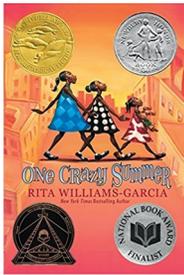


Books by the Stack



One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia

In the summer of 1968, after traveling from Brooklyn to Oakland, California, to spend a month with the mother they barely know, eleven-year-old Delphine and her two younger sisters arrive to a cold welcome as they discover that their mother, a dedicated poet and printer, is resentful of the intrusion of their visit and wants them to attend a nearby Black Panther summer camp.

Why you'll like it: Family, history, funny characters

About the Author: Rita Williams-Garcia graduated from Hofstra University. She has written several books including *Blue Tights*, *Every Time a Rainbow Dies*, *Fast Talk on a Slow Track*, *One Crazy Summer*, and *No Laughter Here*. *Like Sisters on the Homefront* was named a Coretta Scott King Honor Book. She won the PEN/Norma Klein Award. She currently teaches at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in the Writing for Children and Young Adults Program. She won the Coretta Scott King awards in 2016 with her title *Gone Crazy in Alabama* in the author category.

Questions for Discussion

1. How would you describe Delphine's relationship with her sisters? How is it like your relationship with your sibling(s) or like the relationships of siblings you know? How is it different? What does Delphine mean when she says she enjoys her role as Vonetta and Fern's "enemy and big sister"?
2. What does Delphine expect from Cecile? Do her expectations differ from Vonetta's and Fern's expectations? Why? What word or words would you use to describe Cecile?
3. What does Delphine decide about Oakland on her first night there? If you were in her place, would you have come to a similar conclusion? Have you ever felt similarly about a place you've visited? Did you discover anything that changed your mind?
4. Are Cecile and Delphine at all alike/ How? How are they different? What does Cecile mean when she tells Delphine that it wouldn't kill her to be selfish (p. 110)?
5. What elements in the story give you clues about the characters' personalities? Some of the characters have objects that are closely associated with them, like Delphine and her Timex. Cecile and her printing press, and Hirohito and his go-kart. What do these objects say about the characters? Can you find more examples of characters with close associations to objects in the story?
6. Names play an important role in the story? How does Cecile feel about names? How does she explain the name she gave herself, Nzila? Why is Delphine upset when she finds her name in the dictionary? Why does Cecile call Fern "Little Girl" for most of the book, and what finally causes her to call Fern "Fern"? Why does Delphine tell Fern her Cecile-given name, even though Cecile hadn't planned to tell her?
7. Are the Black Panthers Delphine observes at breakfast her first few mornings in Oakland like she expected them to be? How do Sister Mukumbu and Sister Pat differ from Delphine's expectations? What do you think she means when she says that "beating eggs never makes the evening news" (p. 64)?

- 8.** What kind of image does Crazy Kelvin project? Is it possible to judge the Black Panther group based on Crazy Kelvin's actions? Do you think groups can be distinguished negatively or positively by the actions of individual members?
- 9.** What does the stool in the kitchen mean to Delphine? Does her relationship with Cecile change the evening the stool appears? How?
- 10.** How does Delphine feel about the messages of the Black Panthers? Why does she want to stop taking her sisters to the People's Center and skip the rally? Do her beliefs about the Black Panthers and their messages change throughout the story? How would you have felt in her place?
- 11.** Do you feel any sympathy for Cecile throughout the book? Does hearing Cecile's story at the end make you more sympathetic toward her? How does Delphine react to learning her mother's side of the story she's been hearing for years? How do you think you would have felt in her place?
- 12.** Do the sisters find what they were looking for on their trip to Oakland? Why or why not?



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