

Amelia's Road

written by Linda Jacobs Altman
illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Paperback, \$10.95
32 pages

ISBN: 9781880000274

Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades PreK-3

Guided Reading Level: O

Spanish Guided Reading Level: P

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
4.1/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: 660L

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Immigration/Migration, Home, Farming, Poverty, Gratitude, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Journey, Respect, Citizenship, United States, California, Childhood Experiences, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/amelia-s-road
leeandlow.com/books/el-camino-de-amelia

SYNOPSIS

Amelia Luisa Martinez hates roads. Los caminos, the roads, take her migrant worker family to fields where they labor all day, to schools where no one knows Amelia's name, and to bleak cabins that are not home.

Amelia longs for a beautiful white house with a fine shade tree in the yard, where she can live without worrying about los caminos again. Then one day, Amelia discovers an "accidental road." At its end she finds an amazing old tree reminiscent of the one in her dreams. Its stately sense of permanence inspires her to put her own roots down in a very special way.

The richly colored illustrations bring to life the landscape of California's Central Valley farmland. *Amelia's Road* is an inspirational tale about the importance of home.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Migrant Farm Workers

Migrant farm workers move from place to place to do seasonal jobs in places like farm fields, orchards, canneries, plant nurseries, or fish/seafood packing plants. Migrant farm workers often move with the harvest seasons and must find different housing each time they move to work at a different job. (There are also seasonal farm workers, who live in the same place but do different jobs in different seasons.) Migrant farm works are paid by the hour, or by the number of pieces or weight of the crops they pick.

Migrant Farm Workers in the United States

The National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc. offered these statistics and others from a 2005 report at http://www.ncfh.org/uploads/3/8/6/8/38685499/fs-migrant_demographics.pdf:

- There were estimated to be over 3 million migrant farm workers in the United States.
- 72% of US farm workers were born in other countries (68% in Mexico).
- 52% of agricultural workers were parents.

Children of Migrant Farm Workers

According to U.S. Labor laws, children can pick crops when they are as young as ten. Many children in the U.S. take time away from school, or work before and after school on farms to help support their families. Obtaining an education can be challenging when families must move during the school year for work. See <https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2019/08/14/the-children-in-the-fields> for examples of how migrant farm works seek ways to improve educational opportunities for their kids, and programs that support them. The report also includes a profile of a student from a migrant farming family who is the first in his family to attend college.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What kind of jobs might people do on farms? What might be some of the pros and cons of being a farmworker?
- What do you know about the word migrant? (How could it connect to the word migrate?) What do you think a migrant farmworker is?
- What might it be like for kids who have to move to a new place because of their parents' jobs? Have you or someone you know experienced this?
- What helps you feel like you belong somewhere? Do you have any special places where you

feel at home or at peace? Describe them, and the way they make you feel.

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, author/illustrator biography (on jacket back flap), title page, dedication, illustrations, and author's note.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what it's like for Amelia having to move a lot and how she feels about it
- what Amelia discovers, and what she does with that discovery to help herself feel better
- how Amelia grows and changes during the story

Encourage students to consider why the author, Linda Jacobs Altman, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

Content Specific

sunstruck, shanties, labor camps, cabin, crops, harvest, bruise (fruit), footpath

Academic

labored, grim, cheerless, settle down, occasions, accidental, sturdiest, permanent, advice

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What are los caminos? What do they mean to Amelia?
2. What is Amelia's wish for her future?
3. What does Amelia ask her parents when they arrive at Cabin 12. How do they respond? How does that make Amelia feel?
4. What does Amelia do before school? How does she feel about it?
5. What does Amelia discover on the way home from school? How does she describe it? What does she do?
6. How does Amelia's daily routine change once she knows about the accidental road?
7. How does Amelia feel when it's almost time to move? What does she do?
8. What does Amelia find in the trash? What does she do with it?
9. What does Amelia do with the box once it's full? What does she think as she takes her last look at the tree? What does she say?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why do you think Amelia has such strong feelings about roads? What else could those feelings be about?
2. How is Amelia's wish for the future different from her reality?
3. What do you think Amelia wishes her parents would say when she asks about her birthday? How is this different than their actual response?
4. How is this first day of school different than years past? How does Amelia's experience change her thinking?
5. What is special about the tree Amelia finds on the accidental road? Why do you think the author chose the words she did to describe it?
6. Why does Amelia ask her family members, neighbors and teacher for advice? How do you

imagine the conversations might have sounded?

7. Why do you think Amelia chooses the things she puts in the metal box? How does the box help her?
8. How does Amelia feel as she leaves her tree and goes down the accidental road back to her cabin for the last time? How did her feelings change during the story?
9. Why do you think the author wrote this story? What ideas do you think she hopes readers will think about or discuss?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Write an imaginary letter from Amelia, as an adult, to Mrs. Ramos. Think about what Amelia would say to her teacher. What impact did Mrs. Ramos have on her? How would Amelia describe her life during the time that she spent in her class? If you have time, imagine what Mrs. Ramos might write back.
2. Draw a heart map for Amelia. (For an explanation of heart maps and a template, see <https://blog.heinemann.com/heart-mapping-at-home-meaningful-authentic-writing>.) What feelings, people, memories, places, things, or questions do you think would be in Amelia's heart, based on the information shared in the text?
3. Create a Venn diagram comparing your own sense of belonging with Amelia's. Label one circle "I feel like I belong when..." and the other "Amelia feels like she belongs when..." After filling in the diagram, write several sentences explaining how you and Amelia are the same and how you're different.
4. Revisit the parts of the book that describe Amelia's tree in the meadow. Notice the words the author uses to communicate its special qualities. Think of a place that is special to you. Write sentences describing it or write a poem about it.

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. The Spanish version, *El camino de Amelia* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/el-camino-de-amelia>) presents ample opportunity here to encourage students to engage with both languages. Have one student read the English translation and one student read Spanish translation (if applicable in your classroom). Both students who are reading the translations

should be biliterate in both English and Spanish. Ask students to compare their experiences. What was it like reading the story in English? What was it like reading the story in Spanish? Have students discuss the different translations and how they are similar/different.

3. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
4. Have students give a short talk about what makes them feel at home. If needed, provide categories such as "place," "people," "food," "things," and "feelings."
5. The book contains some content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. Gather a box and props to signify the things in Amelia's box (nametag, picture, birthday photo, map, etc.) Unpack your box item by item. Have students find the part in the book most relevant to each item and discuss it.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Flip through the pages of the book and focus on the characters' faces on each page. Describe how their faces look and name the emotions they convey. (You might also notice their body language.) Use sticky notes to label various emotions. Ask students to act out specific sections of the story, using their faces and bodies to help convey how Amelia felt. (Examples: Driving to the new farm, picking apples before school, sharing her wish drawing at school, discovering the road and tree, sitting under the tree, burying her box, moving again.)
2. Discuss some of the strategies Amelia uses to manage difficult feelings (e.g., self-talk, finding a peaceful place, asking for advice). Ask students, "How could these strategies help you in your own life? What other strategies could also be helpful?"
3. Discuss how this story might change students' perspectives on welcoming a new student who has recently moved to the area. How might that new student feel? What could other students do to help them?
4. This story is told from Amelia's point of view. How would the story be different if it was told

from her parents' point of view? Try telling the story from her parents' perspective. How might they feel about always having to move? What might their hopes and dreams be for their children?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- Envision a sequel to *Amelia's Road*. Ask students to think about what would happen in the follow-up story. Who would they choose to write about and why? What would happen in their story? Encourage students to create their sequel with accompanying illustrations.
- Read other books that describe characters wishing for their own space, such as *My Very Own Room/Mi propio cuartito* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/my-very-own-room-mi-propio-cuartito>), *A Space for Me* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-space-for-me>), or *Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/zora-hurston-and-the-chinaberry-tree>). What do the main characters of these books have in common? What are the creative ways the main characters come up with to have their own spaces? Why was their own space important and necessary for the main characters?
- Read other books about the experiences of farming families. Compare and contrast the characters' experiences in several different stories, such as *Amelia's Road*, *First Day in Grapes* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/first-day-in-grapes>), and *Sweet Potato Pie* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sweet-potato-pie>).
- Use passages from the book to study narrative writing craft strategies. For instance, use the description of how Amelia fills and buries her box to model the writing strategy "show, don't tell." See additional articles for support on how to teach students about this particular technique of writing (<https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/138/Activities-for-Image-Driven-Writing.aspx>) (https://www.csustan.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Writing%20Center/documents/showingvstelling_revised.pdf). Or, review sections of the text that include Amelia's internal monologue, thoughts, and feelings. Use these as examples to encourage students to include these elements in their own narrative writing.

- Have an author study of Linda Jacobs Altman with *Amelia's Road* and some of her other books, including *Singing With Momma Lou* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/singing-with-momma-lou>) and *The Legend of Freedom Hill* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-legend-of-freedom-hill>). Make connections between the texts. What themes do the books have in common? How are the characters similar? How are they different? What do you think author Linda Jacobs Altman's message is to her readers across all the books?

Social Studies, Geography & STEM

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- Learn more about what crops are grown in different parts of the United States. Create a mural map with labels or pictures of different fruits and vegetables. Imagine some routes migrant farmworkers might take to find work in different seasons. You might include a study of the book *Yum! ;Mmmm! ;Qué Rico! Americas' Sproutings* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/yum-mmmm-que-rico-americas-sproutings>).
- Have students choose issues related to farm work and farmworkers' rights, research them, and engage in a debate. (For instance, students could take the positions of farm owners and farmworkers in a debate over child labor laws or farmworker exposure to hazards, or of a school administrator and a farming parent on educational needs of migrant students).
- Have students research Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Movement. Discuss potential connections to the book, for instance, how Chavez's work might have changed conditions for Amelia's family. Information at <https://ejournal.org/news/history-racial-injustice-farmworkers-movement/> or <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Cesar-Chavez/352941> can provide a good starting point.

Art, Media & Music

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- Have students use watercolors or tempera paints to create paintings of their mental images of Amelia's "accidental road" through the meadow or her special tree, using text evidence to support their artistic decisions.
- Have students photograph places or details that make them feel like they belong around your school campus or surrounding community. Create a photo essay book or bulletin board exhibit about belonging or feeling at home.

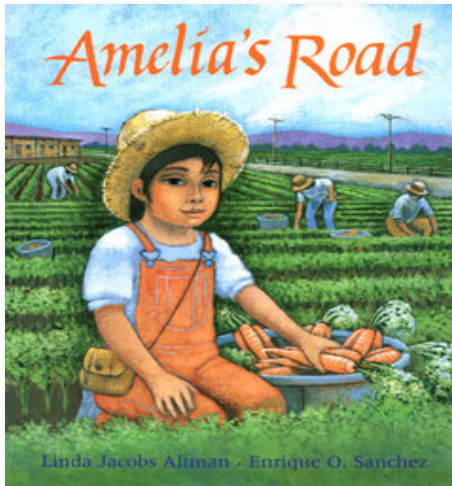
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- As a class, brainstorm questions for adults related to their experiences with moving—or lack thereof—as children. Include questions about their feelings about moving, any arrival or goodbye rituals they had, and memories of special places. Share responses at school and discuss connections among them.
- Arrange visits (in-person or virtual) with individuals connected to the agricultural industry. Prepare questions with students to help them build more context for understanding the experiences of Amelia and her family.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Jacobs Altman is a writer based in Clearlake, California. *Amelia's Road* marked her picture book debut. This title carries special meaning for her: "I first became aware of the problems of migrant farm workers when Cesar Chavez was organizing the United Farm Workers in the 1960s. I identified especially with the migrant children because, like them, I grew up in a family where moving around was simply the way of things." She was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and has lived in many parts of California.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Enrique O. Sanchez has illustrated numerous award winning children's books, including Lee & Low's *Abuela's Weave*, *Amelia's Road*, and *Confetti*. A native of the Dominican Republic, he splits his time between his homes in Bass Harbor, Maine and Miami, Florida.

Ordering Information

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Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
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REVIEWS

"A spare, unsentimental, empathetic picture of a quietly courageous child making the best of difficult necessity. Sanchez provides handsome acrylic paintings in a monumental, fresco-like style that emphasizes these characters' dignity and humanity." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"An important title for any library serving migrant populations, *Amelia's Road* should be a welcome addition almost anywhere. Useful in a variety of educational units, it works equally well as a read-aloud or read-alone." —*School Library Journal*

"What will stay with kids is the physical sense of what it's like to work and move all the time... The yearning in the story is palpable: the dream of what many long for and others take for granted – a settled home, white and tidy, with a fine old shade tree growing in the yard. Security." —*Booklist*

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