

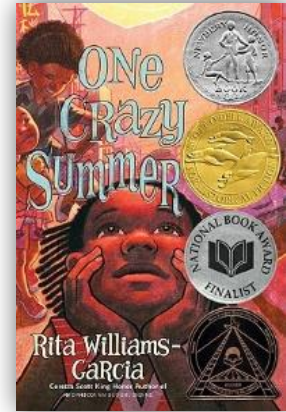
Title: One Crazy Summer

Author: Rita Williams-Garcia

Grade Level: 4th Grade

SUMMARY

It is 1968 and Delphine, an 11-year old girl from Brooklyn, NY, is flying to California with her two younger sisters to visit their mother who abandoned them seven years earlier. Delphine, the narrator of *One Crazy Summer*, will take you along as she and her sisters are drawn into the events at the community center sponsored by the Black Panther Party, and as they navigate the emotions of trying to connect with their distant mother. This novel will engage the entire family with its layers of story and award-winning writing. 4th grade students will consider it a treat to enjoy such an engaging read aloud.



QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- spectacle (pg. 2)
- descent (pg. 9)
- savor (pg. 12)
- retreated (pg. 46)
- balled (pg. 52)
- indignant (pg. 57)
- militant (pg. 57)
- buckle (pg. 59)
- cost (pg. 67)
- revolving (pg. 72)
- smarted (pg. 84)
- revolutionaries (pg. 88)
- begrudgingly (pg. 109)
- political prisoner (pg. 123)
- eating crow (pg. 137)
- uncomprehending (pg. 153)
- monstrous (pg. 161)
- supposing (pg. 180)
- swish (pg. 184)
- ashen (pg. 195)
- birthed (pg. 196)
- counted (pg. 205)

You might use questions like:

Based upon the book, what does “spectacle” mean? What other words did the author use to help you gain a deeper understanding of this word? How is this word different from its synonyms?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. Delphine possesses such a clear and mature voice as a narrator. Talk about the reasons why author Rita Williams-Garcia chose her character to tell the story. Use details from the story to support your thoughts. Consider how it might have changed had another person narrated.
2. Consider this quote: “Cecile made it sound like it was no big deal. ‘I’ve been fighting for freedom all my life.’ But she wasn’t talking about protest signs, standing up to the Man, and knowing your rights. She was talking about her life. Just her. Not the people.” Talk about what Cecile might have meant by the statement that she had been fighting for freedom all her life.
3. Rita Williams-Garcia did a masterful job in mixing humor with the more serious and sometimes heart-breaking elements of this story. Share some of the moments where you laughed and found humor. Talk about the reasons an author sprinkles the opportunity to laugh in a story filled with aches and pains.
4. The notion of a person's name and identity comes up repeatedly throughout the novel. Talk about the difference between a name and identity. How does Cecile feel about names? What are her behaviours regarding names?
5. The girls have lived nearly all of their lives without the presence of their mother. What is a mother? Talk about what makes one a mother. What characters assume the role of mother with the girls? Talk about who they are and what contributions they make in their lives.
6. At the beginning of the story the girls have plans for their visit to California—a trip to Disney, a day at the beach. Contrast the anticipation in the beginning with their feelings as they return to New York. Talk about whether you think they were satisfied with the trip and use details from the story to support your claims.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. This book is loaded with cultural references from the late 1960's. Spend time researching photos and watching video clips to provide background knowledge for your child—for example: a Timex watch, Mighty Mouse, Captain Kangaroo, Malcolm X, Huey Newton, Hippies, etc. What a fun opportunity to time travel!
2. Nzila wrote and published poetry. Reread the poems found in the book. Read other poetry written during the 1960's and 1970's by African-American women. Consider the connections between the poetry and the political and cultural events happening at



the time they were written. Talk about any parallels you find between these poems and *One Crazy Summer*.

3. *One Crazy Summer* is an award-winning book. It earned the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, the Newbery Honor Book Award, the Coretta Scott King Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Award. Research these awards and discuss what elements made it such a winner.