



Summary

Born in West Africa in the mid-eighteenth century, Maryam Prescilla Grace—a.k.a “Momma Grace” will live a long, wondrous life marked by hardship, oppression, opportunity, and love. Though she will be “gifted” various names, her birth name is known to her alone. Over the course of 100-plus years, she survives capture, enslavement by several property owners, the Atlantic crossing when she is only eleven years of age, and a brief stint as a pirate’s ward, acting as both a spy and a translator.

Maryam learns midwifery from a Caribbean-born wise woman, whose “craft” combines curated techniques and medicines from African, Indigenous, and European women. Those midwifery skills allow her to sometimes transcend the racial and class barriers of her enslavement, as she walks the razor’s edge trying to balance the lives and health of her own people with the cruel economic mandates of the slave holders, who view infants born in bondage not as flesh-and-blood children but as investment property.

Throughout her triumphant and tumultuous life Maryam gains and loses her homeland, her family, her culture, her husband, her lovers, and her children. Yet as the decades pass, this tenacious woman never loses her sense of self.



About the Author

Sheila Williams was born in Columbus, Ohio in a year that's none of your business. She is a reformed corporate borg (she drank the Kool-Aid but it made her sick), loves to read, listen to music (most kinds), travel and eat popcorn, preferably served dripping with butter. Sheila lives in northern Kentucky.

Sheila is the author of *Dancing on the Edge of the Roof*, *On the Right Side of a Dream*, *The Shade of My Own Tree* and *Girls Most Likely*. She is a contributor to an anthology entitled *A Letter For My Mother*, compiled and edited by her friend, writer Nina Foxx.

Discussion Questions

- How did the author blend historical facts and fiction in this book? Did you find the book accurate and authentic?
- How did the author portray the historical setting and period of this book? Did you learn anything new or interesting about the time and place of the story?
- Did the author use any historical sources or references in this book? Did you find them helpful and credible?
- Did this book challenge or change your perspective on any historical events or figures? Did it make you want to learn more about them?
- How did this book relate to your own life experiences or interests in the present day?
- If you could travel back in time to the historical setting and period of this book, what would you do or see?
- Who was your favorite character and why?
- Which character did you find the most complex or intriguing and why?
- How did the main character(s) change or grow throughout the story?
- How did the secondary characters impact or influence the main character(s) or story?
- Which character did you relate to or empathize with the most and why?
- Which character did you dislike or disagree with the most and why?
- How did the author create conflict and tension in the book? What was the main conflict or problem in the story and how was it resolved?
- How did the author keep you interested or surprised throughout the story?
- What was the most memorable or shocking scene or twist in the story and why?

Discussion Questions cont'd

- What was the most satisfying or disappointing part of the story and why?
- How did you feel about the ending? Was it satisfying or did you want more?
- What were the main themes or messages of the book and how did they relate to the story?
- How did the book make you think or feel about a certain topic or issue?
- What did you learn from the book or what did it teach you about yourself or others?
- How did the book challenge or change your perspective or opinion on something?
- How relevant or relatable are the themes or messages of the book to your own life, or to society today?