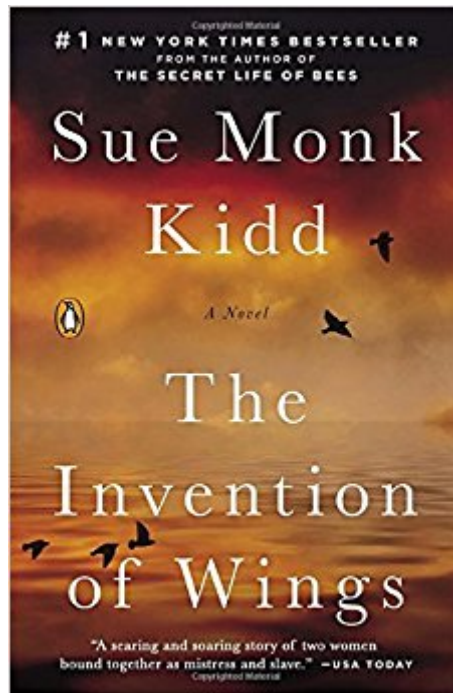


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# The Invention Of Wings



## Synopsis

From the celebrated author of *The Secret Life of Bees*, a #1 *New York Times* bestselling novel about two unforgettable American women. Writing at the height of her narrative and imaginative gifts, Sue Monk Kidd presents a masterpiece of hope, daring, the quest for freedom, and the desire to have a voice in the world. Hetty "Handful" Grimke, an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. The Grimke's daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women. Kidd's sweeping novel is set in motion on Sarah's eleventh birthday, when she is given ownership of ten year old Handful, who is to be her handmaid. We follow their remarkable journeys over the next thirty five years, as both strive for a life of their own, dramatically shaping each other's destinies and forming a complex relationship marked by guilt, defiance, estrangement and the uneasy ways of love. As the stories build to a riveting climax, Handful will endure loss and sorrow, finding courage and a sense of self in the process. Sarah will experience crushed hopes, betrayal, unrequited love, and ostracism before leaving Charleston to find her place alongside her fearless younger sister, Angelina, as one of the early pioneers in the abolition and women's rights movements. Inspired by the historical figure of Sarah Grimke, Kidd goes beyond the record to flesh out the rich interior lives of all of her characters, both real and invented, including Handful's cunning mother, Charlotte, who courts danger in her search for something better. This exquisitely written novel is a triumph of storytelling that looks with unswerving eyes at a devastating wound in American history, through women whose struggles for liberation, empowerment, and expression will leave no reader unmoved.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the early 1830s, Sarah Grimké and her younger sister, Angelina, were the most infamous women in America. They had rebelled so vocally against their family, society, and their religion that they were reviled, pursued, and exiled from their home city of Charleston, South Carolina, under threat of death. Their crime was speaking out in favor of liberty and equality and for African American slaves and women, arguments too radically humanist even for the abolitionists of their time. Their lectures drew crowds of thousands, even (shockingly, then) men, and their most popular pamphlet directly inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*--published 15 years later. These women took many of the first brutal backlashes against feminists and abolitionists, but even their names are barely known now. Sue Monk Kidd became fascinated by these sisters, and the question of what compelled them to risk certain fury and say with the full force of their convictions what others had not (or could not). She discovered that in 1803, when Sarah turned 11, her parents gave her the "human present" of 10-year-old Hetty to be her handmaid, and Sarah taught Hetty to read, an act of rebellion met with punishment so severe that the slave girl died of "an unspecified disease" shortly after her beating. Kidd knew then that she had to try to bring Hetty back to life ("I would imagine what might have been," she tells us), and she starts these girls' stories here, both cast in roles they despise. She trades chapters between their voices across decades, imagining the Grimké sisters' courageous metamorphosis and, perhaps more vitally, she gives Hetty her own life of struggle and transformation. Few characters have ever been so alive to me as Hetty and Sarah. Long after you finish this book, you'll feel its courageous heart beating inside your own. -- Mari Malcolm --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Inspired by the true story of early-nineteenth-century abolitionist and suffragist Sarah Grimké, Kidd paints a moving portrait of two women inextricably linked by the horrors of slavery. Sarah, daughter of a wealthy South Carolina plantation owner, exhibits an independent spirit and strong belief in the equality of all. Thwarted from her dreams of becoming a lawyer, she struggles throughout life to find an outlet for her convictions. Handful, a slave in the Grimké household, displays a sharp intellect and brave, rebellious disposition. She maintains a compliant exterior, while planning for a brighter future. Told in first person, the chapters alternate between the

two main characters— perspectives, as we follow their unlikely friendship (characterized by both respect and resentment) from childhood to middle age. While their pain and struggle cannot be equated, both women strive to be set free— Sarah from the bonds of patriarchy and Southern bigotry, and Handful from the inhuman bonds of slavery. Kidd is a master storyteller, and, with smooth and graceful prose, she immerses the reader in the lives of these fascinating women as they navigate religion, family drama, slave revolts, and the abolitionist movement. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Beginning with her phenomenally successful debut, *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002), Kidd's novels have found an intense readership among library patrons, who will be eager to get their hands on her latest one. --Kerri Price --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I want to add my voice to the legions who are disappointed in this purchase because of the Oprah comments. If I had known the book was going to be formatted this way, I NEVER would have bought it. EVER. Imagine sitting down to read one of your favorite authors, and just as the book is pulling you in, someone interrupts you. And then again. And again. It's HORRID. I wouldn't mind reading Ms. Winfrey's comments once I had a chance to enjoy the book and form my OWN impressions, but this is insulting. It speaks to the enormity of Ms. Winfrey's ego that she thinks her words are as important as the author's. I think should give all of us disgruntled customers a chance to buy another edition, and "credit" us the amount we spent on this travesty.

I would like to be able to eliminate Oprah's notes. They do not have importance to the interpretation of the text for this reader. Those comments get in the way of being able to read smoothly without interruption. I am really unhappy with the purchase of this e-book. I like the writing of Sue Monk Kidd and wish I had purchased this book in paper so that I could skip over Oprah's notes.

I was able to purchase the Kindle version without Oprah's notes. Search for: *The Invention of Wings* A Novel Kindle Edition. The version named "The Invention of Wings: A Novel" is clean. Or go to the Oprah Book Club edition and click on the plus sign next to the Kindle Edition in the Formats box, which has the pricing for hardcover, audio, etc. Click on the picture of the book jacket to "Look Inside" to ensure that you are purchasing the copy without underlined passages and blue ink. This version is \$11.99 as opposed to \$11.24 for the version with Oprah's notes. Thanks to readers who posted this information. I would not have found this version without their help.

As soon as I started reading this book I noticed it was riddled with these blue notes which threw me

off. After searching around I realized these were Oprah's notes. No where in the title or book cover did I see anything that suggested that this had Oprah's notes in it, so I returned the kindle book right away. I was very disappointed because I really like this author and wanted to read the book that SHE wrote and form my own opinions. Luckily a friend told me how I could get the book without Oprah's notes by pressing on the plus sign when ordering the book and getting the other edition. Now how many people are going to go back and do that, which is a shame, because so far it's a really good book without Oprah's input. Amazon I'm ashamed at you, you should know better and the ones your going to hurt by doing this is the author because people will be returning it the book once they figure out what they have or just won't buy it once the word gets out. I feel bad for the author it really is a good book.

I loved this story and I loved the writing. I am moved to explore more of the true story behind it. I wish it was available without Oprah's comments and highlights. It was annoying and difficult to navigate especially at the beginning. I am a diehard Kindle reader. I have four Kindles, but I would recommend a hardcover edition until an Oprah free edition is available.

I wish I could have gotten a kindle copy that didn't have Oprah's notes all over the place. I couldn't care less what Oprah thinks of this or any other book. It was very distracting to have her highlights and notes pop up all the time and then have to struggle to get back the just the regular book. The book itself is wonderful. Just don't get the "Oprah" copy. I know I never will again.

Amazing in every way, Sue Monk Kidd manages to excel in storytelling, character, and an inspiring if sorrowful message in her latest, "The Invention of Wings". Wings is based loosely on the real-life story of Sarah Grimke, a Southern aristocrat whose father is a bigshot judge on South Carolina's Supreme Court, where Sarah wants to be eventually. She is given a slave (Handful) for her 11th birthday, which strikes the little firebrand as something ridiculous. How can someone OWN another person? She doesn't want the "gift" but she's forced to accept. From there, the story is set in motion and follows the two women as they struggle for a common goal: freedom. Handful, naturally, struggles for her freedom from bondage, and Sarah for her freedom from the misogynist oppression of pre-suffrage era sexism. She's taught how to needlepoint and play piano, but she escapes her constrained existence by getting into her father's forbidden library and dreaming of great things like abolition work. Kidd does a wonderful job portraying the barbarism of that time in American history and especially the horrid mistreatment of the slaves, graphically detailing whippings and other

abuses. She also intertwines the characters beautifully in almost a female version of Huckleberry Finn. I hadn't read Kidd's first book, but I will go back and read that based on my experience with Wings. I love books that explore deeper ideas than just entertaining plot. Wings explores ideas of freedom, gender roles, race relations, the law, and belief. The only other place I've seen this balance of emotion and ideas is in *The Book Thief* and the more recent *Now and at the Hour of Our Death*. Amazing all around!

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