

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features a profile of a person's head and shoulders, rendered in a painterly style with visible brushstrokes. The colors are a mix of warm and cool tones, including reds, oranges, yellows, greens, and blues, creating a textured, layered effect. The text is overlaid on this background.

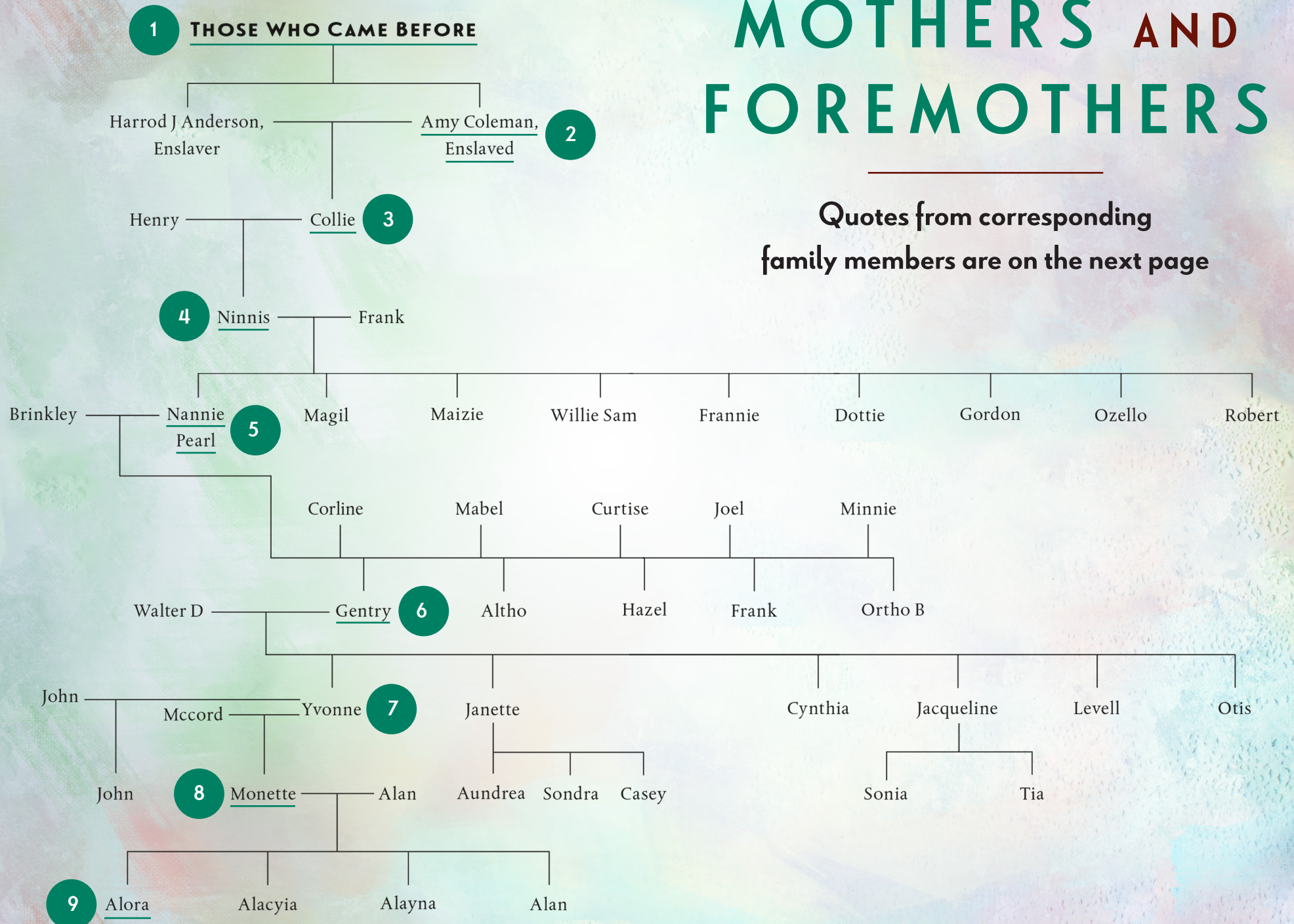
WALKING GENTRY HOME

BOOK
CLUB KIT

ALORA YOUNG

MOTHERS AND FOREMOTHERS

Quotes from corresponding family members are on the next page



MOTHERS AND FOREMOTHERS

1. THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

“On my family tree I found two slaves. / One could be seen because she was freed early / One was left by a name in a will”

2. AMY

“Black girlhood is eternally laced with rhythm from the negro hymns Amy Coleman whispered as she bore her enslaver’s child.”

3. COLLIE

“Collie and Henry / were distant from what the traditions / of-black folks past indicated. / They were married. / And they were free.”

4. NINNIS

“Ninnis married Frank the same year she gave birth to Nannie Pearl. / by now, this was beginning to look like my family’s legacy, shotgun weddings. / Her family, / fresh off the heels of freedom / still lived on a farm in Haywood county.”

5. NANNIE PEARL

“She learned to read and write, / tend house, / and for the first time in our family’s history, / she attended school. / She lived amidst a fluffy of siblings / and they lived on their own land.”

6. GENTRY

“Gentry sat a bright young girl / and admired her momma’s prowess for business. / She learned the lesson, / ‘if you don’t own this land, it will own you.’ / She learned that land was money, was power, / was doing anything a man could do.”

7. YVONNE

“Yvonne was the life of the party. / And when she was ready to leave / she would sneak out the back door, / and the fire would fade / before anyone had time to realize / what had changed.”

8. MONETTE

“My momma played double dutch / My momma was a beauty queen / My momma was a prodigy / My momma couldn’t sit at lunch counters / She was born in the year 1970”

9. ALORA

“They say I’m the culmination of a thousand generations of brilliant women, prayers, internal warfare, deferred dreams.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. “My ancestry was lost / in chains and boats across the seas / Am I aristocracy? / Do I belong to a great nation?” Discuss the questions she poses in these lines, and how slavery’s erasure of family history and roots affects the author.
2. Young writes, “In Halls, I am the bearer of a prophecy . . . They say I’m the culmination of a thousand generations of brilliant women, prayers, internal warfare, deferred dreams. . . . And because I bear this prophecy, I think it’s my fault every time one of their dreams dies.” Discuss the weight of these expectations, and how they could be helpful and harmful.
3. Why do you think the author chose to write this memoir in verse? How might it be different if she had written a standard, chronological memoir in prose?
4. Throughout the book, Young returns to the theme of shotgun weddings—and of her foremothers becoming mothers when they’re just girls themselves. “I am from five generations of shotgun weddings / Of women with stronger wombs than wits.” Why do you think this cycle repeated itself? What outside factors contributed? How did Alora break the cycle for herself?
5. Which poem, image, or line from the book has stayed with you the most? Why?
6. Young writes about all of the Black, female genius that has been lost to history for various reasons: Racism (then and now), the lack of someone to record that history, being overshadowed (“we all remember Rosa but we forget Claudette”), and more. What is the author saying about who we remember and who we forget? How did this make you think differently about the importance of storytelling and memory?
7. Collie, Young’s fourth great-grandmother, was born to a slaver and an enslaved woman, Amy. “I wonder if Collie ever looked at her skin like I do and thought about how it was the color of abuse,” Young writes. Discuss what she means by this.
8. Of all the women she writes about, why do you think Young chose to name her book for Gentry? What aspects of Gentry’s story resonated with you?
9. *Walking Gentry Home* contains a richness of references, from personal and historical to Greek mythology and popular culture. How do these references and allusions influence your reading experience?
10. How does Young address concepts that can be difficult to talk about, like colorism and domestic violence?
11. Discuss the poem about Monette’s Miss Halls pageant. Where do you see similar injustices playing out today?
12. One of the overarching themes of *Walking Gentry Home* is girlhood: Of running from it, of not being allowed to experience it, of missing out on it for any number of reasons. How did it make you think differently about girlhood?
13. “Burn your textbooks if they tell you there’s nothing / More to change.” What does Young mean by this?
14. Young writes both about famous Black women in history—Madam C. J. Walker and Ida B. Wells; Shirley Chisholm and Claudette Colvin; Aretha Franklin and Beyoncé—and the non-famous women in her own family. Why is it important to tell the stories of “regular” women alongside historical changemakers?
15. How did *Walking Gentry Home* make you think differently—or more deeply—about your own family line? How will you bear the responsibility of recording your family’s stories?



HOGARTH