



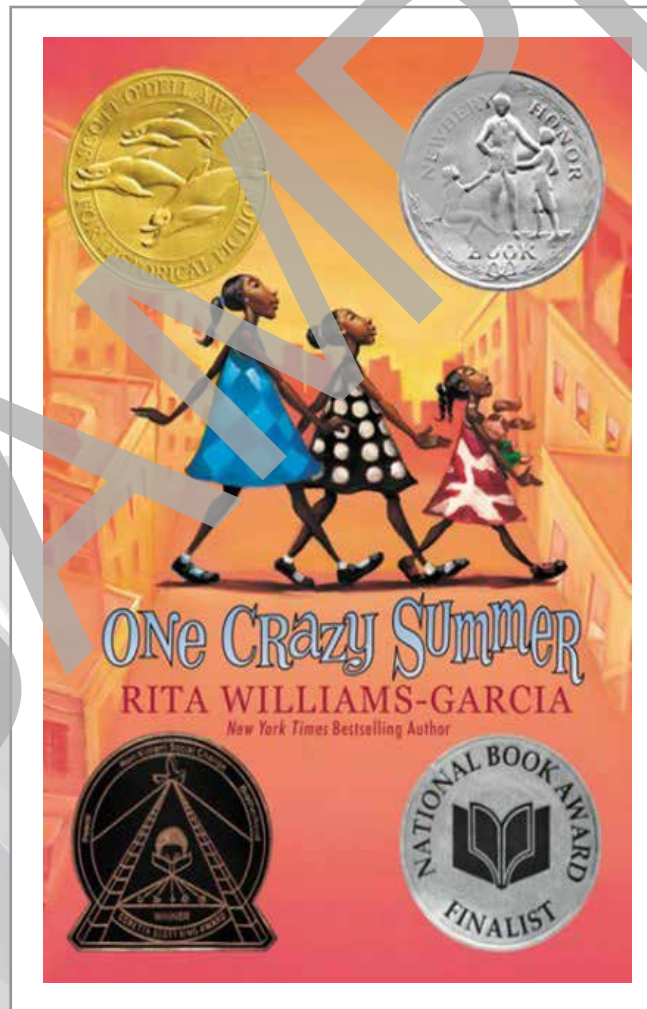
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

One Crazy Summer

Rita Williams-Garcia



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

One Crazy Summer

Rita Williams-Garcia

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Analysis, research, evaluation,
interpretation, compare/contrast,
drawing conclusions

Comprehension

Inferring, sequencing,
predicting, supporting
judgments

Literary Elements

Point of view, setting, theme,
genre, figurative language,
character analysis

Vocabulary

Definitions, word maps, target
words, parts of speech

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, report, interview,
recitation

Writing

Interview, letter, poetry, essay,
short description, personal
narrative

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—Oakland, Black
Panther Party, Civil Rights
Movement, COINTELPRO,
Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali),
Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton,
Afros, Bobby Hutton,
Gwendolyn Brooks, resistance
movement publications;
Geography—maps; Art—
illustration, scrapbook

Genre: historical fiction

Setting: the summer of 1968 in Oakland, California

Point of View: first person

Themes: family, sisterhood, motherhood, civil rights, dignity, personal freedom, integration, prejudice, injustice, responsibility

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. society

Style: narrative

Tone: conversational, informative

Date of First Publication: 2010

Summary

Eleven-year-old Delphine narrates the story of her and her two younger sisters' month-long visit to Oakland, California to visit their mother, Cecile. They have been estranged from Cecile since she left the family seven years prior, just after Fern, the youngest daughter, was born. Cecile is a poet and greatly resents the intrusion of the children into her life, so she sends them to the People's Center, a Black Panther organization for young people. Initially, the girls are upset because of their mother's negligence, as they must navigate through the unfamiliar environment by themselves. However, as they make friends and contribute to the Black Panthers' pursuit of justice and equality, they begin to enjoy themselves. As the girls learn more about their mother, they gradually form a bond with her.

About the Author

Rita Williams-Garcia was born in Queens, New York in 1957. She and her two siblings grew up in Seaside, California, where her father served in the army. She began to read at an early age and displayed an interest in writing throughout her childhood. Her family moved back to New York when Williams-Garcia was in high school. She attended Hofstra University and obtained a job at a marketing company after college, which allowed her to type, print, and send her manuscripts to publishing companies. Williams-Garcia published her first novel, *Blue Tights*, in 1988. Other novels include *Every Time a Rainbow Dies*, *Fast Talk on a Slow Track*, *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, and *No Laughter Here*, all of which were chosen as ALA Best Books for Young Adults. She received a 2011 Newbery Honor, Coretta Scott King Award, and Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction for *One Crazy Summer*. She has also won the PEN/Norma Klein Award and was a National Book Award Finalist. Williams-Garcia currently lives in Jamaica, New York and is on the faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in the Writing for Children & Young Adults Program.

Cassius Clay Clouds–Green Stucco House

Three sisters—Delphine Vonetta, and Fern—travel on an airplane from Brooklyn, New York to Oakland, California to see their mother Cecile for the first time since she abandoned them seven years ago. Delphine, the eldest daughter and the novel’s narrator, takes responsibility for her younger sisters on their journey. Cecile is late arriving at the airport and shows little interest in the girls. She walks ahead of them, makes them hold their luggage in the taxi, and unceremoniously brings them to her green stucco house.

Vocabulary
whimper
pry
surging
warbled
uppity
gawk
unfurled
scrutiny

Discussion Questions

1. How do the three sisters compare to one another? What role does each play in the family? (*As the eldest, Delphine takes care of her sisters. She often puts her desires and fears aside so she can give her sisters what they want or need. On the airplane, Vonetta and Fern are afraid, so Delphine tries to ease their fears. She says, “That’s mainly what I do. Keep Vonetta and Fern in line” [p. 2]. Delphine also shows her maturity when she gives up the window seat on the plane to prevent fighting between Vonetta and Fern, refuses money from a lady at the airport, accompanies her sisters through the airport while Cecile walks ahead, and resolves the sleeping arrangements at Cecile’s house. Vonetta is the middle child and loves attention.*)

2. What can you tell about the relationship between African Americans and Caucasians during this time period from the girls’ trip to Oakland? Why is Delphine offended by the white woman who admires the girls at the airport? (*Answers will vary. Throughout their journey, Delphine is keenly aware that their behavior is being watched and judged by the white people they encounter. She is afraid they will make a “Negro spectacle” of themselves on the plane, and when she causes a commotion trying to see out the window she feels she “had managed to disgrace the entire Negro race, judging by the head shaking and tsk-tsking going on around [them]” [p. 11]. Delphine feels the white woman is being condescending when she comments on how adorable and well-behaved she and her sisters are, “like [they] were on display at the Bronx Zoo” [p. 15].*)
3. Describe Big Ma. Based on the author’s descriptions of Cecile, do you think Big Ma and Cecile would’ve gotten along if Cecile hadn’t left? (*Big Ma moved from Alabama to live with the family after Cecile left. She is old-fashioned and doesn’t acknowledge change [e.g., She refuses to refer to the airport as “JFK,” its new, official name.]. It seems that she does not want to challenge the current situation between white and black people. Big Ma emphasizes to Delphine the need to be on her best behavior around white people, and Delphine thinks Big Ma would have been glad that the lady at the airport wanted to give the girls money for being cute. Big Ma greatly resents Cecile and “hadn’t considered forgiveness where Cecile was concerned” [p. 4]. Delphine says Cecile would not be welcome by Big Ma in Brooklyn and that is why Pa sent them to Oakland. Answers will vary. When Cecile is introduced, she is disguised well. She wears a scarf around her head, big black sunglasses, a big hat, and men’s pants—“like a colored movie star” [p. 20]. Cecile is rude and unpleasant when the girls meet her. Because Big Ma is old-fashioned and teaches good manners, it seems that she and Cecile wouldn’t get along even if Cecile had stayed.*)

4. What do Cecile's actions at the airport and in the taxi indicate about her feelings toward the children's visit? *(Answers will vary. Cecile does not appear eager to see the girls. Delphine notices that Cecile "moved, then moved back, maybe deciding whether to come to [them] or not" [p. 18]. When Cecile claims the girls she refers to them as "these" instead of saying she is their mother. She doesn't help them with their suitcases and walks ahead of them quickly through the airport. Cecile might put distance between herself and the girls because she does not want people to see her with them. She hurries the children into the taxi and smokes a cigarette in front of them without considering how it affects them. Her actions seem to indicate a total lack of interest in the girls.)*
5. Based on the Background Information provided in this guide and the description of the cab driver, how do you think Cecile is associated with him? *(Answers will vary. Delphine says the driver is wearing a black beret and calls her mother a name that sounds like "Zilla." Since Black Panthers are well-known in Oakland at this time period and black berets are part of their uniform, he may be a Black Panther. This might indicate Cecile is also a Black Panther or that she helps them somehow.)*
6. Delphine recounts how Big Ma would say their mother lived on the street or "in a hole in the wall" (p. 23) and slept on park benches. How did these expressions add to Delphine's feelings of abandonment by her mother? *(As a six-year-old, Delphine took her grandmother's words literally. She pictured her mother living on the street in the worst conditions while it rained or snowed. This made it more difficult for her to understand why her mother would prefer such a lifestyle to living with Delphine and her sisters.)*
7. As the girls prepare to sleep in their mother's house the first night, Delphine thinks, "Our mother was crazy" (p. 27). Why does Delphine believe this? *(Delphine is referring to Cecile's strange behavior and characteristics. Cecile mutters to herself, places pencils in her hair, and dresses "like a secret agent" [p. 18]. Delphine also makes judgments based on her mother's house. Because Cecile's house seems strange to Delphine and is different from the other houses in the neighborhood, Delphine concludes that their mother ran away because she was crazy.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: On page 14 of the novel, Delphine mentions alternative names for "mother" and what each implies. Have students identify different names for "father" and provide a short description of what each implies (e.g., Dad, Daddy, Pa, etc.).
2. Point of View: *One Crazy Summer* uses first-person point of view. Use the T-chart on page 31 of this guide to compare the advantages and disadvantages of first-person narration.
3. History: Research Cassius Clay. Why was he famous, and why did he change his name? Create a chart of historic figures you encounter while reading the novel, including researched information for each.

Story Map

Directions: Complete the story map below.

Characters	Setting	Conflict(s)
	Date: _____ Place: _____ Other: _____	
main _____ main _____ main _____ main _____ minor _____ minor _____	<i>One Crazy Summer</i>	
Possible Themes (general statements the novel makes about life)	Point of View _____	Author's Style and Tone
	Genre _____	