



Axle Annie

By **Robin Pulver** (robinpulver.com)

Illustrated by **Tedd Arnold**

Teacher Guide

About the book:

Winter packs a wallop in Burskyville. But it doesn't matter how hard it snows, because Axle Annie, Burskyville's favorite school bus driver, can handle it. "Do snow plows plow? Do tow trucks tow? Are school buses yellow? Of course I can make it up Tiger Hill," she says and that's why the schools in Burskyville never get a snow day. The laziest bus driver in town is not pleased at all, so he comes up with a scheme to keep Axle Annie off the road. But he's not counting on Axle Annie's gumption. Of course she'll make it up Tiger Hill--won't she?

About the author:

Robin Pulver is the author of a number of picture books including *Punctuation Takes a Vacation* and *Axle Annie and the Speed Grump*, as well as the popular Mrs. Toggle series. She lives in Pittsford, New York, with her family. www.robinpulver.com

Author Interview

1. How did you get the idea for AXLE ANNIE?

When my children were younger and rode the bus to school, I felt so grateful for the bus drivers who were cheerful and friendly and helped get the day off to a good start. I knew these bus drivers took seriously their responsibility for their passengers' safety as well. I wanted to write a story that would honor that kind of bus driver.

Also, I thought it would be fun to write about a character who does NOT worry about something I DO worry about: Driving in snow!

2. Do you still love snow days?

I really do, altho' I don't have children who go to school anymore. But I love the feeling of being snowed in. It lets me get more writing done. And when I go out to shovel the sidewalk, it's fun to chat with the neighbors.

3. If you weren't a children's author what other type of job would have?

I can't imagine. I know I wouldn't be a school bus driver. I'd probably do something that uses writing. I studied journalism in graduate school and used to write for magazines and newspapers.

Pre-reading:

How often do you get a snow day in your town? What's the best part? Should everybody get a snow day even if they live in warmer climates?

Questions to consider:

1. Describe Axle Annie.
2. Why is Shifty Rhodes irritated with Axle Annie?
3. Why does the superintendent of schools always call Axle Annie when it snows?
4. How does she answer?
5. Who does Annie help on Tiger Hill?
6. Would you rather have Axle Annie or Shifty Rhodes for a bus driver? Why?
7. How does Shifty Rhodes try to get the schools to close?
8. Why doesn't his plan work?
9. What consequences does he face for his actions?
10. What is named after Annie? Why?

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts:

A Gallery of Gumption!

"Do snowplows plow? Do tow trucks tow? Are school buses yellow? Of course I can make it up Tiger Hill!"

Write your own questions and statement of fact that best represent what YOU can do.

For example, "Do soccer balls roll? Do tap shoes tap? Do horses gallop? Of course I can_____!"

Then illustrate. Hang this "Gallery of Gumption" in the hallway or on a bulletin board!

Math/Logic:

Draw a map of your own bus route. Identify street names, railroad crossings, major intersections. Be sure that the top of your map faces North. Add important reference spots along the way like the library, gas station or town hall.

Science:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/3876/scienceofsnow.html>

Visit this website to learn about the science of snow. Write at least five facts in your own words that you learned on one of the topics and illustrate their meaning.

Art:

Mix equal parts of non-menthol shaving cream with Elmer's glue. Use this concoction to create puffy winter scenes on black or royal blue paper. Add food coloring to a small amount for details.

6+ 1 Writing: IDEAS

Read Axle Annie aloud to students and discuss where they think Robin Pulver got the idea for the book. Then, read aloud the interview questions and answers. Are you surprised by the answers?

Brainstorm a list of challenges that kids might face each year. For example:

Riding the bus

A new teacher

Bully in the lunch line, etc.

Be sure to check out all the other teacher's guides available for Robin Pulver's books!

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of Reaching for Sun from Bloomsbury. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature!