***Study Questions for Amanda’s Secret***

1. During colonial times, the laws and customs in different colonies very different from each other. One big difference was in the area of religion. In Virginia, for example, there was an official religion. The official church was the Church of England, also called the Anglican Church. It wasn't illegal to belong to a different religion, but every white Virginian still had to go to the Anglican Church and pay taxes to support it. Meanwhile, in Maryland, the laws kept changing. In the beginning, all Christians, including Catholics, were guaranteed religious freedom. Then things changed and they outlawed the public worship of the Catholic faith; Catholics could pray at home but not in public. Catholics were not allowed to be lawyers or be teachers. Later on, things changed again, and Catholics were treated equally once again. In Pennsylvania, the founder, William Penn, and the people who followed him were called Quakers. Other people could go to whatever church or temple they wanted -- or none at all!

**Questions:** How would you feel if you lived in Virginia and didn't believe in being an Anglican? What are some of the problems with the requirement that everyone go to and support the Anglican Church? Are there any good things?

2. In colonial Virginia, the churches were responsible for taking care of poor people and orphans in their areas. There were no government services like there are today. That’s why it was the Church Vestry (a group of men who ran the practical side of things) that was responsible for finding Amanda someplace to live, along with the court.

**Questions:** Since the churches back then were doing things like protecting children and taking care of the poor that government does today, did this make it more fair or reasonable that people were required to support to their local church? Why or why not?

3. The local court in Williamsburg was the one that decided local questions like whether servants, slaves, and orphans were treated properly. Only white men who owned property could be judges, called justices. These men were generally rich and important in the community and most likely had servants who were enslaved or indentured. Some of them were lawyers but they didn’t have to be.

**Questions:** In the first court case involving Amelia, the Court rejected Mr. Lambertson’s argument that Mr. Pryor wasn’t treating her properly. Do you think the case would have come out any differently if there'd been different sorts of people on the court, like women or poorer men? Or what if there had been a jury of different sorts of people, maybe even including other servants? Why or why not?

4. In addition to placing orphans with families, the church and the court could take children away from poor parents and place them in other families. This could happen if church or court officials thought the parents wouldn’t do a good enough job of raising the children. Raising the children meant instructing them in “Christian principles” and paying some attention to their education. Generally speaking, the purpose of requiring that children be "educated" was to make sure the children ended up with enough skills to support themselves when they were grown up. This normally depended on what the parents did or didn't do, since there weren't any other rules about education and no public schools.

 **Questions:** What if no one cared very much whether you went to school (or were homeschooled)? How would your life and your education be different?

5. In Amanda's time, the Church and the judicial court decided whether it would be better to take a child away from his or her parents. Today, it's the court state or local government agencies that make these decisions. In Amanda's time, the concern was mainly about whether the child could support him or herself, or whether he or she would become a burden on society. Today, courts are more concerned with whether or not a parent is abusing or neglecting their children (this is called “child welfare”).

 **Questions:** What's the difference between then and now? Can you think of examples?

6. How well-educated a child was depended mostly on how much money the children’s family had - whether they could afford to hire a tutor and whether they could afford to have the child spend much time studying instead of working. If the parents could afford to hire a tutor, the tutor might come occasionally or live with them full-time, or sometimes the boys (only boys) were sent off to live with the tutor in his house (like a private boarding school, only smaller).

 **Questions:** How is it different, having a tutor and studying at home, from going to a school and learning from a teacher in a classroom? What difference does it make whether everyone is educated or only the children of people who can afford it?

7. Most often boys were taught very different things from girls – boys might learn Latin, for example, while girls learned things like music and basic reading and sewing. The Lambertsons have enough money to hire a tutor who comes to the house to teach Amanda. A tutor (and also Mrs. Lambertson) taught her poetry, French, reading, sewing, writing, and arithmetic. Another person comes to teach her dancing. Dancing was a major form of recreation and socially very important to many people in colonial Virginia.

 **Questions:** Do you think those subjects are enough for Amanda to learn? Why or why not? What else do you think she should be studying? Why?

8. Amanda is thrilled with her new ball gown! Her gown was very special: the silk came all the way from China. In colonial times, almost all fabric was imported and it was relatively expensive. Her gown was also hand-made. In colonial America generally, you couldn't buy clothes already-made unless they were second hand (from someone else). Sewing machines hadn’t been invented yet, so someone had to hand-sew everything. Usually Men’s suits were made for them by tailors and women’s fancy dresses might be made by a milliner, if she could afford it. Otherwise, many things were made at home. As a result, people didn't have much clothing compared to what we have today.

 **Questions:** How many different outfits do you have? Can you count them? Can you imagine having only two or three? What difference would it make - if any - if that's all you had to wear?

9. In colonial Virginia and other parts of colonial America, there were two kinds of servants who weren’t paid and weren't free to leave their masters: **enslaved people** and **indentured servants**.

Enslaved people were like property and owned for life, and their children were slaves, too. Sometimes the owner might free them; George Washington wrote in his will that he wanted his slaves to be freed when he died (but not his wife's slaves, because they were her "property" and not his). Sometimes an enslaved person was able to make enough money on the side to “buy themselves” (or buy someone else) and free them. Most often, though, they stayed enslaved. Enslaved persons were primarily of African ancestry – that is, they were born in Africa or else their parents or grandparents or other ancestors were born there.

Indentured servants were people like Jane, who had agreed to give up their freedom for a certain number of years, usually in return for getting free passage to the American colonies. They agreed to work in return for free travel by signing a legal contract that could be bought and sold. This meant that they didn’t have any control over who they worked for! These servants came mostly from Britain and Europe.

 **Question:** Why would someone agree to travel weeks and weeks on a sailing ship across the ocean, to go to America and work for some unknown person for seven years? Can you imagine doing it?

 **Question:** Since there wasn’t any TV or internet and there weren’t any phones, how did people in England and Europe know anything about America?

10. In colonial America, there weren’t trains, trucks, paved roads, or grocery stores. Food from other places had to travel either by horse over sometimes very difficult dirt roads or by ship, when the water wasn't too frozen for them to sail through it. There also weren't any refrigerators and canning hadn't been invented yet. So mostly people ate food that was raised nearby and in the season when it was growing.

**Questions:** What foods would you eat in spring? Summer? Fall? Winter? What types of foods keep a long time? What were some of the ways that food could be kept from spoiling without refrigerators or sealed cans with lids?