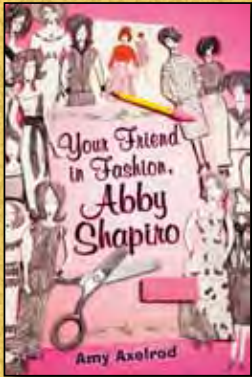


YOUR FRIEND IN FASHION, ABBY SHAPIRO

by Amy Axelrod



Ages 8–12 HC: 978-0-8234-2340-8

“Funny, lively, sensitive—a real winner.”
—Kirkus Reviews

Deeply affecting and laugh-out-loud funny, this coming-of-age novel chronicles a year in the life of eleven-year-old Abby Shapiro, aspiring fashion designer, who writes letters to Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, the Possible Future First Lady of the United States.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Abby was embarrassed by the way her mother looked in public, and she was angry at what her friend Susie said about Abby’s mom. Have you ever had a similar situation involving a family member whom you had to defend even though you were embarrassed about it? How did you handle it?

There are often jealousies between family members. Abby felt that her mother was jealous of Abby’s Aunt Rina. Do you think Abby handled the situation well? If not, what could she have done instead? Have you had similar situations in your own family? How have you handled them?

Abby, who was inspired by Jackie Kennedy, began writing letters and sending fashion sketches to Jackie before she became First Lady. Who inspires you? Talk about why and then write a letter to that person.

Abby did something terrible on Halloween because of peer pressure. Have you had a similar experience when you allowed peer pressure to force you to do something you really didn’t want to do? Why do people succumb to peer pressure? What, if anything, can they do to avoid it? Is it ever justifiable to do something bad for a good reason? When? How?

Abby lost her favorite good-luck doll, Mei. What favorite objects do you have? Why are they important? How would you feel if you lost one of them?

Abby’s mother intercepted Abby’s letters to Jackie Kennedy and never sent them. Do you think it is ever a good idea for parents to invade their kids’ privacy like this? Why or why not?

Secrets and lies play a big part in Abby’s story. When is it good to keep secrets? How does it make you feel when you are keeping a secret? Is it ever a good idea to lie to someone—even if you think you are protecting that person? Why or why not?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Axelrod is the author of the best-selling *Pigs Will Be Pigs* math series. She lives in the Hudson Valley in New York State. *Your Friend in Fashion, Abby Shapiro*, her first novel, is based in part on her own childhood and is illustrated with paper dolls she made when she was Abby’s age. Visit Amy online at www.amyaxelrod.com.

Guide prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

History/Social Science

The presidential election of 1960 plays a big part in *Your Friend in Fashion, Abby Shapiro*. Students can do research on that election and on John F. Kennedy himself. They can also compare that election with the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. Both Kennedy and Obama presented firsts when they ran for president. Students can also read or learn the two Robert Frost poems “Dedication” and “The Gift Outright,” both of which played a part in Kennedy’s inauguration. (See “Online Resources” below.)

Barbie™ was introduced in 1959 and was very important to Abby. Students can discuss toys that were/are very important to them and tell why. They can do research on the history of Barbie and can also discuss whether they feel Barbie currently presents a good image for young girls to emulate.

Abby wanted to be a fashion designer, and she decided to create sketches for Jackie Kennedy. Students can do research on Jackie and find photos of her to see what clothes she actually wore. They can also find out who her favorite designers were. Ask students to compare the fashions of 1960 to those of today. How are they similar or different?

Anti-Semitism and pogroms are mentioned at various places in the story and play a big part in Abby’s family’s history. Ask students to discuss the issues of prejudice and to research these two topics using print and online resources in their school or public libraries.

A few Jewish holidays are mentioned in the story: Hanukkah, Passover, and the High Holy Days. Students can do research and compare the celebrations with other holidays, especially Christmas, Easter, and New Year’s.

WEB LINKS

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

<http://bit.ly/okE4CS>

Provides a wealth of classroom resources and activities related to the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy as the thirty-fifth president of the United States.

The Great Idea Finder

www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/barbieidoll.htm

Presents the history of the Barbie doll and biographies of the people who created her, along with a survey of how she and her fashions have changed over time.

New World Encyclopedia—The History of Pogroms

www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pogrom

Provides a definition and a history of anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia and eastern Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century and beyond.

Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years

www.thecityreview.com/jackieo.html

Discusses Jackie Kennedy’s fashions and favorite designers. (Taken from the catalog of an exhibit of her clothing that was mounted in 2001 and 2002 in New York, Boston, and Washington DC.)

The Library of Congress

<http://1.usa.gov/oWkoZN>

Provides information on “Dedication,” the poem that Robert Frost did not read because the sun was in his eyes. And <http://1.usa.gov/oSLPFJ> provides a replica of “The Gift Outright,” the poem he recited from memory.

Check out <http://yourfriendinfashionabbyshapiro.com> for interactive activities, the history of Abby’s dolls, and lots more!