled by actors.
- stay in hotels when they travel.
- sometimes present 12 performances in 12 different places in a week.

Write To Us!

After you attend **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon**, please share your thoughts with ArtsPower, or visit ArtsPower online at http://www.artspower.org and click on "Contact Us" on the top tool bar. (We welcome your drawings, too!)

Teacher's Name: _____

Your School: _____

City, State: _____

Date: _____

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Montclair, NJ 07042-3354

I, _____, saw **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon** at _____.

My favorite character in **Amber Brown Is Not A Crayon** was _____

_____

_____

_____

My favorite part was when _____

_____

_____

_____

Here's what else I have to say about the show: _____

_____

_____

_____

Sincerely,

Your Name: _____