One Crazy Summer

By

Rita Williams-Garcia

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed
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About the author: Nat Reed has been a member of the teaching profession for more than 30 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites www.reedpublications.org and www.novelstudies.org.

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This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on three chapters of *One Crazy Summer* and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

**Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)**

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to:

a) determining the meaning of words and phrases... including figurative language;
b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
c) compare and contrast two characters;
d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
e) drawing inferences from the text;
f) determining a theme of a story... and many others.

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A portfolio cover is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A Student Checklist is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include race relations in the United States in the late 1960s, black pride, racial prejudice, friendship, child-parent relations.
One Crazy Summer  
*By Rita Williams-Garcia*

**List of Skills**

**Vocabulary Development**
1. Locating descriptive words / phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

**Setting Activities**
1. Summarize the details of a setting

**Plot Activities**
1. Complete a *timeline* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

**Character Activities**
1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

**Creative and Critical Thinking**
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

**Art Activities**
1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip
One Crazy Summer
By Rita Williams-Garcia

Synopsis

Set during one of the most tumultuous years in recent American history, One Crazy Summer is the heartbreaking, funny tale of three girls who travel to Oakland, California in 1968 in search of the mother who abandoned them. It's an unforgettable story told by a distinguished author of books for children and teens, Rita Williams-Garcia. [Courtesy of the publisher]


Author Biography
Rita Williams-Garcia

In addition to One Crazy Summer, Rita Williams-Garcia is the author of six distinguished novels for young adults. She is the winner of a number of awards for her writing including a Coretta Scott King Honor Book, Newbery Honor Book and the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. Rita was born in Queens, New York in 1957. She now lives in Jamaica, New York and teaches at Vermont College of Fine Arts.
One Crazy Summer  
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Student Checklist

Student Name: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade/Level</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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One Crazy Summer

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Name: ____________________________
Before you read the chapters:

The protagonist in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *One Crazy Summer* is eleven-year-old Delphine, who with her two younger sisters is about to embark on the journey of a lifetime. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting protagonist?

Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>signature</th>
<th>announce</th>
<th>descent</th>
<th>immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>episode</td>
<td>appalled</td>
<td>unfurled</td>
<td>soothed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The girls became frightened when the airplane began its ____________.
2. We had already seen that ____________ of *Saved By the Bell*.
3. When the soldier ____________ the flag, the people began to applaud.
4. When the thunderstorm began, my mother came into our bedroom and ____________ my little sister.
5. “Just place your ____________ on the form, Mrs. Jensen,” the clerk ordered roughly.
6. Kelsey was ____________ at how messy the living room was.
7. When they began to ____________ the winners, we snuck out of the auditorium.
8. Most of the people on our street are recent ____________ to our country.
1. What is the **setting** of the story for much of the second chapter?

2. In the following statement, what do you think the expression, *I kept on spinning straw* means in the following sentence: *As long as Vonetta kept her fear to one shriek and Fern kept hers to biting Miss Patty Cake, I kept on spinning straw, making everything all right?*

3. Why did the girls' father insist on them spending a month with their mother?

4. After reading the first three chapters think of two adjectives which would accurately describe the following characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>ADJECTIVE 1</th>
<th>ADJECTIVE 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delphine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vonetta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Ma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Why did Delphine come to regret not sitting in the window seat of the airplane?

6. Why was it so important to Big Ma that the girls behave on their trip?
7. How was Cecile not the kind of mother the girls expected?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Anagram</th>
<th>Clue</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sisters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Withstands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>shades</td>
<td></td>
<td>Runs fast.</td>
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<tr>
<td>trash</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult male deers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>period</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not as smart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Small bites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plane</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group; committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grown</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Now find two additional words from the first three chapters which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.
B. The Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of **four** lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain was written by the *famed Canadian poet*, Campfire Sam.

*Our plane trip to Oakland,*  
*Was a scarey old ride.*  
*It tossed and it shook us,*  
*From in to outside.*

Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A – B – C – B**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first chapter of our novel.

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**The Quatrain Poem**

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

**Title:** ______________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>Line 2</th>
<th>Line 3</th>
<th>Line 4</th>
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</table>
C. **Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example taken from Chapter Two: *The clouds had made peace with our Boeing 727.*

Describe how the clouds are personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

D. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter Two: … *the Golden Gate Bridge.*

Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A bumpy airplane ride.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An old teddy bear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your choice.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Extension Activity

Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in the first three chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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