



The Summer of Hammers and Angels

by Shannon Wiersbitzky

ABOUT THE BOOK

When lightning strikes Tucker's Ferry, literally, and Momma ends up in the hospital, Delia finds herself without a house, without a family, and forced to live under the same roof with her nemesis, Tommy Parker, perhaps the densest boy on earth. But Delia isn't the sort to pout. She has a house to rebuilt and a family to remake. It's a huge job for a young girl, until she learns where to ask for help.

Delia's unforgettable summer unfolds in this heartfelt and witty novel about loneliness and belonging, fear and faith, and the value of a good set of tools.

AGES 10 – 14 • GRADES 5 – 9

"Down-to-earth life struggles combine with inspiring generosity of spirit in this uplifting debut."
—*Publishers Weekly*

William Allen White Children's Book Award (Missouri) Master List, Grades 3-5, 2013-2014

Kansas NEA Reading Circle recommended title, 2012

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the book, Delia compares her discovery of angels to a motorist being drawn into a local diner. What do these two experiences have in common? What does the comparison tell you about how Delia looks at the world?
2. Tucker's Ferry is a close-knit town in West Virginia. What sets Mama and Delia apart from many of their neighbors?
3. When her mother is hit by lightning, Delia has the presence of mind to go for help immediately and then accompany her mother to the hospital. Yet she falls apart at the idea of staying at Tommy Parker's house. Why?
4. "Delia needs a few days to find her feet," Mrs. Parker tells her son. What does that expression mean to you? Have you ever needed time to find your feet?
5. In what ways is Delia similar to her best friend Mae? How are the girls also different from each other? How are you alike and different from your closest friend?

6. How would you describe Tucker's ferry? What are your favorite descriptive passages about the town?
7. Delia realizes that "the future of the Burns women was up to me." Do you agree? How does she meet the challenge?
8. Everyone has a special gift, Delia is told at church. But she worries that she has none. What do you think is Delia's special gift? What is your own?
9. Praying is usually a private act, yet it often occurs in a public place. For Delia, what is the difference between the prayers she says at her mother's bedside and the prayers she joins at the First Congregational Church of Christ?
10. Homes can take on the personality of their owners, according to Delia. What does Delia's house reveal about her mother? What does your home say about the people you live with?
11. Delia has no family other than her mother. How does that change over the course of the story?
12. During church, Delia is sure that the preacher can see into her soul, "at all the good and bad sitting there." Do you feel that there is good and bad in all of us? Why or why not?
13. Why is Delia so determined to find some family photographs at her home? Why do you think there are none?
14. "The fear of losing someone you love can turn people inside out," Miss Martha tells Delia after Tommy gets hurt. What does she mean by that? Have you ever felt turned inside out?
15. Miss Martha wonders if she once picked up an angel on a highway. Delia imagines angels in sunflower yellow T-shirts amusing her Momma. Who do you think are the real angels in this story?
16. "How long do you need to believe?" Delia asks Miss Martha. The old woman answers, "As long as it takes." What does Miss Martha mean by that? How long do you hold on to your beliefs? What causes you to doubt them?
17. How does Delia's relationship with Tommy evolve over the course of this story? What is it like at the beginning? What is it like at the end? Do you think their relationship could become romantic? Try to imagine what happens to Tommy and Delia after the novel ends. Is a romance likely? Why or why not?
18. For most of this novel, Delia's mother is gravely ill in the hospital. Does Delia ever lose faith that her mother will get better? Did you?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shannon Wiersbitzky was born in North Dakota and grew up largely in Pennsylvania. She spent her summers in Culloden, West Virginia, which has only one stoplight, much like the imaginary town of Tucker's Ferry. Ms. Wiersbitzky now lives in Pennsylvania with her husband and their two sons. This is her first novel.

A note to teachers and school librarians: These discussion questions will help your students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts, especially the collaboration and comprehension skills included in the speaking and listening standards. See CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1 (and for upper grades).