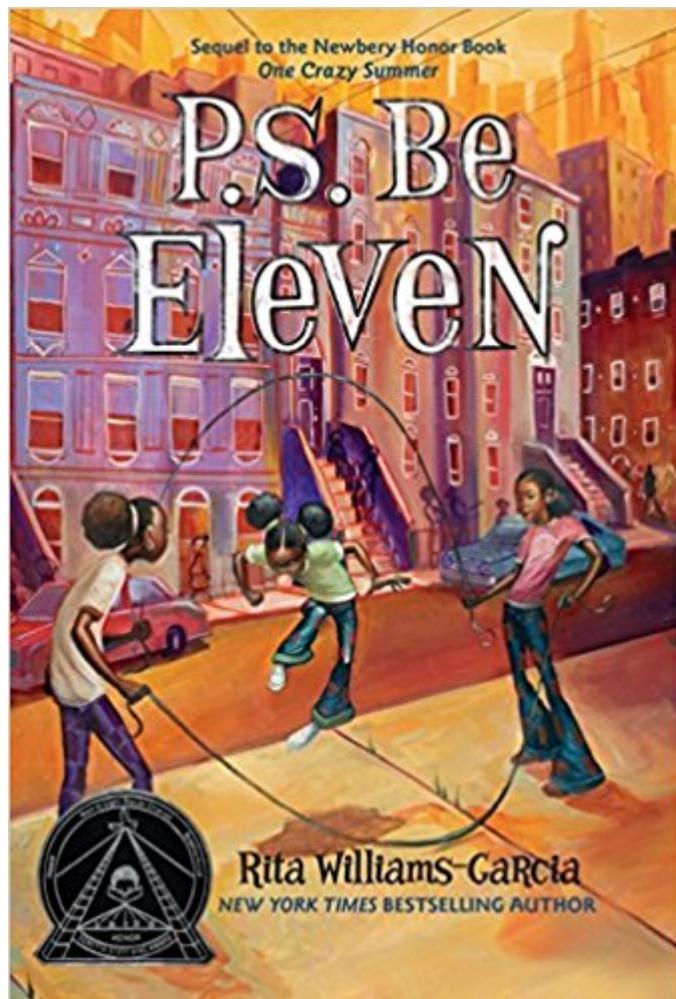


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## P.S. Be Eleven



## **Synopsis**

In this Coretta Scott King Award-winning novel and sequel to the New York Times bestseller and Newbery Honor Book *One Crazy Summer*, the Gaither sisters return to Brooklyn and find that changes large and small have come to their home. This extraordinary novel earned five starred reviews, with Publishers Weekly calling it "historical fiction that's as full of heart as it is of heartbreak" and The Horn Book considering it "funny, wise, poignant, and thought-provoking." After spending the summer in Oakland, California, with their mother and the Black Panthers, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern arrive home with a newfound streak of independence. The sisters aren't the only ones who have changed. Now Pa has a girlfriend. Uncle Darnell returns from Vietnam a different man. But Big Ma still expects Delphine to keep her sisters in line. That's much harder now that Vonetta and Fern refuse to be bossed around. Besides her sisters, Delphine's got plenty of other things to worry about—like starting sixth grade, being the tallest girl in her class, and dreading the upcoming school dance. The one person she confides in is her mother, Cecile. Through letters, Delphine pours her heart out and receives some constant advice: to be eleven while she can. This extraordinary novel will find a home in the hearts of readers who loved *Brown Girl Dreaming* and *As Brave as You*. Supports the Common Core State Standards

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 91 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #18,138 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism #49 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational #143 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Girls & Women

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-7-After their life-changing summer in Oakland with their poet-activist mother, related in *One Crazy Summer* (HarperCollins, 2010), sisters Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern find it difficult to readjust to life in Brooklyn. In addition to their grandmother's strict expectations, the girls must navigate the return of their uncle from Vietnam, their father's new romantic relationship, and their own uncontrollable love for the Jackson Five. Delphine finds some solace in corresponding with her mother, who reminds her not to take on too much or try to grow up too fast; instead she should remember to be 11. But each adult in Delphine's life has a different idea of what that means. Over the course of the book, Delphine strives to balance these conflicting perspectives and to articulate her own beliefs. From the very start of the story, her well-realized voice pulls readers into her rapidly changing world. Williams-Garcia ably integrates historical information with Delphine's story. Even secondary characters are complex and her nuanced understanding of the 1960s brings the setting to life. *P.S. Be Eleven* is a must-read for fans of the first book, but it can also stand alone as an engrossing novel that will leave readers pondering important issues of race, gender, and identity.-Gesse Stark-Smith, Multnomah County Library, Portland, OR © (c) Copyright 2013.

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\*Starred Review\* The Gaither sisters—Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern—are newly returned from a summer spent in California with their mother, Cecile, and the Black Panthers (*One Crazy Summer*, 2010). But life in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, with Big Ma and Pa is nothing like the freedom of Oakland, even if the girls carry back independent streaks. And while their summer may have been crazy, autumn is not exactly tame: Pa, wearing cologne and whistling now that he has a girlfriend; Uncle Darnell, back from Vietnam but sleeps a lot; and sixth grade has a new Zambian exchange teacher, Mr. Mwilla. Delphine speaks her worried mind in letters to Cecile, who always adds a postscript, reminding Delphine to "Be Eleven" and not a grown-up. (This makes for a nice recurring sentiment, if a somewhat clunky title.) Set against the tumultuous, yet vibrant, backdrop of the late 1960s—as Nixon campaigns against Humphrey and the Jackson Five are poised to play Madison Square Garden—the story is vividly narrated by Delphine, who reluctantly learns to ease control over her sisters and comes to a tough realization: "Twelve makes you know better than to wish for things that only eleven would wish hard for." Even without the dynamic Black Panther characters, this soars as a finely drawn portrait of a family in flux and as a memorable slice of a specific time in our nation's

history. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Williams-Garcia's *One Crazy Summer* (2010) won the Newbery Honor and the Coretta Scott King Award and was a National Book Award finalist. A robust marketing campaign includes author appearances. Grades 4-7, --Ann Kelley --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Grade: A+Delphine and her two younger sisters return home after summer in Oakland with their mother and at Black Panthers Camp. Back to Big Ma and her old fashion ways, back to Pa and his new girlfriend, back to Uncle Darnell home from Vietnam and on drugs. Everything seems to be changing except Big Ma and her strict ways. The sisters are saving for a Jackson 5 concert, sixth grade is harder than Delphine imagined and she keeps receiving letters from her mother ending with PS BE ELEVEN, reminding the parentified young girl to enjoy her childhood. Book #2 in the Gaithersburg Sisters trilogy is every bit as wonderful as Book #1 *ONE CRAZY SUMMER* as Rita Williams-Garcia once again captures the pitch perfect voice of the spunky Delphine and the unrest of the times. Her characters practically jump off the pages, as real as anyone you'd encounter, ordinary yet extraordinary, unique yet familiar. *PS BE ELEVEN* brought me back to sixth grade around the time of the book's events, my first dance, feeling so much older than I was. I feel sad that there's only one more book in the series and hope Williams-Garcia considers expanding the series, perhaps making the younger sisters narrators. **THEMES:** sisters, family, stepparents, coming-of-age, Vietnam, substance abusers, extended family No matter what your age or the age of your child, *PS BE ELEVEN* is not to be missed.

This is a great sequel to *One Crazy Summer*. The character growth with these 3 sisters is amazing. Though, it hasn't been that long since their return from CA, that visit changed their lives. Delphine is changing the most. She still has the weight of the world on her shoulders. She's the big sister to 2 younger ones, who are impressionable. Being there for them, but at the same time trying to find some independence, is hard to achieve. She finds some guidance from her mother, whom she writes to often. *P.S. Be Eleven* is not the only advice that her mother gives but it is the one that I love the most. It's hard to be eleven when you're growing up and have to take on adult responsibilities. Life in 60s Brooklyn, New York. I've watched a lot of documentaries and movies over the years that portray that decade. Garcia is a great storyteller so it was not hard for me to jump back in the lives of these characters. Giving these characters real problems and culture is just the icing on the cake. The Jackson 5 are these girls favorite group. I loved how the author gives you the images to put

together in your head. It's like I was transported back in time and I was there trying to make a way to go to that concert! There are other things going on around Delphine, Fern, and Vonetta. Pa has a new lady in his life so that's a big change for them. Their uncle Darnell is fresh out of the war in Vietnam and he's not the same man he used to be. These girls learn a lot about adults and the hardships of life all around. I'm not sure if it was worse back then than it is now. The only things that changed are technology. The advances in technology gives kids access to things but it doesn't change the fact that it's hard being yourself. Bullying has gotten worse. To the point where suicide seems the only way out for the recipient. I think this is a great book for anyone of any age, race and gender. There are some great life lessons to be learned reading these books and I, for one, will be reading the next book when it comes out. I can't get enough of Garcia's storytelling or these amazing girls that she brings to life within the pages. Definitely recommend!

I had every intention on wrapping this as a gift to one of my nieces. The cover is adorable and the storyline seemed like fun. I decided to take a peek and read the first few pages, as Big Ma says, "A mercy!" I'm halfway through! Brooklyn, Bell Bottoms (I had a baaad pair!) and The J's had me back in 1972! I remember seeing them at the Los Angeles Forum with my bell bottoms and mid drift top! This story shows how Colored/Black families really lived. Even in 2015 a lot of the story line holds true. I will go back and order the 1st and I'm going to order the next! Even if I don't pass them on to my nieces, when they visit, they'll have something to enjoy from my childrens library. It's a wonderful way for Black Girls who Rock, to see why they Rock! The author, honey child deserves every single honor she is given! I dig Sisterhood! p.s. michael was my favorite too!

This could be a stand-alone read, but I recommend reading One Crazy Summer, first, to meet Delphine - one of the most memorable and authentic characters to come along in a long while. The story picks up as Delphine and her younger sisters return from their summer 'vacation' with estranged mother, Celia, where they mostly fended for themselves and were taken under the wing of the Black Panther members in the neighborhood (1960's). Now, back East, and entering 6th grade, Delphine learns her father is about to remarry, the teacher she was expecting to have has gone off to Africa in a teacher exchange, and all of her friends have gotten Jackson Five mania. Her uncle comes home from Vietnam, not quite the same, and in writing to Celia about all of these happenings, Delphine doesn't understand why her mother just tells her to just "be eleven." Delphine

reminds me so much of Dicey Tillerman, Cynthia Voigt's protagonist, who had to grow up early and come to terms with her absentee mother. Loved this story.

I adored ONE CRAZY SUMMER, and was psyched when I learned Rita was writing this sequel. I dove right back in to protagonist Delphine's world, not only fully enjoying the ups and downs of Delphine's family, but also the deeper issues of what it would be like to grow up African-American in the late 1960s. And come on--she's got The Jackson 5 in there!

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