

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Sue Monk Kidd's novel The Invention of Wings

Hardcover novel published by Viking, a division of Penguin
Group, New York, 2014.

Novel ISBN: 978-0-670-02478-0

Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the hardcover edition of *The Invention of Wings*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion was written by Rona Arato, Anne Isenberg, and Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed. Herbert is the founder of Bookclub-in-a-Box and an international speaker with more than 30 years experience as a teacher and school librarian. Bookclub-in-a-Box is a unique guide to current fiction and classic literature intended for book club discussions, educational study seminars, and personal pleasure. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for The Invention of Wings

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Sue Monk Kidd's *The Invention of Wings*

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Readers and Leaders Guide

Each Bookclub-in-a-Box guide is clearly and effectively organized to give you information and ideas for a lively discussion, as well as to present the major highlights of the novel. The format, with a Table of Contents, allows you to pick and choose the specific points you wish to talk about. It does not have to be used in any prescribed order. In fact, it is meant to support, not determine, your discussion.

You Choose What to Use.

You may find that some information is repeated in more than one section and may be cross-referenced so as to provide insight on the same idea from different angles.

The guide is formatted to give you extra space to make your own notes.

How to Begin

Relax and look forward to enjoying your book club.

With Bookclub-in-a-Box as your behind the scenes support, there is little for you to do in the way of preparation.

Some readers like to review the guide after reading the novel; some before. Either way, the guide is all you will need as a companion for your discussion. You may find that the guide's interpretation, information, and background have sparked other ideas not included.

Having read the novel and armed with Bookclub-in-a-Box, you will be well prepared to lead or guide or listen to the discussion at hand.

Lastly, if you need some more "hands on" support, feel free to contact us.

What to Look For

Each Bookclub-in-a-Box guide is divided into easy-to-use sections, which include points on characters, themes, writing style and structure, literary or historical background, author information, and other pertinent features unique to the novel being discussed. These may vary slightly from guide to guide.

INTERPRETATION OF EACH NOVEL REFLECTS THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX TEAM.

Do We Need to Agree?

THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS NO.

If we have sparked a discussion or a debate on certain points, then we are happy. We invite you to share your group's alternative findings and experiences. You can contact us via our website (www.bookclubinabox.com), by email (info@bookclubinabox.com), or by phone (1-866-578-5571). We would love to hear from you.

Discussion Starters

There are as many ways to begin a book club discussion as there are members in your group. If you are an experienced group, you will already have your favorite ways to begin. If you are a newly formed group or a group looking for new ideas, here are some suggestions.

- Ask for people's impressions of the novel. (This will give you some idea about which parts of the unit to focus on.)
- Identify a favorite or major character.
- Identify a favorite or major idea.
- Begin with a powerful or pertinent quote. (Not necessarily from the novel.)
- Discuss the historical information of the novel. (Not applicable to all novels.)
- If this author is familiar to the group, discuss the range of his/her work and where this novel stands in that range.
- Use the discussion topics and questions in the Bookclub-in-a-Box guide.

If you have further suggestions for discussion starters, be sure to share them with us and we will share them with others.

Above All, Enjoy Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

There was a time in Africa when people could fly. Mauma told me this one night when I was ten years old. She said, “Handful, your granny-mauma saw it for herself. She say they flew over trees and clouds. She say they flew like blackbirds. When we came here, we left that magic behind.”

My mamma was shrewd. She didn’t get any reading and writing like me. Everything she knew came from living on the scarce side of mercy. She looked at my face, how it flowed with sorrow and doubt, and she said, “You don’t believe me? Where you think these shoulder blades of yours come from, girl?” (p.3)

Ten-year-old Hetty “Handful” Grimké is an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston. She is given to the Grimké’s daughter, Sarah, on Sarah’s eleventh birthday. Sarah, however, has a mind of her own and does not want to “own” another human being. She believes she is meant to do something big and important in life. When she tries to free Hetty, her parents intervene and the two girls become bonded in a relationship that will span thirty-five years. Sarah defies her parents and her society by becoming an abolitionist. In this, she is joined by her younger sister Angelina. Together they become pioneers in the abolitionist and human rights movements.

notes

The story is based in part on the historic figure of Sarah Grimké. Kidd uses the character of Hetty and Hetty's servitude in juxtaposition to Sarah's liberal leanings. Hetty's mother, Charlotte, is a fearless and cunning woman who records her family's history on a quilt that she keeps hidden from her masters while her lover, Denmark Versey, a free black man, plans a slave uprising that ends in disaster.

The Invention of Wings is about self-discovery and a striving for freedom that overcomes heartbreak, rejection, and societal restrictions.

Author Information

- Sue Monk Kidd was born August 12, 1948, in Sylvester, Georgia. She trained and worked as a registered nurse. She was always interested in writing and so, in her forties, she took writing courses. Her first published work was a personal essay that was eventually reprinted in *Reader's Digest*. Her first two books were spiritual memoirs about her experiences in contemplative Christianity — interior and personal meditation. She wrote a third memoir, which focused on her own ideas of feminist theology.
- Kidd's first fiction was *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002), a story set in the years of the Civil Rights Movement (1964). Her second novel was *The Mermaid Chair* (2005). Both of these stories have been adapted into films.
- She has also published a memoir with her daughter, Ann Kidd Taylor, about their travels to sacred sites in Greece, Turkey, and France, called *Traveling with Pomegranates: A Mother and Daughter Journey to the Sacred Places of Greece, Turkey, and France* (2009).
- Kidd's third novel, *The Invention of Wings* (2014), is based on the life of Sarah Grimké, a 19th-century abolitionist and pioneer of women's rights. In writing this novel, she wanted to move to an understanding of the very roots of racism, especially with the thought that slavery existed in the United States for more years than Abolition. The legacy of slav-



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Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guide.**

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