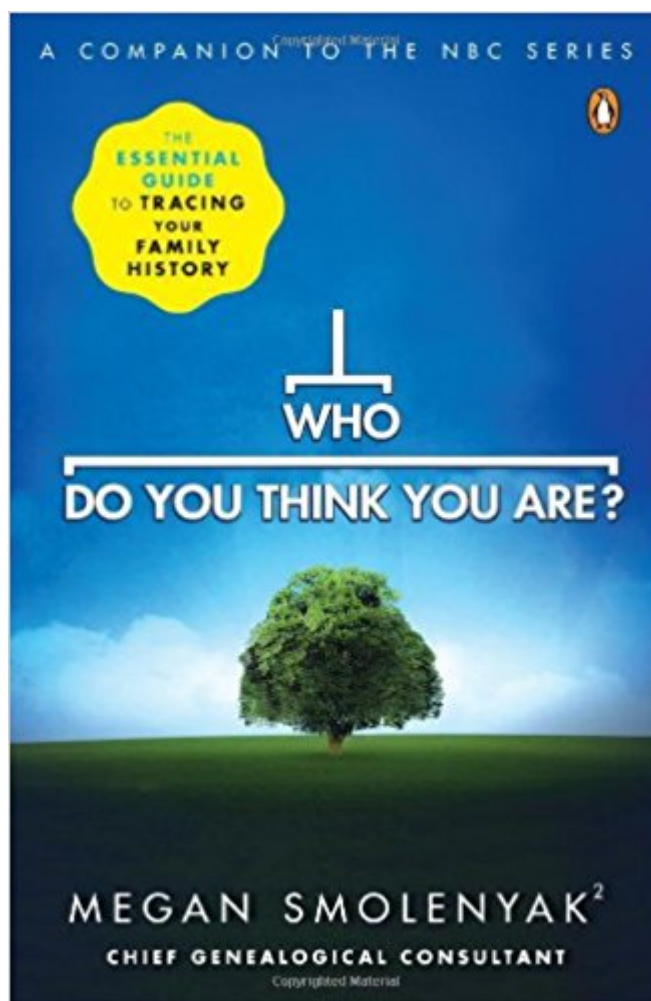


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# Who Do You Think You Are?: The Essential Guide To Tracing Your Family History



## Synopsis

The companion how-to guide to the hit TV series-with advice for anyone starting their own genealogical search. In the groundbreaking NBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?* seven celebrities-Sarah Jessica Parker, Emmitt Smith, Lisa Kudrow, Matthew Broderick, Brooke Shields, Susan Sarandon, and Spike Lee-went on an emotional journey to trace their family history and discover who they really are, and millions of viewers caught the genealogy bug. With the official companion guide, anyone can learn how to chart their family's unique path. Featuring step-by-step instructions from Megan Smolenyak<sup>2</sup>, one of America's top genealogical researchers, this book offers everything readers need to know to start the journey into their past, from digging through old photos, to finding the best online resources.

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; First Edition, 1st Printing edition (December 28, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143118919

ISBN-13: 978-0143118916

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 92 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #160,226 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #18 in [Books > Parenting & Relationships > Family Relationships > Extended Families](#) #81 in [Books > Reference > Genealogy](#) #21465 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting](#)

## Customer Reviews

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Wall to Wall Media is one of the world's leading producers of factual and drama programming. Now in their twenty-first year, they have won many major awards including an Emmy for *Baby It's You* and an Oscar for the feature documentary *Man on Wire*. They are the producers of the multi-award winning television series *Who Do You Think You Are?* Megan Smolenyak is the chief family historian and spokesperson for Ancestry.com, the largest genealogical company in the world. She has consulted for and appeared on *Good Morning America*, the *Today* show, CNN, NPR, and the BBC. She has written articles for numerous ancestry and genealogy publications. --This text refers

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Although promoted as a "companion" to the popular TV series, this good and enjoyable guide to beginning genealogy really has little to do with the show, except for a color section in the middle covering each of the participants. Instead it's a nuts-and-bolts guide to 1) getting started on your family-history quest, and 2) the most commonly-used (and some not-so-common) records. Smolenyak writes enthusiastically and well. She is passionate about her subject and it shows. In some ways, the book suffers for the same reasons that the TV show suffers: it makes it look too easy. This is probably unavoidable in a beginning guide or a popular TV show since covering all the caveats might turn off the audience. That said, I wish there had been at least some emphasis on how one might go about developing skills, such as taking classes (which are often free or inexpensive), attending conferences, etc. Also lacking is any meaningful discussion of evaluation of and analysis of all of the various pieces of evidence one finds; obviously this can't be done thoroughly in a book like this, but it should at least be addressed. The author works for [...], the giant online genealogical service; although it is noted on the jacket blurb, in the interest of full disclosure she could have been a little more forthcoming about that relationship throughout the book when one of ancestry's features or databases takes center stage. Her recommendation of [...]s member tree feature (as her first suggestion for software to use for your data) is ludicrous; I would be very surprised if that is her own database software of choice. (Save the comments: I'm a whole-world subscriber to ancestry.com and think it's a fabulous and essential resource.) What I especially like about this book, in addition to the writing, is its begin-at-the-beginning approach (start with yourself and work back); this may seem obvious, but it's not obvious to many beginners. There is a good section on home sources, talking to relatives, etc. The record examples and illustrations are great: generally from the famous or infamous (Chef Boyardee and Al Capone, to name a couple). Smolenyak's chapter about her search for President Obama's Irish ancestors is one of the best parts of the book because it illustrates difficult aspects to resolving a genealogical problem and, in this case, doesn't make it look easy. I recommend this book for anyone who wants to begin researching their family and to more experienced researchers who will probably find, as I did, some new (particularly online) resources.

I recently started working on my family genealogy. This book was a good introduction to how to research it, and now that I've gotten past most of the "easy" research, it has lots of great tips for how to take the next steps to find the more difficult records I need. There are tons of websites and

suggestions for sources. Very useful.

I have been researching and working on a family history book for the past two years. It is too bad I didn't know about this book sooner. I purchased this book a few weeks ago and have gone through it and find, because I have been at my research so long, it wasn't much help to me. If you are a new comer to genealogy then I would highly recommend it. All of the sources are there and the author does a good job of explaining how to use them. I was pleasantly surprised that the author did not just use her book as a skill for Ancestry.com. It appears that she is either a permanent, or sometime employee of the company, and the book cover also notes that the book is a companion for the TV series of the same name. The TV program is an offshoot of the website. I have never watched the program since it seems they only deal with celebrities and not just ordinary people like me. Although I have not found much use for the book at the moment, I intend to hang on to it since I think it would be foolish to overlook some potential source that I haven't thought of in a while. As I stated earlier; if anyone has been at this type of research for any length of time, then they probably are well acquainted with all the sources described. On the other hand if someone is just starting out, then this book would be very helpful.

I have been doing genealogy for a long time, and have a sizable book collection. Megan, to me is one of the best Genealogist to come along. She seems to have the heart and soul of family history flowing through her viens. First of all, she gets it, one of the few who understands that the overwhelming majority of family researchers are not of the Mayflower genre, and are not looking for Generals and Gentry. Also she realizes all immigrants did not own vast amounts of land, and her books are not dedicated to looking for wills and deeds. The Royals and the very rich did not emmigrate to North America. She is one of those professional who understands this intuitively. This book is the best, so much good information and so understandable. She actually explains DNA, both types for research on 2 pages. If you are interested in DNA this book sums it up in a very understandable form. Again I will say that she is the best that has come along to genealogy since I have been researching, and that says alot since I do not consider myself an amature. You will also love her book on serendipity. Therefore, stop looking for famous people and attaching your family to them, instead, start with yourself, and begin the fabulous journy called "Family". Most of all, be proud of who you are and who you find. Megan's books are the best for helping you achive your geneological adventure.

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