



One Crazy Summer

Rising 4th



A Novel Study Unit Adapted from Lavinia Group's
Insight Humanities™ Curriculum



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PURPOSE:

Why study historical fiction through *One Crazy Summer*?

"I wanted to write this story for those children who
witnessed and were part of necessary change.
Yes. There were children."

-Rita Williams-Garcia

One Crazy Summer fully immerses readers in its time period; it is brimming with important historical and cultural figures and events, flinging history's door wide open to readers and inspiring further research and exploration. Yet the novel also boasts rich character and plot development in its own right. Readers will find the narrator realistic, relatable, and engaging and will be drawn into the story's twists and turns.

In the summer of 1968, 11-year-old Delphine and her younger sisters, Vonetta and Fern, travel from Brooklyn to Oakland to visit the mother who left them when Fern was a newborn. Their hopes of a warm welcome and trips to the beach are quickly dashed when they encounter a cold, intimidating woman who prioritizes her poetry and printing press over her three daughters. Instead of taking them to Disneyland, their mother, Cecile, sends them off to the Black Panther-run People's Center, where the sisters, raised by their old-fashioned Southern grandmother, encounter the organized Black Power Movement for the first time.

For four intense weeks, Delphine and her sisters navigate their relationship with their mother, their new community, and their understanding of their own identities. Readers are challenged along with the sisters to think deeply about themes of family, race, and identity.

Rita Williams-Garcia respects her readers. She knows that middle-grade students have experienced racism and have heard and seen things they don't understand. They have complex, and often confusing, feelings about their places in their families and society. She tackles, and therefore prompts readers to grapple with, complex ideas—ideas that still resonate and are at the forefront of our current national dialogue. Through Big Ma, Cecile, and Sister Mukumbu, readers will understand the tensions between the "twice as good" ideology associated with Booker T. Washington, the nonviolent passive resistance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Power school of thought often represented by Malcolm X. They will move beyond the traditional American valorization of peaceful passive resistance and into a more complete understanding of the intersection between the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement. Yet Williams-Garcia also respects childhood—and children's social-emotional need for comfort and hope. This is a tough but uplifting novel, and reading it is ultimately a joyful and empowering experience for students and adults alike.



Connection to the Insight Humanities™ Scope and Sequence

This unit connects to the Insight Humanities yearlong content focus on equality and justice by delving into the African American struggle for equality and justice that is at the core of our nation's history and continues to this day. By reading about the 1960s and the Black Power Movement, students will analyze the ways in which the struggle reached a climax in the 1960s and make connections to current events. They will understand that the fight for equality and justice is ongoing—we have seen remarkable victories and progress, and we are challenged to continue the work.

As students read One Crazy Summer and engage in rich discussions, they will uncover the themes of the novel. By the end of the novel, students will be able to articulate and explain the following themes:

- **Racial Justice in America:** Black pride elevates Black history and culture to attain equal status with the white history and culture that dominates American society. Similarly, redistributing power from white centers to Black centers is a crucial move in the ongoing struggle for justice. This may look different at the individual, community, and societal levels.
- **Identity:** An individual's identity is rooted in their understanding of their place in their family, their community, and their society. Race is a key part of a person's identity, but it's important to remember that a person's identity is their own: Another individual or society cannot make assumptions about someone's identity based on their own bias or on that person's appearance.
- **Family:** Family is a basic human need. Though one's family makeup may look different, understanding one's place in their family and feeling confident and secure in familial love and support is an important part of one's identity and self-confidence.
- **Community:** Community unity is a source of strength and comfort. Participating in a united community is a true give and take of rewards and responsibilities in which community members work together for the common good, support individual members, and accept help when needed.

While these are the major themes of the novel, there are a variety of ways in which the themes can be stated. For example, students may interpret scenes from the novel that relate to the theme of identity or community as finding one's place in society. What is most important is that students can name the themes of the novel and support them with evidence from the text.



DAILY LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1

Shared Novel

Materials: Reader's Notebooks, Let the Children March

LAUNCH

Today, you'll welcome your students to their summer school novel study unit!

During today's Launch, you'll give students a quick introduction to the circumstances that inspired Dr. Martin Luther King's protest marches, followed by a short video on the Children's Crusade. This will provide context for the picture book you'll read aloud today, Let the Children March. It also sets the stage for the events in Oakland during 1968, the backdrop of the novel One Crazy Summer.

Friends, in a few minutes, we'll read a story that is set during the Civil Rights Movement when Dr. Martin Luther King was leading peaceful marches to protest racial injustice.

Before we read, I'm going to show you a short video about an important part of these marches.

As you watch, bear in mind that in 1963, African American children were legally forced to go to separate schools, play in separate areas, and even drink from separate water fountains. White society didn't want the Black community to have the same rights or have access to the same spaces.

Play this [four-minute video from HISTORY Classroom](#) about the Children's Crusade of 1963.

When the video is over, show children the cover of Let the Children March.

This book is called Let the Children March and is written by Monica Clark-Robinson. Based on the video we just watched and the title, are you getting some initial ideas about what might happen in this book? Let's read to find out!



READ ALoud AND DISCUSS

Read Let the Children March by Monica Clark-Robinson.

Read to “Let the children march! They will lead the way.”

Readers, let's pause to envision, or to make a mind movie of, this moment. Put yourself in that church. See those anxious parents. Be the brave children offering to march. And hear Dr. King's powerful invitation: “Let the children march! They will lead the way.”

Wow. What an honor—and what a huge responsibility. Dr. King has asked those kids to put themselves front and center in this fight for equal rights and treatment. Imagine what this means.

Pause to let the enormity of this invitation sink in.

Read to “...on and on we marched, we marched, we marched.”

How do the children feel as they begin the march? Discuss your thoughts with your partner.

Give students an opportunity to share their thinking in turn and talk. Select 1–2 students to share that the children are scared, but they are marching anyway. They are able to face their fear and keep going because they are marching for something so important—for freedom.

Read to “I was going to jail.”

Readers, let's pause here. Listen again to this part:

Hate dogged my heels all that day, its yellowed canine teeth sharp—but Courage walked by my side and kept me going.

Notice how the narrator talks about hate and courage as if they were living beings. Why do you think that is? Jot your ideas in your Reader's Notebook.

As students jot their ideas, select 1–2 students to share that the narrator is surrounded by so much hate that it feels powerful and alive. But her courage, and the courage of other marchers, also feels strong and alive.

Hate isn't really a dog, though we see that police are setting dogs on the children, so it's a good comparison. And courage isn't actually a friend walking by the narrator's side, but it's such an overwhelming feeling that it seems almost real to her.

Read to “And the seeds of the revolution were sown!”

As some of you may know from studies of the American Revolution, a revolution is when a large group of people rises up against the government to make a change.

The word “sown” means planted. With this in mind, what does the author mean when she says, “But we had been heard, and the seeds of the revolution were sown”? Discuss your thoughts with your partner.



As students share their ideas in small groups, listen in to different conversations and select 1–2 students to share that there are no *literal* seeds. Instead, the children's march helped create the revolution.

Read to the end. Then, have students prepare for a whole-class discussion.

WHOLE-CLASS DISCUSSION

Final Question: What lessons does the narrator learn in this story? What lessons or important ideas can we, as readers, take away from this story?

Give students about a minute to discuss their initial ideas with a partner or small group. Then, give students time to engage in a quick write about this question in their Reader's Notebooks.

As students complete their quick write, study their writing in real time, and choose 1–2 students to kick off the discussion.

KEY IDEAS

- Children can make a real difference in the world with their voices and actions.
- People can accomplish significant change when they band together.
- We need to muster the courage and determination within us to fight for change.

BACK-POCKET QUESTIONS

- What did these children accomplish by marching?
 - How did the president and the world respond to the march?
 - What changes did the children help bring about?
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Lesson 2

Close Reading

Materials: Reader's Notebooks, Let the Children March

LAUNCH

Today, you will guide students through a close read of a section in Let the Children March, reading from “Would I be hurt? Would we be heard?” through “We wouldn’t stop until things started to change.” This will help build interest in the content of the novel, which you will introduce in the next lesson, while also helping students hone their approach to literary analysis to support even stronger reading and class discussion.

Friends, yesterday, we read Monica Clark-Robinson's powerful picture book, Let the Children March. This is such a meaningful book, I'm not ready to let it go! Readers often linger with meaningful books after they've finished them because those books make us feel and think and reflect on our own lives.

Well, today, we're going to do just that. We're going to revisit some parts of this story and think further about what moves Monica Clark-Robinson has made to craft such a powerful, moving story. We're going to look closely at a few excerpts together and analyze what choices Monica Clark-Robinson has made and why.

READ ALoud AND DISCUSS

Read Let the Children March, from “Would I be hurt? Would we be heard?” through “We wouldn’t stop until things started to change.”

Readers, yesterday, we talked about the important ideas Monica Clark-Robinson conveyed to her readers: that children can make a real difference in the world with their voices and actions, that people can accomplish significant change when they band together, and that we need to muster courage to fight for change. Keep those ideas in mind as we read these pages.

Read the pages aloud once through without stopping. Then, read them again with students, stopping for student discussion.

Read from “Would I be hurt?” through “...we marched, we marched.”

Readers, the children have just started marching. Why do you think Monica Clark-Robinson begins this section in this way? What effect do the first three lines have on us, the readers? Discuss your thoughts with your partners.



Give students the opportunity to share their initial ideas with a partner or small group.

As students share, listen in and select 1–2 of them to share their ideas with the class. Students will notice that this section begins with three “Will I...?” questions. Repeating “Will I...?” conveys the narrator’s nervousness and uncertainty at the beginning of the march. This helps us feel like we are starting the march, too, and feeling just as anxious.

Read the next page, from “Boys and girls,” through “...we marched.”

Wow, this is only one sentence, and it conveys so much! What is unique about this sentence? What choices does the author make here and why? How does the illustration support the idea in the text?

Use the chat feature to give all students the opportunity to share their thinking with the class.

Select 1–2 student responses that share that Monica Clark-Robinson uses repetition to convey the length of the march and the determination of the marchers. Students may further develop this idea by explaining that this will not be a quick and easy task. The illustration depicts determined marchers stretching as far as the eye can see. This also conveys the size and scale of the march.

Read from “Hate dogged my heels...” through “... Courage walked by my side and kept me going.”

Yesterday, we discussed how Monica Clark-Robinson writes about hate and courage as if they are living beings. That’s called personification, giving human actions or characteristics to something that is not human. Let’s look more closely at how she does this.

First, what do you notice about the words “Hate” and “Courage,” and why did the author do this?

Give students time to think about their ideas and then call on a student to share that the words are capitalized like people’s names. This is part of the personification of those concepts.

She writes that Hate “dogged” her heels. When dog is used as a verb, an action, it means to track or follow persistently like a dog, not giving up.

With that in mind, what do you think Monica Clark-Robinson is hoping to convey here with this image of Hate? What or who is Hate? Take time to capture your ideas in your notebooks with a quick write!

As students jot, select a few of them to share different ideas, such as:

- Hate is the police who are literally tracking these children with their dogs.
- Hate is white people who don’t want African Americans to have access to the same rights and spaces.
- Hate is the government denying African Americans equal rights.

We noticed that “Courage” is also personified. What do you think the author is trying to convey about courage here?

Give students time to jot their thinking in response to this question. Then, select a few students to share their ideas, such as:

- Courage is capitalized because it is so important. It is almost like another character in the book, walking with the narrator.
- The narrator summons Courage as a response to hate.
- Courage is stronger, more powerful, than the hate around her.
- The Courage within her gives her the strength to continue marching even when afraid.

Readers, let's analyze the other side of this page now.

Read from ““Disperse or you’ll be jailed!” through “...until things started to change.”

Monica Clark-Robinson is employing a technique we noticed earlier! What is it, and why does she use it? Discuss your thoughts with your partner.

Listen in as students discuss, then select a few students to share ideas, such as:

- Monica Clark-Robinson uses repetition. She repeats the word “disperse.”
- Again, repetition is used to convey the length and arduous nature of the march. Each time the police shout, “Disperse or...!” it is a new day.
- After the police shout, “Disperse or...!” the narrator says, “We did not disperse.” The author is trying to show the tension between the police and the kids. The police’s job is to break up the march. The kids’ job is to keep going. This is the source of conflict.

Readers, do you notice any other repetition here? Look carefully; this is more subtle.

Call on 1–2 students to share that the narrator says “We” three times in a row to describe three actions (or refusals) the children take in response to the police ordering them three times to disperse.

Those children are banding together, right? They are not backing down. Yesterday, we said that Monica Clark-Robinson wants us to understand that people can make a big difference when they band together. We see that message is supported here.

Have students prepare for a whole-class discussion.



WHOLE-CLASS DISCUSSION

Final Question: How does the author help us better understand the message of this story? What moves does the author make to develop her message?

KEY IDEAS

- Monica Clark-Robinson uses repetition to show the length of the march. It takes courage and determination to fight for change.
- The author personifies hate to show that the marchers are faced with hate and opposition so strong that it feels like it's alive. She is showing that these children are up against a powerful form of oppression.
- She also personifies courage to show that the children draw on inner strength and bravery so powerful that it can overcome hate. The message is that these children have the conviction and the bravery to take on the forces of hate surrounding them and to fight for change.
- Monica Clarke-Robinson repeats the word "disperse" to show the conflict between the police and the children. The police demand that the children stop marching. The children do not disperse; they show that they will not back down. This supports the message that there is strength in numbers; these children band together to stand up for what they believe in.

BACK-POCKET QUESTIONS

- How and why does Monica Clark-Robinson personify "Hate"?
 - How and why does Monica Clark-Robinson personify "Courage"?
 - Why does Monica Clark-Robinson repeat the word "disperse" and the actions/inactions the children take in response to this order?
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Lesson 3

Shared Novel

Materials: Reader's Notebooks, One Crazy Summer

LAUNCH

Today, you'll give your students a quick introduction to the Shared Novel. You'll read aloud the first two chapters, pausing to ask questions that invite your students to think about the characters and the world they live in. In addition to laying the foundation for reading work that you'll introduce early on, you'll also orient students to the historical backdrop of the novel.

Friends, today we begin our Shared Novel: One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia. This book is about three sisters who take a special journey together. It is set in the summer of 1968, which was a momentous year in history. Even though African Americans and civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had successfully gained legal rights by 1965 (like the right to a job without discrimination and the right to vote), many white people and state governments were still treating Black people and all people of color unfairly, sometimes even with violence. Tensions were on the rise, and the African American community was continuing to fight for their dignity and human rights.

Starting today, we will set up our Reader's Notebooks to keep track of all of our ideas about this book. Let's take two minutes to set up your notebooks for today's lesson.

Give students time to access their individual copies of the Reader's Notebook with a chart that looks like this:

<i>[Date]</i>	<i><u>One Crazy Summer</u> Pages:</i>
<i>Page</i>	<i>Discussion Notes</i>

Now that we have our materials set up and we've developed some background knowledge about this time period, notice what Rita Williams-Garcia does to set up her story within this historical context as you listen to me read.

READ ALoud AND DISCUSS

Read pages 1–12 of **One Crazy Summer** by Rita Williams-Garcia.

Read to page 3, “... Even better, we saw ourselves going to Disneyland.”

Readers, make a mind movie of this opening scene. Do you see those three sisters on the plane, terrified of all the shaking—the turbulence—that’s happening? Imagine how that would feel.

Let’s pause to think about this new story. What do we know so far about the main character and the journey she’s on? Who is she with? What kind of person is she? Discuss your ideas with a partner. Remember to include specific evidence from the book in your answer.

Give students time to discuss their thinking in small groups. Listen in to partnerships as students discuss, then select a few students to share their ideas, such as:

- Three sisters are on a plane headed to California, and they’re dreaming about the ocean and Disneyland.
- The main character is a caring, responsible big sister because she’s doing her best to reassure her little sisters even though she’s frightened, too.

How many of you are wondering who Cassius Clay is? Remember when I told you this novel is set in 1968? Cassius Clay is the birth name of a famous boxer who took the name Muhammad Ali as part of his conversion to Islam.

With this in mind, what do you think it means when the narrator talks about the “Cassius Clay jabs” to the plane?

Give students about a minute to think about their ideas and complete a quick write in their Reader’s Notebooks, then select a few students to share their ideas. Students can also share their ideas by typing directly into the chat feature. These might include ideas such as:

- The clouds aren’t literally boxers, but the “punches” to the plane feel like a boxer’s jabs. The narrator is making a comparison to express what it’s like to be on a plane pummeled by clouds.
- The narrator is using her imagination to lighten a scary situation.

Read to page 5, “He’s good at it.”

Readers, let’s think about what else we’ve learned about this story. Who do you think Cecile is, and why is Big Ma upset that her son is sending her granddaughters to see Cecile? Discuss your ideas with your partner.

Give students another opportunity to share their thinking with a partner or small group. Select 1–2 students to share that Big Ma can’t forgive Cecile for abandoning her family and neither can her oldest daughter.

I wonder what these riots are that Big Ma mentions. It sounds like she’s nervous because they are happening where Cecile lives. Let’s keep that in mind as we read on.

Read to the end of the first chapter on page 7.

Readers, you know that this novel is set in the summer of 1968. What more have we learned about what it was like during this time? Jot down your ideas.

Give students about a minute to complete a quick write in their notebooks to capture their ideas. As students jot, select a few of them to share their ideas.

- This is a time when African Americans were especially cautious around white people in order to protect themselves from acts of racism.
- Big Ma is warning her grandchildren to “behave” around the white people, and she even asks a stranger—another African American woman—to look after them.

These are compelling observations that reveal some aspects of the world that our characters are growing up in. Let's keep going.

Read to the end of the chapter on page 12.

Readers, why is the response to the commotion between the sisters important? How does it support Big Ma's concern? Capture your ideas in a quick write in your notebook.

Give students a couple of minutes to capture their ideas. Share out some of their thinking. Display their notebooks for the class so students can see a model of strong note-taking.

Student responses should reflect the idea that racism directed at African Americans was so intense and tensions between Black and white people were so high in 1968 that African American kids making a tiny commotion was enough to evoke white people's disapproval—and to “disgrace the entire Negro race.”

Then, have students prepare for a whole-class discussion.

**WHOLE-CLASS
DISCUSSION**

Final Question: What role does Delphine take on with her sisters, and why is that role especially important in 1968?

KEY IDEAS

- Delphine takes on a very adult, almost motherly, role as the oldest. She both comforts her sisters and keeps them in check. She has a lot of responsibility on her 11-year-old shoulders.
- Delphine's role is particularly important during the summer of 1968, which is just months after MLK's assassination. African Americans were feeling especially vulnerable at this time, and race relations were tense. Delphine had to protect her sisters because many white people were quick to judge them harshly, simply for being Black.



BACK-POCKET QUESTIONS

- What actions does Delphine take with her younger sisters?
 - What do those actions tell you about the role she plays?
 - How do the people on the plane react to Delphine and her sisters? Think about both the African American woman that Big Ma asks to look after them and the other people on the plane.
-