



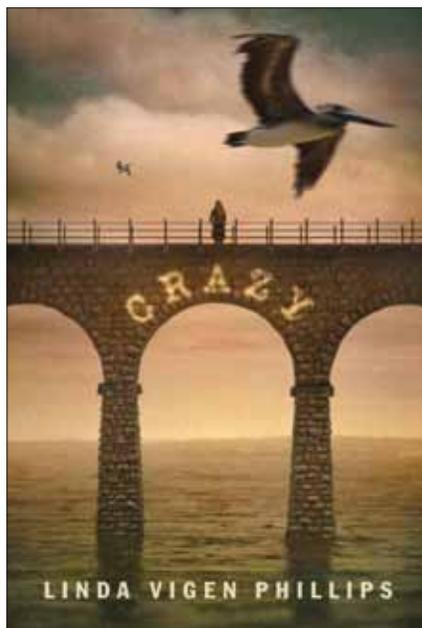
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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

INCLUDES COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS

CRAZY

Written by **LINDA VIGEN PHILLIPS**



*I stopped down by the canal,
swarming with hungry pelicans
and screeching gulls,
and I wondered
what it would feel like
not to sit and dangle my feet through the slats
but instead to climb up on the railing
and let myself just slip off and down
and down
and down.*

*I decided against it because,
of course,
I'm not the crazy one
in our family.*

Laura is a typical fifteen-year-old growing up in the 1960s, except for one thing: her mother is suffering from a mental illness that no one will talk about. Eloquent and compelling, this powerful novel-in-verse tackles complex themes in a way that will have readers rooting for Laura to find the courage to get the answers she needs.

Trade Paperback ISBN: 978-0-8028-5437-7 ♦ \$9.00
5½" x 8¼" ♦ 320 pages ♦ Ages 13 & up
Contact Eerdmans for rights information

ABOUT the Author

LINDA VIGEN PHILLIPS is a retired teacher. *Crazy* is her first novel, drawn from her own experiences growing up in Oregon. Linda now lives in North Carolina. Visit her website at www.lindavigenphillips.com.

PRAISE FOR *Crazy*

"Beautifully written and emotionally impactful."
— *School Library Journal*

"Phillips' accessibly written chronicle will resonate with teens who understand the desire to protect themselves from their families' inner truths."
— *Booklist*

TO ORDER

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If you have any suggestions for using
Crazy with young readers,
we would be happy to hear from you.

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ Artists / Art
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Forgiveness
- ❖ Mental illness
- ❖ U.S. History

VOCABULARY USE AND ACQUISITION

What do you know about the following words or terms? *Mental illness, nervous breakdown, shock treatment, ceramics.* Write down what you think they mean, and then use print or online sources to find out more. (L.4)

As you're reading the book, write down any unfamiliar words you encounter. If you can, guess the meaning from the context. Then use an online or print dictionary to find a definition and compare it to your guess. (L.4)

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Crazy is a novel in verse, meaning that it is written in the form of poems. What effects do you think this format might have, and why do you think the author chose to write the book this way? (RL.5)

What is the importance of the clay figurines? Why do you think the author chose to make these poems visually and rhythmically different from the rest of the poems in the book? Back your explanation up with relevant examples from the book. (RL.5)

Crazy is written as a first-person narrative. How does that shape the reader's impressions of the events in the book and the other characters? Can you find a passage in the book where Laura's perspective might be very different from that of another character? (RL.6)

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How is the word "crazy" used in the book? Why do you think the first two poems mention it six times? (RL.1)

Art and artists play a major role in Laura's life. Find a passage that names one of the six artists mentioned in the book and read it aloud. Why does Laura refer to this artist at this point in the book? (RL.1)

In the poem "Ceramics Versus Pottery" on page 117, Laura makes a distinction between the two types of art. Why is it so important to her to make this distinction, and why doesn't she think Beth understands? (RL.3)

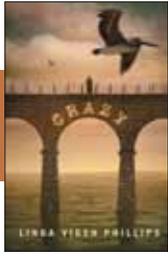
What role does communication play in Laura's family? Find a passage that shows how members of her family speak to one another. What grade would you give Laura and her family on "communication skills," and why? How does their communication compare to your family's? (RL.1)

How would you describe the role Mrs. Boucher plays in Laura's life? Has there ever been a time in your life when someone outside your family affected how you felt or what you did? How might Laura's life have been different if she had not met Mrs. Boucher? (RL.3)

Laura's mother has two breakdowns in the book, and each time Laura has a different reaction. How would you describe the difference in Laura's reactions? What emotions do you think motivate her each time? Is one a healthier reaction than the other? (RL.3)

When Laura returns home at the end of the book, how has she changed? What do you think she means when she says in the last poem that "everything was right?" (RL.3)

What are some of the major themes in *Crazy*? How do you see these themes developed throughout the novel? Refer to specific details in the book to support your points. (RL.2)



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

SPEAKING AND LISTENING / WRITING

Have you ever known someone who had a mental illness? If so, describe your experience with that person to your classmates. Was it easy to talk with that person, or did the illness make the conversation awkward or difficult? If you have never known or talked with anyone with a mental illness, do you imagine that it will be any different than talking with someone who does not have a mental disorder? (SL.1)

Do you think it was necessary for Laura to leave home in order to get the answers she was looking for? Could she have gotten the same results by going about it some other way? Write a short summary of what alternate actions she might have taken, and how the book might have resolved differently. (W.3)

Crazy is set in the 1960s. There was a lot going on in the United States and the world at that time. Can you name any other events that took place during that time, besides the events described in the book? Do research to find out what else was happening then, both in the U.S. and around the world, and create a timeline to set the events of *Crazy* in their historical context. (W.7)

Leonardo da Vinci said, "Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen." Discuss this statement with your classmates. How does this relate to the theme of art in *Crazy*, especially in terms of how Laura feels about art and poetry? Work with a partner to find a passage in the book that exemplifies da Vinci's quote. Make a brief presentation to the class, reading your passage and explaining why you think it shows what da Vinci was referring to. (RL.2 / SL.1)

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

Have you read any other books that deal with the issue of mental illness or include a character who has a mental illness? If possible, consider reading another book that does so, and compare it to *Crazy*. Does it present similar themes? Do the characters share any traits with the characters in *Crazy*, or deal with any similar struggles? (RL.9)

Research the Kennedy assassination. Try to find several first-hand accounts from people who lived at the time. What effect did this tragedy have on our nation, and on the daily lives of all Americans? Now try to imagine what concerns you might have had if someone in your family was suffering from depression or anxiety at that particular time. Write a paragraph or poem expressing the emotions you might have felt. (RL.9)

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Caletti, Deb. *Wild Roses*. Simon Pulse, 2008.

Harrington, Karen. *Sure Signs of Crazy*. Little Brown, 2013.

Hemphill, Stephanie. *Your Own, Sylvia: A Verse Portrait of Sylvia Plath*. Knopf, 2008.

Nolan, Han. *Crazy*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.