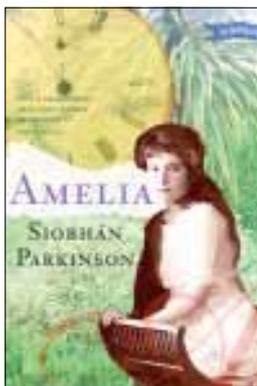


AMELIA

by Siobhán Parkinson

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Spring 1914 and Amelia Pim is planning a thirteenth-birthday party that will impress all her friends and see her take her place as a Young Lady, allowed to wear good frocks and fine stockings. Mama, 'a great disappointment' in many ways because of her interests in feminism and her lack of interest in appearance, has finally agreed to buy Amelia the party-dress of her dreams. And when Amelia glides down the stairs in her emerald-green silk dress, she is supremely happy and ready to face the world. But the party proves a turning-point in more ways than one when Papa arrives home to announce his bankruptcy. Forced to move to a smaller house, Amelia feels she has lost her place in the world, and when Mama is imprisoned following a public demonstration, her former friends show their true colours. With Papa in despair and Edmund seriously ill, Amelia turns to their servant, Mary Ann, for comfort and support, and finds in herself hitherto unknown reserves of courage and strength as she strives to keep her family together.

LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

- ◆ Vocabulary extension: Vainglory, dishevelment, inconsequentially, imbibing, invigorating.
- ◆ Descriptive writing: E.g., 'living icicles of light' (p.72), 'a large puddingy sort of person' (pp.72–73), 'spirituous newsprint' (p.59), 'rainy music' (p.14), 'in a splashy waterfall' (p.11).
- ◆ Imaginative use of words: E.g., 'dull, grown-uppish conversation' (p.14), 'all muddying and puddling' (p.11), 'her own ... inside-outside place' (p.13).
- ◆ Character development: Children draw personality profiles of Amelia and of her mother, adding to these as characters reveal more of themselves. Discuss any traits which are common to both and say how they differ in their approach to unforeseen circumstances.
- ◆ Discussion: '... Grandmama said telephones were instruments of the devil, invented to encourage idle chatter ...' (p.115). List other inventions that might have been so described and say why some people might fear such technological progress.
- ◆ Discussion: 'Amelia's mama was a great disappointment ... in many ways' (p.16). Mary Ann expressed herself 'proud to be the sister of a patriot' (p.50). Suggest times when one might be disappointed with and/or proud of a family member and say how these feelings affect the relationship.
- ◆ Discussion: Amelia's special place, the orangery, had fallen into disuse, but for her birthday party it was transformed to its former splendour. Discuss the significance of the orangery and Grandmama's pronouncement ('Vainglory', p.12) in the light of events made clear in Book II.
- ◆ Creative: Examine carefully the description of the emerald silk dress (pp.74–75, 84), discuss Amelia's sense of delight and pride. Write a short piece exploring her reactions and imagine what new possession might inspire such emotion nowadays.

SESE – HISTORY

- ◆ Local studies: Homes. Comparing and classifying a range of homes: Size and layout, construction materials, decoration, furniture and fittings, heat, light and environs. Contrast the relative luxury of Amelia's home in Rathgar (pp.12–18, 25, 71–79) with the smaller house (pp.89–90, 96–100, 109–110) and Mary Ann's house (pp.156–160). Visit the restored Georgian house at 29 Fitzwilliam St Lwr, Dublin, or look at photographs of Dublin's houses during the Georgian and Victorian periods.
 - ◆ Local studies: Schools. Exploring the history of a school in the wider context of educational development in Ireland: National School system, work of religious orders, curriculum content and school equipment. Amelia attended the Grosvenor Academy for Young Ladies, where she studied Geometry, Geography and French (pp.32–34, 101–103), among other subjects. Examine rollbooks, parish records and local newspaper reports of the time and chart the changes in school life across the twentieth century, or visit the Museum of Irish Education, CICE, 96 Upr Rathmines Rd, Dublin 6 (Tel: 01-497 0033).
 - ◆ Eras of change and conflict: Changing roles of women in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Becoming familiar with women's struggle for suffrage in Ireland and in England, identifying some of the key Suffragettes and examining their campaign. Discuss Mrs Pim's reasons for supporting the movement (pp.26–28), her disagreement with Countess Markievicz (pp.112–113) and how her imprisonment influenced Amelia's outlook on her own future career choice (pp.125–128, 147).
- ## SPHE
- ◆ Myself: Developing self-confidence. Taking increasing personal responsibility for oneself, caring for belongings and becoming more independent and autonomous. Discuss Amelia's carelessness with the watch (p.67), her interest in 'frivolities' (pp.43, 72–77), her later acceptance of household chores (pp.100,

109–110, 123, 133) and the way she dealt with the crisis of Edmund's illness (pp.134–148).

- ◆ Myself: Taking care of my body. Exploring the reasons why some people abuse alcohol or other drugs, identifying the various people who are concerned with the health of others and examining some of the strategies adopted in the community for protecting people from ill-health. Discuss the way Papa 'coped' with his problems by turning to alcohol (pp.94, 136), examine the contemporary attitudes towards women in the health-care system (p.147), research dangerous illnesses of the time (p.140) and find out to what extent these have been eradicated.

- ◆ Myself: Making decisions. Learning to examine critically the factors and levels of thought that influence choices: Impulse, values and beliefs, parental opinion and social constraints. Papa's decisions were often impulsive (buying the watch, the car), whereas Mama's decision to speak at a public meeting was inspired by her beliefs and principles.

- ◆ Myself and others: Myself and my family. Examining some factors that can affect family life: Addiction, poverty, illness, a change in lifestyle, and identifying behaviour that is important for harmony in family life: Laughter, love, honesty, respecting each other. Read the accounts of preparations for Mama's home-coming (pp.169–175) and of the family outing to the Botanic Gardens (pp.192–199) and discuss how the family overcame adversity together.

- ◆ Myself and others: My friends and other people. Discuss and appreciate the different aspects of friendship and the difference between close friends and acquaintances. Examine the relationships between Amelia and her school friends (pp.66–68, 85, 101–106), her growing friendships with Mary Ann (pp.107–108, 120–121, 156–161) and Dorothea (pp.180–182).

- ◆ Myself and the wider world: Developing citizenship. Understanding the role of various individuals and groups in the community. Examine the origins and history of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and their contribution to Irish and world communities.