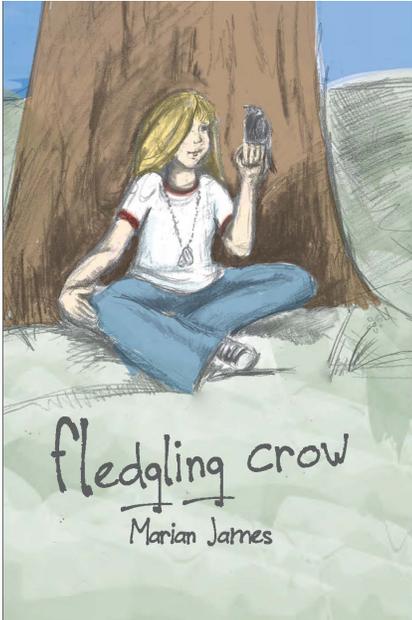


Discussion Guide

Fledgling Crow

by Marian James



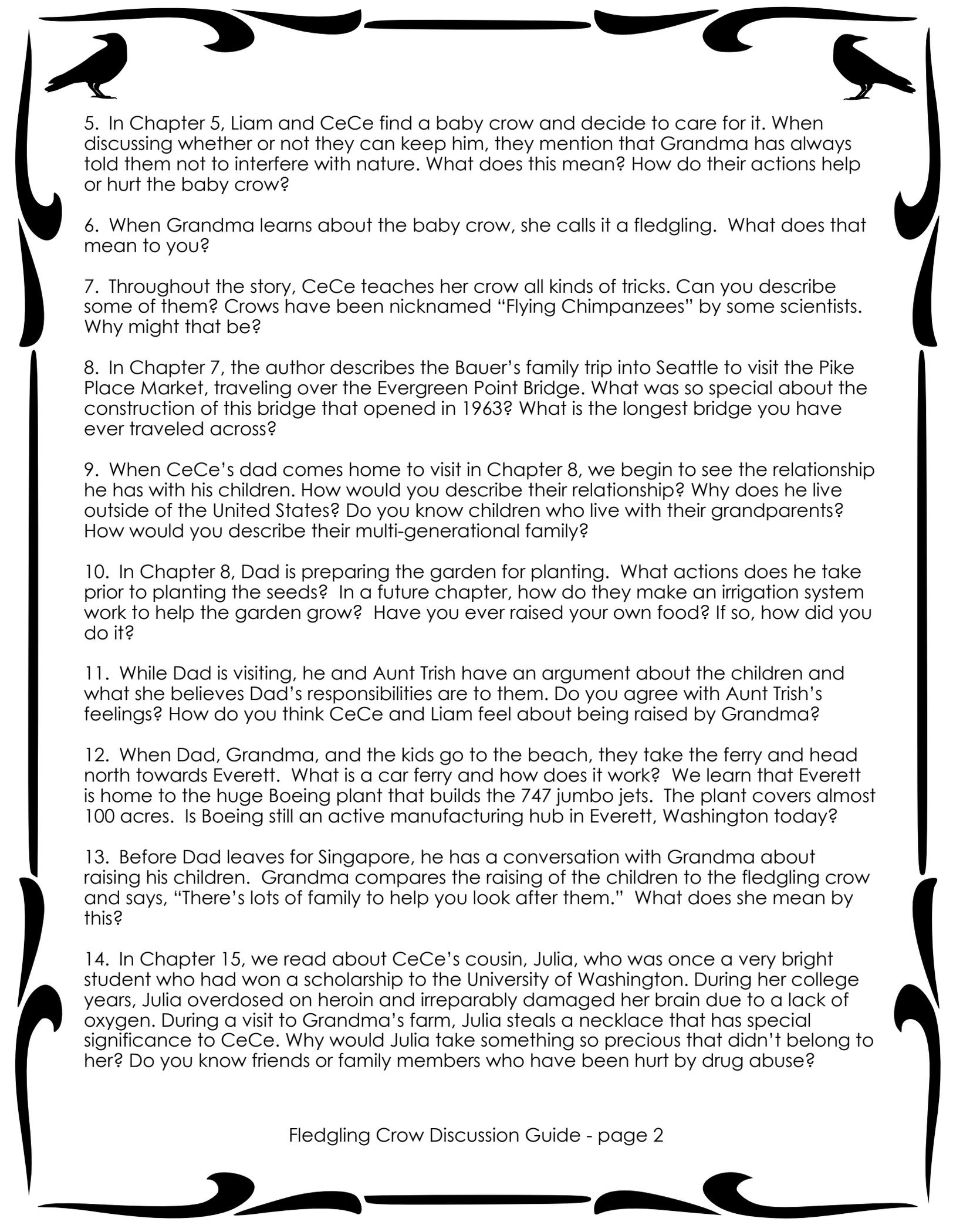
About the book

The soldiers are coming home to one of the country's deepest recessions. The unemployment rate is double digits. Unrest and demonstrations are rampant in every major U.S. city. It's the summer of 1973 and the Viet Nam War is coming to an end while the Watergate presidential scandal is just getting started. Against this back drop, six year old CeCe lives with her grandmother and older brother Liam on a small farm outside of Seattle while her widowed father is on the other side of the world helping to pioneer global air travel. The isolated farm has not been modernized since the nineteen fifties. Daily life with Grandma Grace stands in stark contrast to the turbulence of the times and the amazing breakthroughs of the American aviation and space industries.

CeCe and her brother rescue a fledgling crow from feral cats and Blackie the Crow becomes the most amazing pet as they learn to care for him. Like the fledgling crow, CeCe is surrounded by extended family and friends who help care for her while she struggles to learn about the mother she never knew and to understand why her WWII War Hero father is so distant. A veteran from a different war - the Vietnam War - crosses paths with Ce Ce that summer to change her life forever.

Discussion Questions

1. In the opening of the book, CeCe describes Grandma Grace Bauer's home as a sustenance farm. What did that mean to this family?
2. When describing their home, CeCe mentions that there was no toilet, shower, bath, or any hot water inside the house. Inside the detached garage were a water heater, shower, stationary tub and wringer washer for laundry. CeCe notes that the shower was covered in moss, and frogs and salamanders liked to hang out there. Do you think the Bauer family was living in poverty? Were there any indications that the family was poor?
3. Many current events of the time are discussed in the book. In Chapter 4, it is explained that Vatican II was launched in the sixties by the Catholic Church to try and make the church more relevant in modern times. What changes came about due to Vatican II?
4. Further in Chapter 4, CeCe's family discusses the Skylab launch. What was happening with the space program at that time? Why was there a race to space? What is happening with the space program today?.



5. In Chapter 5, Liam and CeCe find a baby crow and decide to care for it. When discussing whether or not they can keep him, they mention that Grandma has always told them not to interfere with nature. What does this mean? How do their actions help or hurt the baby crow?

6. When Grandma learns about the baby crow, she calls it a fledgling. What does that mean to you?

7. Throughout the story, CeCe teaches her crow all kinds of tricks. Can you describe some of them? Crows have been nicknamed “Flying Chimpanzees” by some scientists. Why might that be?

8. In Chapter 7, the author describes the Bauer's family trip into Seattle to visit the Pike Place Market, traveling over the Evergreen Point Bridge. What was so special about the construction of this bridge that opened in 1963? What is the longest bridge you have ever traveled across?

9. When CeCe's dad comes home to visit in Chapter 8, we begin to see the relationship he has with his children. How would you describe their relationship? Why does he live outside of the United States? Do you know children who live with their grandparents? How would you describe their multi-generational family?

10. In Chapter 8, Dad is preparing the garden for planting. What actions does he take prior to planting the seeds? In a future chapter, how do they make an irrigation system work to help the garden grow? Have you ever raised your own food? If so, how did you do it?

11. While Dad is visiting, he and Aunt Trish have an argument about the children and what she believes Dad's responsibilities are to them. Do you agree with Aunt Trish's feelings? How do you think CeCe and Liam feel about being raised by Grandma?

12. When Dad, Grandma, and the kids go to the beach, they take the ferry and head north towards Everett. What is a car ferry and how does it work? We learn that Everett is home to the huge Boeing plant that builds the 747 jumbo jets. The plant covers almost 100 acres. Is Boeing still an active manufacturing hub in Everett, Washington today?

13. Before Dad leaves for Singapore, he has a conversation with Grandma about raising his children. Grandma compares the raising of the children to the fledgling crow and says, “There's lots of family to help you look after them.” What does she mean by this?

14. In Chapter 15, we read about CeCe's cousin, Julia, who was once a very bright student who had won a scholarship to the University of Washington. During her college years, Julia overdosed on heroin and irreparably damaged her brain due to a lack of oxygen. During a visit to Grandma's farm, Julia steals a necklace that has special significance to CeCe. Why would Julia take something so precious that didn't belong to her? Do you know friends or family members who have been hurt by drug abuse?

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15. When CeCe finds Mr. Abel in the woods, why do you think she decides to keep this a secret from Grandma? As the reader, what comes to your mind about who Mr. Abel is? Do you fear for CeCe's safety with him?
16. When Uncle Gil and Aunt Trish take the family to Mt. Ranier, why can you see the mountain some days and on other days you cannot?
17. When Mr. Abel tells the story about being in Viet Nam with his friend, Elliott, he describes a war situation that has a terrible ending. What was the point of his story and what happened to Elliot? To the villagers?
18. When CeCe's Dad kills the skunks because one of them sprayed him, we perceive that CeCe has lost some of her best friends. Why is this? Why do you think her Dad did such a violent thing when he was angry?
19. Are guns an important part of this story? In what ways? How do Gil's guns compare to people's possession of guns today? How did Cy explain why Gil owned so many guns?
20. Knowing that the timing of the book was 1973, how do our social customs compare with those at that time? Do you know children living with their grandmother? Do you have friends who own guns? Do you have friends living in poverty without hot water or inside plumbing?

About the author

MARIAN JAMES grew up in Seattle, Denver and the San Francisco Bay Area before settling in northern Kentucky as an adult. She has been a product designer, marketer and business woman for over thirty years; traveling the world and meeting all kinds of fascinating people. She has only recently begun to pursue her dream as a writer. Fledgling Crow was her first novel.

