

Dear Amelia fan,

I've been telling stories and drawing pictures to go with them for as long as I remember. When I was little, I drew on everything, even the furniture! Sometimes I told stories to myself silently in my head. Sometimes I told them out loud to entertain my brother and two sisters.

I loved the power words gave me. If I was mad at my older sister, I would invent someone just like her in my story and make bad things happen to that character. Then, to prove I could be nice, I'd rescue that character and make a happy ending.



I took my first art class when I was five. I loved every minute of it and was especially proud of a watercolor I painted of a squirrel. In high school, I got my first job illustrating a book. The author couldn't pay much, so he asked my art teacher if he had a student who drew well enough to liven up his book. I got the job!

This is me in art class at age five. I'm the one on my knees, really getting into my work!



Me at age ten.



I was determined to be an artist. I studied art in college, but in those days abstract art was popular, and I didn't want to paint just shapes and colors. I wanted to draw people and animals. So I decided to study art history to learn how other artists worked. But with or without a teacher—always, always, I drew.

After college I worked as a waitress. For five years I sent stories and drawings to editors. I ended up with a whole shoe box of rejection letters. But I didn't give up, because making books was all I wanted to do. Finally I got published! Mostly I did kids' picture books, the kind with words on one page and pictures on another.

I got the idea for Amelia's Notebook when I was buying school supplies for my son. I saw a black-and-white-splatched composition book that reminded me of the notebook I kept when I was nine. I took it home and wrote and drew what I remembered mattered to me then. Amelia was what came out.

