

January 10, 2026

# Book & Bake

## Characters

### Hetty Handful Grimke

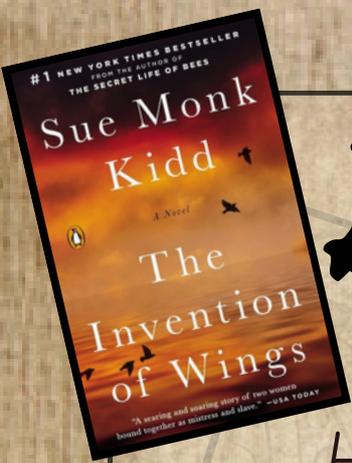


- One of many slaves owned by the Grimke family; daughter to Charlotte
- Ten years old; given to Sarah as a gift for her 11<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Intelligent - learns to read easily (taught by Sarah Grimke, illegally)
- Talented - excellent seamstress like her mother
- Brave, thoughtful - understands that her body is enslaved but her mind is free
- Joins the group of slaves planning revolt under the leadership of Denmark Vesey



### Sarah Moore Grimke (1792-1873)

- One of 14 Grimke children; receives Handful as a personal slave for her 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Witnesses traumatic event (beating of family slave, Rosetta) at age four which and loses her ability to speak; this speech impediment remains with her
- Loved books and learning from them yet forbidden to read after expressing her repulsion of slavery and desire to have a profession (lawyer) like her brothers
- Defies societal and legal expectations by affirming her personal beliefs
- Leaves Charleston and becomes a Quaker with hopes of becoming a Quaker minister....becomes an abolitionist and women's rights advocate



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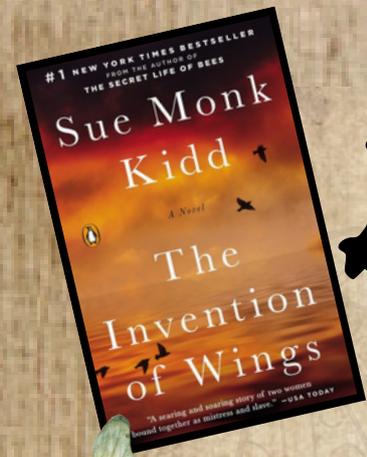
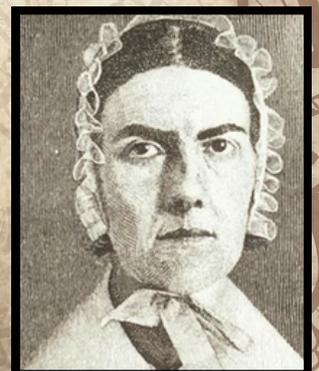
### Charlotte Summer Grimke (Mauma)

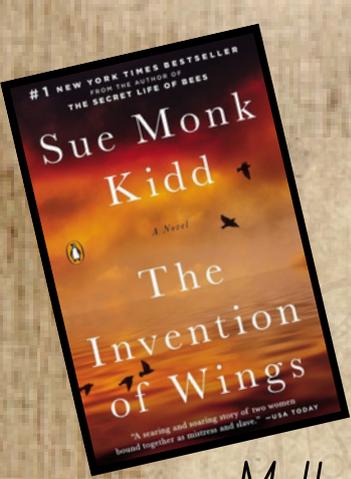


- Mother of Handful, family slave, head seamstress to the Grimke family
- Raises Handful to be independent-minded, strong, and mindful of family connections using the story quilt as a tool...and, teaches Handful that her identity is outside of slavery
- In an adulterous relationship with Denmark Vesey, a free Black man, demonstrating a desire for romance and her longing for freedom
- Attempts for freedom fail; yet she dies knowing she has given Handful the mental tools for freedom someday.

### Angelina (Nina) Grimke (1805 - 1979)

- Sister and Godchild to Sarah Grimke; 12 years younger than Sarah
- Headstrong, well spoken, and determined to rebel against societal norms; considered a "doer" by her sister, Sarah
- Eventually leaves Charleston to join Sarah in the north
- Marries abolitionist Theodore Weld yet never abandons Sarah or the work of ending slavery and women's rights





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Mary Grimke (Missus) 1764-1839



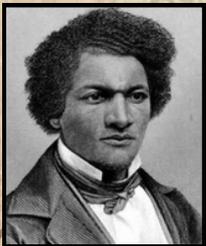
- Mother to Sarah and Nina
- Harsh to slaves and a stickler to propriety and status of the upper ranks of Charleston society
- Never swayed by Sarah and Nina's arguments, yet remains faithful to them as family
- "The truth," she said, "is that every girl must have ambition knocked out of her for her own good. You are unusual only in your determination to fight what is inevitable. You resisted and so it came to this, to being broken like a horse." (p. 81)

John Faucheraud Grimke (1752 - 1819)

- Master of the Grimke plantation, father to Sarah and Nina, husband to Mary
- Favored Sarah, allowing access to his library until she reveals her ambitions and teaches Handful to read
- Judge in Charleston; ruined by accusations of bias

Denmark Vesey

- Free Black man
- Known to have three wives plus mistresses
- Carpenter
- Organized rebellion of slaves in Charleston; hung



# Thematically Speaking...

Power of friendship and the complexities that come with it.

In what way can the friendship between Handful and Sarah be seen as...

- A blessing of gifts
- A burden and responsibility



**In what way does Sue Monk Kidd use the friendship between Handful and Sarah as a tool for the reader? What can we learn?**

*"People say love gets fouled by a difference big as ours. I didn't know for sure whether Miss Sarah's feelings came from love or guilt. I didn't know whether mine came from love or a need to be safe. She loved me and pitied me. And I loved her and used her. It never was a simple thing. That day, our hearts were Pure as they ever would get." -Handful, p. 54*

**How does the above quote highlight the complexities of their friendship?**

## Voice and Silence

Sarah and Handful live in a time where women are decoration and Blacks are considered 3/5 of a person.

**How did these two girls/women (along with other women in the novel) push back against social norms when their voices are silenced?**

Both Sarah and Handful struggle to have their voices heard.

**In what ways do they find or lose their voices, and how does this reflect larger societal issues?**

# Symbolically Speaking...

## Sarah's Silver Button

- What do you think the button represents to Sarah?
- Why do you think Handful retrieved Sarah's button from the fire?



## Charlotte's Story Quilt

- How does Charlotte use the story quilt as her voice?
- How can the story quilt be a symbol of hope for Handful?
- In what way does Charlotte use black triangles?
- How does quilting and sewing serve both as a symbol of conformity and a means of resistance?



## Red Thread

- Rebellion
- Spirit Tree
- Power/self-worth





"The truth is that every girl must have ambition knocked out of her for her own good."

1. How do the mother figures of Mauma (Charlotte) and Mary Grimke shape their daughters' lives and beliefs?

"Aint nobody can write down in a book what you worth."

What contrasts do you see between them?



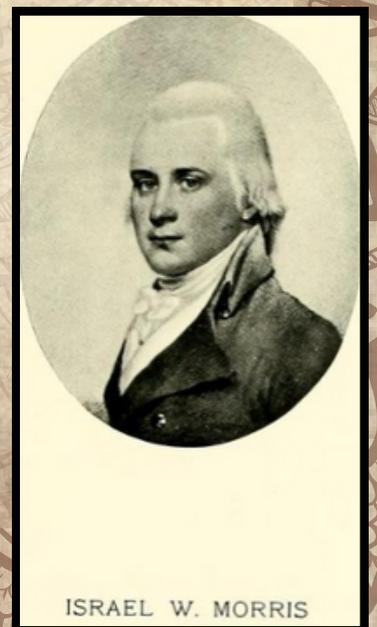
2 What do you think Sarah means when she says, "Nina was one wing, I was the other." (p. 308)



3 The way people are raised can impact them in positive and negative ways. Think about how "Little Mary" treated the slaves harshly, just like her mother, while other Grimke children did not....why is that if they were all raised in the same household?



4 How did your opinion of Israel Morris shift as his story arc progressed? What about his sister? (women oppressing women)



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5 Mary Grimke believes in following tradition and thinks running the household and keeping strict order over everyone, including slaves, is her duty. Is she a product of her time, or does she bear full responsibility for her cruelty? Can we separate the person from the system, or not?

6 Do you agree with Sarah's decision to put her cause before personal happiness, or could she have balanced both? What do you think this says about women's choices today?



7 What are your thoughts about Nina choosing to wed even though she felt as strongly about their causes as Sarah?

8 Reflect upon the context of the novel.....What does it mean to invent wings, and how do different characters in the book invent wings? How do we invent wings today?

