



# The Invention of Wings

By Sue Monk Kidd

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## The Invention of Wings By Sue Monk Kidd

**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.

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

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*

### From [Booklist](#)

**\*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

### Review

#### Praise for *The Invention of Wings*

"A remarkable novel that heightened my sense of what it meant to be a woman – slave or free . . . a conversation changer." – Oprah Winfrey, *O, The Oprah Magazine*

"Exhilarating. . . powerful. . . By humanizing these formidable women, *The Invention of Wings* furthers our essential understanding of what has happened among us as Americans – and why it still matters." – *The*

*Washington Post*

“A textured masterpiece, quietly yet powerfully poking our consciences and our consciousness . . . leaves us feeling uplifted and hopeful.” – NPR

“A searing and soaring story of two women bound together as mistress and slave.” – *USA Today*

“Kidd has managed to avoid both condescension and cliché, creating an unforgettable character in the slave Handful, the emotional core of her utterly engaging third novel.” – *The Boston Globe*

“If this isn’t an American classic-to-be, I don’t know what is. . .this book is as close to perfect as any I’ve ever read.” – *The Dallas Morning News*

“A powerful story of rebellion and heroism. . .The remarkable courage and hope found in *The Invention of Wings* is a reminder that we all have those wings – and tells us a lot more about how we got them.” – *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Kidd has done a marvelous job of capturing two special and vibrant voices. . . I can’t recall reading a book about slavery that presented in such vivid and heartbreaking detail just what the daily life and labor felt like.” – *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“A total revelation. . .the book is balanced by two extraordinary women: real-life abolitionist and feminist Sarah Grimké and the imagined handmaiden Handful, who nearly leaps off every page.” – Patrick Bass, *Essence*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Jeffrey Barclay:**

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book titled *The Invention of Wings*? Maybe it is to be best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have various other opinion?

#### **Mary Grubb:**

What do you regarding book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you require something to explain what the ones you have problem? How about your free time? Or are you busy man or woman? If you don't have spare time to accomplish others business, it is gives you the sense of being bored faster. And you have extra time? What did you do? Every individual has many questions above. They must answer that question due to the fact just their can do this. It said that about guide. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on guardería until university need this *The Invention of Wings* to read.

**Cheryl Alexander:**

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