



## Discussion Questions for *Unstoppable Octobia May* by Sharon G. Flake

Octobia May is a girl filled with questions. At a time when children, and especially girls, are “to be seen, not heard,” Aunt Shuma gives Octobia May the freedom and self-expression of an adult. When Octobia May begins to question the folks in her world, an adventure and a mystery unfold that beg some troubling questions: Are the adults in her life exactly who they appear to be? Is Octobia May squandering her freedom at a time when many African Americans have to struggle and fight for theirs? And, perhaps most important: *Do vampires really exist?*

1. Octobia May aspires to be a writer, a detective, or a reporter, although in the 1950s a girl was expected to grow up and rely on a husband. What do you want to be when you grow up? How would you feel if you were told you could not be what you wanted?
2. Aunt Shuma says, “A woman in this world can’t play banjo to nobody’s fiddle.” What does this mean? Do you think this advice is relevant today? Why or why not?
3. Jonah says that he likes Octobia May unconditionally—“Hair or not. Smelly or sweet.” Who are the people in your life that you love unconditionally?
4. Girls at the time were expected to be ladylike and to wear skirts and dresses most of the time. Octobia May refuses. Where does she find the confidence and courage to live life on her own terms? How would you feel if you were told what to wear every day?
5. The adults in her life tell Octobia May to stop telling stories about Mr. Davenport and snooping on him. Why do you think she ignores everyone?
6. What do you think it means when Octobia May says, “What happens to one person, happens to all people”?
7. Octobia May writes a letter to Linda Carol Brown who is being denied entrance into a white school. Think of someone in the news today who you think is being treated unfairly. What would you say to that person in a letter?
8. Aunt Shuma wants Octobia May to observe grown-up business so she knows what to do when she is older. What’s the #1 life lesson you have learned from watching adults?
9. Mrs. Nicholson says that Octobia May has *gumption*. Think of someone you know who has *gumption*. How does he or she show it?
10. Why do you think the book is called *Unstoppable Octobia May*? What makes *you* unstoppable?