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ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison is a well known African American writer who is famous for winning important awards due to her creativity and talent. In the first chapter, we collected the most important aspects about Toni Morrison's life and beginning in her career. We describe Toni's early years, her school days and how her family influenced the love for reading and writing, and her development and consolidation as a famous writer.

In the second chapter, we present a deep analysis of her Nobel Prize winner novel, Beloved, through its main characters: Sethe, Beloved, Denver, Paul D, and Baby Suggs. Likewise, we review the times and settings where the novel takes place. Also, because the novel is narrated through flashbacks and without chronological order, we have a character map which helps us to understand the complexity of the novel.

The next chapters, three and four, contain historical events in Toni Morrison's time which influenced her to write such amazing works. In chapter three, we describe events related to how African American people fought to obtain equal rights in the

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American society of that time. Also, we made a recounting of people, including presidents and leaders, who have contributed to desegregate barriers that prohibited the African American's free development. Finally, chapter four shows how the times mentioned above are reflected in her works. In order to make this chapter we considered Toni's greatest works: The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved and Jazz.

Key words: African American, awards, Nobel Prize, flashbacks, chronological order, equal rights, American society, desegregation.

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A STUDY OF TONI MORRISON'S BEST FICTION
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to our beloved God and our families who encouraged us morally to finish our career and accomplish our goal.

With affection

Heidy and Sandra

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INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison is a multifaceted author of contemporary literature. She has helped to change a restricted, predominantly white and male-centered literary world into a multicultural mosaic. A native of Lorain, Ohio, and daughter of Southerners from Georgia and Alabama who migrated to the north in the early part of the twentieth century, she grew up as a black girl in the restricted society of that time in the United States. Her infancy was important in developing Toni's interest in literature, and her passion for writing. Storytelling, songs, ghost stories, dreams, and the everyday language of ghettos which surrounded Toni, made her conscious of the value of her roots.

This investigation represents for us a different perspective from what we had already learned about

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slavery. This project is very important because it expands and redefines American Literature through a study of Toni Morrison's work. Her work represents her experience as an African American woman. For this reason, our investigation is focused on the life, time and influence of Toni Morrison in the 20th century. Toni Morrison's biography describes the most important influences that she received and how they contributed to the developing of her career as a recognized writer around the world. Moreover, her creative vision and talent helped her to win significant awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize for Literature on October 7, 1993. She became the first African American woman to win such important prizes.

Toni Morrison wrote many novels, such as The Bluest Eye and Sula which attained worldwide fame only after the publication of Beloved in 1987. Beloved is

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Toni Morrison's fifth novel, and her most technically sophisticated work to date. The novel is inspired by the true story of an African American slave woman, Margaret Garner, who was known to have killed her own daughter rather than seeing the child return to slavery. Through this novel, Morrison claims her own freedom, and contributes to the expansion of her folklore. Many historians have written about slavery but Toni felt that nobody had described slavery from the slaves' point of view or from slaves' narratives. Likewise, she dedicates the novel "*to the sixty million and more*" slaves to commemorate the victims of two centuries of slavery in the United States. Many of these slaves did not escape drowning, disease, whipping, mutilation, burning, rape, starvation and other horrors. She writes the novel in order to recover details of slavery and reconnect herself with her black ancestors.

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Toni reminds her people that the history of slavery is not their burden but rather a heritage they should not abandon. The last part of this analysis is focused on historical events of Toni Morrison's time and how they are reflected in her novels. As we mentioned before, Toni grew up and lived at the time when the United States was changing; however, there were lots of restrictions on black people. Toni, as many other black writers of that time, faced difficulties in publishing her novels. At those times, people did not think that African American people could produce any significant work. Toni fought for her American dream and it helped to produce wonderful works rich in language, and full of black heritage. Toni is not only influenced by her own history but by her ancestors' too. Many of her novels are set in the pre-civil war and Civil War up to World War II and the Vietnam War. Moreover, Toni has

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always been politically active and in some occasions
she has been part of the United States history.

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CHAPTER I

TONI MORRISON'S BIOGRAPHY



Toni Morrison, African American Nobel Prize winner.

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1.1. TONI MORRISON'S BIRTH, FAMILY AND HERITAGE.

Toni Morrison was born on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio. Lorain is close to the Ohio River. During the time of slavery, the river was used to help slaves escape through the *Underground Railroad*ⁱ. The slaves travelled by night because it was very dangerous go during the day: they were afraid of being recaptured or killed. For this reason, there are large black communities in Lorain. Years later, Toni's family, the Woffords, settled in this city and formed part of the black community. When Toni Morrison was born, her parents named her Chloe Anthony Wofford. It was her original name, and she used it until she went to the University. She was the second of four children, and her parents were George and Ramah Wofford. Both of her parents were Southerners from Alabama and Georgia. They came from *sharecropping families*ⁱⁱ who had

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moved to the North in pursuit of better living conditions in the early 1900s.

Toni's maternal grandparents were Ardelia and John Salomon Willis. They also had been sharecroppers in Greenville, Alabama. In the late 1890s they were cheated by white people who paid little for their land of 88 acres. The family accumulated a big debt which they could never pay. This experience made them think that there were not opportunities for Negroes in America. The family lived in constant poverty, and the grandfather had to look for other jobs. In order to earn some money, John Salomon moved to Birmingham, Alabama. He worked as a musician playing the violin and sent his earnings to his wife. Meanwhile, his wife, Ardelia, was alone with her daughters in Alabama. In those times a dangerous business appeared: catching and selling girls, and sexual exploitation, in the South



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was common. Ardelia was afraid of white boys who began to look at her girls. She decided to move from that place and sent a message to her husband: *“We’re heading north on the midnight train. If you ever want to see us again, you’ll be on that train.”ⁱⁱⁱ*

When Salomon met his family on the train, they went to Kentucky where John worked in a coal mine and Ardelia did other people’s laundry. Their daughters went to a one-room school, and the teacher was a 16-year-old white girl. One day, Ardelia’s daughters came back from school, and one of them told her parents that she had taught long division to her teacher. Ardelia turned to her husband and said that they had to move. It was because in those times white people did not accept the fact that black children were sometimes smarter than their teachers. The family continued to the North, and finally they settled in Lorain.

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Toni's father, George Wofford, was a hardworking man. He had terrible experiences with white people, and he received shocking impressions of adult whites when he was a child. For these reasons, he decided to keep white people completely out of his life. In contrast, Ramah Wofford, Toni's mother, was open-minded and patient when she had to deal with white people. She was a more educated and trusting person than her husband. She had a different point of view concerning race relations.

Although Toni's parents had experienced racial troubles since they were children and they had different points of view about racism, it did not affect Toni's attitude toward whites. In addition, it did not influence the way she saw the lives of African Americans either. She grew up in a lively house, surrounded by songs, fairy tales, ghost stories, myths, and the language of



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her African American heritage. Storytelling was a common tradition in her family. It was the main form of family entertainment and everyone participated. They listened to stories and created them. Later, this pastime contributed to Toni's love of reading and writing. In the end, these experiences helped her create magnificent literary works.

1.2. TONI MORRISON'S EARLY YEARS.

The first years of the life of great literary personages are usually very important in developing them as writers or poets, and Toni Morrison is not the exception. She was born when the United States was in the midst of the Great Depression, and it was a difficult time for her family because unemployment was high. Although times were hard, Toni's childhood was full of



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happiness, dreams and her African roots. Ramah Wofford, Toni's mother, belonged to the church choir and used to sing jazz, blues, gospel and opera around the house. Her mother was part of a book club in spite of their lack of money. She taught Toni that books were a treasure and that to be cultivated literarily was more important than wealth.

Also, the supernatural had a place in their lives; they talked about dreams as something that really happened. Toni's grandmother had a book which she used to interpret dreams and play with numbers. Toni also absorbed stories about her maternal grandparents, John Salomon and Ardelia Willis, who emigrated from Alabama in 1912. It was from them that she heard stories about what it was like to grow up in the South: her great-grandparents were slaves before the Civil War. Her family was very dependent on one another,

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and everyone in her family had to work and take his or her responsibilities seriously. When Toni's grandfather got older, he sometimes became confused and went away from home; and Toni had to find him and bring him back. When her grandmother was dying, Toni sat by her bedside and read to her passages from the Bible. These experiences taught Toni that children also have to take care of adults. When she was thirteen-years-old, she had an after-school-job cleaning a house for a white family in order to help with the family's finances. All her African American folklore, myths, and traditions were just one part of her education. The other part was given to her by her parents who started teaching her, her first letters at home.

The influences in her life not only included listening to family stories but also growing up in an ethnically and

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racially diverse community. Toni learned to read at an early age, and she was the only child in the first grade class who could read at the beginning of the school year. She went to school with German, Irish, Italian, Greek, Mexican and African American children. This diversity of cultures gave her a wide vision of the world and made her understand the situation of blacks at that time, even though she was very young.

1.3. TONI MORRISON'S EDUCATION.

Toni Morrison's parents encouraged her passion for reading, learning, and culture, as well as her confidence in her own abilities and attributes as a woman. She read everything. When she was a teenager, she used to read translations of classic French and Russian novels. Later, Toni started to read



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classical literature, including Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy and Jane Austen. She was fascinated with some authors because of the way they presented their African roots in their writing. She graduated from Lorain High School in 1949 where she completed four years of Latin and finished high school with honors. After high school, Toni's family expected her to find a job, get married and settle down. However, she surprised her family by insisting on leaving Lorain to obtain a college degree. Although her parents rejected this idea at the beginning because there was not enough money to support her studies, they finally accepted her decision. Her father paid for her college by working at three jobs, and her mother worked in "embarrassing jobs" in order to help her go to college and to graduate.



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1.3.1. TONI MORRISON AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY

After graduation, Toni Morrison attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. She went there in order to study for a degree in English. She studied under strong African American spokesman such as poet Sterling Brown, and philosopher and critic Alain Locke a Scholar who edited The New Negro. Most of the students who attended this university were African American people. For this reason, she picked Howard; she thought it would be full of intelligent black students who would stimulate her mind. But she felt disappointed when she realized that the school was all about getting married, buying clothes and going to parties instead of learning new things about African American culture. Moreover, she did not feel



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comfortable at all because among the literary works she read, there was only literature from white men and women; and she wanted more black literature to read and study.

Toni was the first woman in her family who attended college. At Howard University, she changed her name, Chloe, to the nickname Toni. It was because her original name was difficult to pronounce. Then she became a member of the Howard University Players, a campus theatre group. She saw the South for the first time while she was performing some plays on a tour with a student group of her university. This trip was very important to her because through it she could see her family roots. In 1953 she graduated with a



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bachelor's degree in English and a minor in Classics.^{iv}

1.3.2. TONI MORRISON AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY.

After Toni got her bachelor's degree in English, at Howard University, she started to think about what she was going to do. She did not want to go back home again, but on the other hand, she had nowhere else to go. She decided to attend Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, for a graduate degree in English. She spent long hours studying in the library. Finally, she completed her master's thesis about the deaths of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, and in 1955 she received a master's degree in English. Her degrees qualified



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her to teach. Years later, she became a professor and taught Humanities and English at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. She worked there for two years. Years later, her experience in teaching would contribute to her career as a writer. ^v

1.4 TONI MORRISON'S MARRIAGE

In 1957, after Toni became a professor, she returned to Howard University to teach English. At Howard, she met Harold Morrison, a young architect from Jamaica who was teaching there. The couple fell in love and one year later they got married. In 1961 Tony and Harold had their first son, a child called Harold like his father, but their parents called him by his middle name, Ford. Toni never imagined that her



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marriage would be the most difficult period of her life with a lot of cultural differences between them. Her suffering increased, and her need to write increased, too. Due to her loneliness she needed the company of other people who appreciated literature as much as she did in order to escape from the difficulties of her relationship. She had not thought about becoming a writer, but from the time she was a child her main interests were reading and writing. For that reason, she joined a small writers group at Howard University in 1962.

In spite of Toni's efforts to improve the relationship, her marriage had many problems. In 1964 she was expecting her second child, and she left her job at Howard University. During that summer, she, her husband Harold and their son Ford went to Europe.

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There, the couple realized that their marriage had deteriorated, and it culminated in divorce. Toni did not like to talk about her unhappy marriage; but, in an interview with a reporter of the New York Times, she mentioned some of the difficulties of their relationship:

“Women in Jamaica are very subservient in their marriages”, she said. “They never challenge their husbands. I was a constant nuisance to mine. He didn’t need me making judgments about him, which I did. A lot.”^{vi}

Toni was facing the hardest period of her life. Harold Morrison returned to Jamaica, and Toni continued looking after her son. It was not easy for her to survive alone with a small son, a baby on the way and no job. As a consequence of this, she returned to



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her parents' house in Lorain, Ohio. Her second son, Slade Kevin Morrison, was born four years after his brother Ford. In Toni's family, to end a marriage was not common. Her great-grandmother, her grandmother and her mother had enjoyed long and happy marriages. Unfortunately, Toni did not have the same luck as other women in her family. Her sons were always the most important part of her life: this was the main reason why she never got married again. She thought that it would be painful for her children to have a stepfather. She worked hard to overcome that stage of her life and also she was enjoying her freedom and making her own decisions.

After about a year and a half, in the fall of 1964, Morrison's life began to change, and opportunities were coming. Toni found a job in The New York Review of Books for an editing position with a textbook publisher

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of Random House, a large publishing company, in Syracuse, New York. She obtained the job, and she and her sons moved to Syracuse in 1965. While working all day, her sons were cared for a housekeeper, and in the evening she cooked dinner and played with the boys until their bedtime. When her sons were asleep, she started writing. She found writing exciting and challenging. It was in Syracuse that she began to get serious about writing.^{vii}

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Toni Morrison with her two sons: Ford (left) and Slade Kevin Morrison. She dedicated her second novel, Sula, to them.

1.5 TONI MORRISON'S TEACHING AND WRITING

With a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Howard University and a Master of Arts degree in English from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, Toni had the necessary requisites to be a teacher. She accepted a position of teaching Humanities and English

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at Texas Southern University in Houston for two years. In 1957 she returned to Howard University in Washington DC to teach English. Working at that place, she discovered her passion for writing and joined the university writers' group. This group was made up of about ten writers, mostly poets, who met once a month to read and criticize each other's work. Their only rule was that everyone had to bring something they had written to read at each meeting. Toni shared with the group stories that she had begun to write in high school. One month she did not have any story to share with the group. So she wrote a story about an African American girl who imagined that her life would change only if she could have blue eyes and blond hair. She read the story to her writers' group and got positive responses from some of the members. After the meeting, she put the story aside. She had no plans to do anything else with



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it. While she was working as a senior editor at Random House in New York, her feeling for writing increased, and she decided to develop her short story into a novel. Her first novel was titled The Bluest Eyes and was published in 1970.

Toni loved to read, listen to and tell stories but she never thought about writing books. One reason was that there were very few books written by African Americans. Many of them were talented writers, but publishing companies were owned by whites. They believed that white readers would not be interested in books about African Americans' lives, and they did not believe there were enough educated black people around to read books written by Blacks. Back in the 1920s, many Southern Blacks had moved to the North to escape the violent racism of the South. At that time, quite a few African American authors had managed to



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get their books published, but many of these authors and their books had been forgotten.

One year later, Toni published her first novel. Then she accepted a position as a visiting professor of English at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Purchase. She agreed to teach there for that school year while she continued working at Random House. In 1976 she was invited to be part of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, as a visiting professor for the 1976 – 1977 school year. Her classes on the technique of fiction and the writings of African American women were scheduled on Fridays. The schedule gave her time to continue working as an editor the rest of the week.

In 1983 Toni decided to leave her textbook editor position at Random House after twenty years in that special place. In 1984 she was named *Albert*

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Schweitzer Professor^{viii} of the Humanities at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany. She was selected by the New York State Writers Institute at SUNY Albany to write a play. For a writer such as Toni Morrison to change her sequence of writing novels to writing a play was a challenge. However, her good writing skills helped her to create excellent dialogues. She started to write her first play, Dreaming Emmett. This play was based on a true story of an African American teenager, Emmet Till, from Chicago. The story took place in Sumner County, Mississippi, during the summer of 1955. Emmet Till was a fourteen year old boy who had been beaten, mutilated and shouted at twice by racist white men after being accused of whistling at a white woman. In Toni's play, Till became a symbol for the high number of deaths that African American youths suffered from white racist people.

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Dreaming Emmett was performed on January 4, 1986, at the Marketplace Theater in Albany in honor of the first celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

In January 1989 Toni left her position as professor at the SUNY in Albany and went to Princeton University, where she was named the Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Council of Humanities. With this distinction, she became the first black woman writer to hold a named chair at the Ivy League University. The chief executive officer of a department at a major university is called a chair. It is usually more prestigious to have a named chair which is established to honor someone important from the university. Robert F. Goheen had been president at Princeton University. Toni occupied this position from 1989 until her retirement in 2006.

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1.6 TONI MORRISON'S CAREER TAKES FLIGHT.

Toni began her successful career when she became a senior editor at Random House. She was the first African American woman to hold this position. As a well respected editor, she used her influence to help black writers publish their works. She enjoyed her profession as a teacher. Working with young people and discovering their creative talents were some of her passions. Her career as a writer took flight with the publication of her first novel The Bluest Eye. However, there was a problem with the publication of that book. On the cover, the author's name read "Toni Morrison", not "Chloe Anthony Morrison" because the editor knew her as Toni Morrison. It was too late to change her name on the cover and since that time she has kept that name on her works.

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Working as an editor in the daytime and writing at night, Toni started her second novel. It took two and one half years to write a complex tale in which she focused on a friendship between two adult black women. Sula was published in 1973, and it gave Toni her first major public recognition. Sula was nominated for the National Book Award. After that book, she put her writing on hold, and she decided to focus on editing. In spite of her hard life, Toni made time to write her third novel, Song of Solomon, published in 1977. In this novel she mixed different elements: myth, fantasy, and folklore, in which Milkman Dead tried to find a bag of gold connected to his family's past; but instead of finding gold, he discovered his family's history. The man's search for his heritage brought Toni national and international recognition as a writer. In 1981 Toni's fourth novel, Tar Baby, was published. The book was



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set on a beautiful Caribbean island. The novel was about the love between Jadine Childs, a black model who was educated in Europe, and Son Green, a convict who hated white culture. In her story, Toni explores the meaning of the racial fears sometimes felt by both whites and blacks. Her novel was a bestseller for four months.

Toni wrote one of her greatest works Beloved, which is considered one of the most important writings of African American literature. This novel was praised in a magazine article. It is about a slave woman, Margaret Garner, who escaped with her children to Ohio from her master in Kentucky. When she was going to be recaptured, she murdered her little child. In Beloved the story takes place in Cincinnati, Ohio, a few years after slavery had ended. Sethe was the mother who murdered her two-year-old daughter to protect her from



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slavery. The daughter's spirit returns as a mysterious young woman, and Sethe believes that the woman is the murdered child who has returned to earth to take revenge. The mixture of realism and fantasy made Beloved a bestseller at the time of its publication in 1987.

In addition to the most popular and important works of Toni, in 1992 she wrote Jazz. The story is about Joe Trace and his wife Violet, two middle-aged sharecroppers. They moved to Harlem, a New York City neighborhood that is a center of black life and culture. There Joe met his lover, Dorcas, an eighteen-year-old girl who was assassinated by him when she tried to leave him. The word "jazz" does not appear in the book, but at that time New York was an important jazz place. In this novel, Toni combined the history and music of Harlem life in the 1920's. She was inspired to write

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about that time period because of the stories her parents had told her about the time when they were younger.

1.7 TONI MORRISON AS A LITERARY PERSONAGE.

Many people have only faint memories of their childhood. However, Toni's memories are vivid, and they helped her create amazing literary works. Her stories paint a picture of the African American community. She represents black culture in her writing, using fiction to show readers how African American people live and act. As a child, she was fascinated by the speech of ordinary black people. The people around her believed in magic and visits from spirits. They mixed their language with Biblical passages, preaching, and street slang. Years later, she absorbed all of this and included it in her novels.

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Becoming a fiction writer was never Toni's ambition. Her professors always encouraged her creativity, although she preferred to read rather than to compose. It was not until she was a young wife that she decided to make a break in her routine, and she joined a writing workshop. As mentioned, she wrote a short story in order to have something to share with the group. This became her first novel, The Bluest Eye, which was not published until she was thirty-nine-years-old. Many people consider that she had a slow start in her career; however, she accomplished much more than they knew. As we know, she had taught for several years at major universities, and also she had a solid career as an editor at Random House, a large publishing company. As a professor, she taught and wrote important critical essays, and as an editor, she helped to bring the work of other black writers to print.

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Among these black authors were Muhammad Ali, Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis, and Gayl Jones. By 1970, newspapers and magazines asked for her opinion about books written by black people. Between 1971 and 1972, she received 28 books to edit and publish. Moreover, she wrote an important essay on the women's liberation movement for The New York Times. Also, she worked on a project whereby she planned to put together a book that tells the history of African Americans from the point of view of common African American people. She worked very hard for eighteen months, collecting old newspapers, song lyrics, photographs, advertisements, patent office records and excerpts from slaves' narratives. It was not easy to accomplish this task, but in 1974 that collection was published and was titled The Black Book. Middleton A. Harris appeared as the primary author on the cover of



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the book. Three other contributors, Morris Levitt, Roger Furman and Ernest Smith, were listed on the title page, but Toni's name did not appear anywhere on that book even though she was the one who came up with the idea for the project.

Many people have tried to explain Toni's writings with long explanations that are not sufficient to show what she is trying to represent through her novels. In her works, telling the truth about culture is more important than having a happy ending. She also stresses the idea that connections with our ancestors are very important. Her works usually include characters filled with emotions. They often have unusual names: Milkman Dead, Chicken Little, BoyBoy, Son, and First Corinthians. Most of the time, the events in her stories are not told in order. Instead, she frequently uses *flashbacks*.^{ix} In fact, her novels reflect



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her desire to draw on the people, places, language, values and cultural traditions of African American people. Her novels are made for us to feel rather than to understand.

1.8 A BRIEF OUTLINE OF TONI MORRISON'S LITERARY AWARDS.

Toni's decision to devote her life to writing has established her as a giant in American and African American literature.

- In 1975 her second novel, Sula, was nominated for a National Book Award. In the same year Toni won the Ohioana Book Award.
- Her third novel, Song of Solomon had great financial success. Over three million copies were sold, and the book was on The New York Times

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best seller list for sixteen weeks. In 1977 Song of Solomon won The National Critics Circle Award in Fiction and The American Institute of Arts and Letters Award. For Toni, to deal with fame was a new experience. *“Being a writer I’m used to being the observer, not the other way around,” she said.*^x

- At SUNY Albany, her play, Dreaming Emmett, inspired from a true story of an African American boy, won the New York State Governor’s Art Award in 1986.
- On April 1, 1988, Morrison was selected to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Robert F. Kennedy Award for her greatest fiction work Beloved. The Pulitzer Prizes are a group of awards that have been presented yearly since 1917. The prizes are given for achievement by



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Americans in literature, drama, music, and journalism.

- On October 7, 1993, Morrison was notified that she had won the Nobel Prize for literature. In the announcement, the Nobel committee cited three books that had played a significant role in its decision: Song of Solomon, Beloved and Jazz.
- On February 15, 1995, the New York chapter of Women in Communications announced the names of the select people who would receive the Matrix Awards. The Matrix Awards were established in 1970 to honor women who have distinguished themselves in the field of communications. Toni Morrison was selected to receive the year's award for the category of books.



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- On March 2, 1995, Toni Morrison was feted by her soul mate, Howard University, and awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. More than one thousand people attended the occasion.

Recognition and monetary success have been the rewards of Morrison's hard work, but they have never been a goal. *"There's a difference between writing for a living and writing for life," Morrison told her creative writing students. "If you write for a living, you make enormous compromises, and you might not ever be able to uncompromise yourself. If you write for life, you'll work hard; you'll do it in a disciplined fashion; you'll do what's honest, not what pays".^{xi}*

During an interview Morrison shared her definition of a novel. *"A novel ought to confront important ideas, call them historical or political, it's the same thing" she said.*

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“But it has another requirement, and it is art. And that should be a beautiful thing.”^{xii}

1.9 TONI MORRISON AND THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE.



Swedish King Carl Gustaf XVI presents Toni Morrison with the Nobel Prize in Literature at a ceremony in Stockholm, Sweden.

The name of the Nobel Prize comes from its original founder, Alfred Nobel, a Swedish scientist. This

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Award is given every year to different people who have made a significant contribution to the world. Among its categories are the following: physics, chemistry, medicine or physiology, literature, and peace. The Nobel Prize in Literature is one of the world's highest prizes that a writer can win. The writers can not apply for this award. A list of nominees is suggested by writers, professors, previous Nobel winners, and writer's organizations. That list is given to the Swedish Academy of Literature in Stockholm, Sweden. After they have reviewed the list, the Academy chooses a winner. The Award is based on all of an author's work and is given annually to an author. Toni Morrison became the first black woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature. This Award represented one of the most important and proudest moments in Toni Morrison's life. The Nobel Foundation stated that Morrison "*gives life to*



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an essential aspect of American reality” through “novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import.”^{xiii}

The committee of the Academy made the decision to give Morrison the Award mainly for her three books Song of Salomon, Beloved, and Jazz.

It was the fall of October 7, 1993 and Princeton University, Morrison’s work place, was excited over the announcement of the new winner of the Nobel Prize in literature. Toni Morrison had woken up very early to write. It was about 7:00 am, when the telephone rang. One of her friends called her to congratulate her; she already knew that Morrison had won such an important prize. At the beginning, she thought there were terrible news but then she was very surprised; Morrison could not believe it, merely. Later that day, she received a call from the secretary of the Swedish Academy to confirm that she was the winner indeed. Morrison asked the

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secretary to send her a fax to read it and believe the new; otherwise, she could think it was just a dream or a hallucination. The amount of money she received was \$825,000 and she was the eighth woman and the first black woman to receive the prize at the age of 62 years old. When she arrived at her Princeton University office there were journalists everywhere and people who wanted to congratulate her. There were television cameras all over the place but she was a professor and she had students waiting for her in the classrooms. Toni Morrison was very happy because her mother, Ramah Wofford, was still alive to see her triumph as a writer. When she finally spoke to the reporters she said,

“This is a delight for me. It was wholly unexpected and so satisfying. But what is most wonderful for me personally is to know that the Prize at last has been



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awarded to an African American. I thank God that my mother is alive to see this day.”^{xiv}

Two months after receiving the notification from the Academy, she traveled to Stockholm, Sweden, to receive the award. Morrison’s sister, Lois, her nieces, and her sons, Ford and Slade traveled to Stockholm together with Toni. They arrived in the winter of December 6, when the lack of sun is evident in that northern country. The organizers of the Nobel Prize welcomed them and planned a week full of events, including dinners, concerts, and conferences. On Tuesday, Morrison had lunch at the American Embassy. Later, in the afternoon, the police escort took her to the Swedish Academy where she gave her lecture and received the Nobel Prize for Literature. She wore a black gown and began her lecture with a soft voice tone and with the traditional words that children

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hear when they listen to a tale: Once upon a time... and told the story of a woman who was both blind and wise. Her Nobel lecture was very emotional to the audience. There were about 400 people and she talked for half an hour. At the end she was rewarded with a standing ovation. The actual presentation was on Friday evening and, the festivities began with a trumpet fanfare and a procession led by Toni Morrison, who was escorted by the king of Sweden.

The Nobel Prize is very important in Morrison's life; however, everything was not happiness. After receiving the announcement of the Nobel Prize Academy, her brother died and sometime later her mother, Ramah Wofford, died too. Moreover, after her return to the United States, a fire destroyed Morrison's Hudson River home. She kept important manuscripts which she had promised to donate to the Schomburg

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Center for Research in Black Culture. Fortunately, the manuscripts were in a basement file cabinet and were not harmed.

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CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED WORK: BELOVED



Representation of Margaret Garner's capture

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

When Tar Baby was finished in 1981, Toni stopped writing novels. After four successful performances, she did not have any urgent reason to continue with her career as a writer. Beloved emerged when Toni accepted the editing of one of the most important projects of her career, The Black Book, in 1974. This book was a collection of nineteenth and twentieth century African American stories; it contains accounts of the experiences of ex-slaves who survived slavery and the oppression that came after it. Toni has said that the idea of Beloved was mainly inspired by two small fragments of stories about slave women.

During the process of writing The Black Book, Toni found a fragment of a newspaper about an incident in



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the 1850s. At that time, Margaret Garner, a fugitive slave woman from Kentucky, was caught and taken to jail by proslavery authorities in a small settlement outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. It was about ten o'clock on Sunday, January 27, 1856, when eight slaves who belonged to Archibald K Gaines, and John Marshall from Richwood Stations, Kentucky, escaped from their owners. They were pursued by Marshall and Gaines to the Mill Creek Bridge on the river road. The fugitives were celebrating a party in honor of their freedom when their owners and some officers surprised them with gun shots. The fugitive slaves tried to defend themselves, but the white officers forced them to go to a jail. At the corner of that place, there was a horrible scene. Margaret Garner stood holding a knife dripping with blood. By her side was her dead child whom she had killed. She cut the throat of the daughter who she



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probably loved the best, and then she tried to kill herself. Her desperation made her think about escaping, but when she saw her hopes vanishing, she decided to end her children's lives in order to avoid the pain of slavery again.^{xv}

Toni had said that she did not know what eventually happened to Margaret Garner. There are some reports, according to The Liberator in March 1856, that said that while Margaret was being shipped back to Kentucky, she jumped overboard with her baby. She was saved, but her baby drowned. Other reports in the Cincinnati Chronicle and the Philadelphia Press, confirmed that Margaret and her husband Robert worked in New Orleans and then on Judge Bonham's plantation in Mississippi until she died of typhoid fever in 1858. Margaret chose death for both herself and her most beloved rather than to accept being forced to



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return to slavery and see her child suffer. Later, the story of Margaret became the historical counterpart for the plot of Beloved, and was used to signify the extreme measures a person would take to escape bondage. Also, her case became a symbol for what Frederick Douglas called his “philosophy of reform” concerning the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law.^{xvi}

After reading the narrative of Margaret Garner, Toni found another interesting story. Toni links the above story fragment to another in Van Der Zee’s, The Harlem Book of the Dead. It’s an album which contains photographs of a Harlem funeral.

“In one picture, there was a young girl lying in a coffin and he (Van Der Zee) says that she was eighteen years old and she had gone to a party and that she was dancing and suddenly, she slumped and they noticed there was blood on her and they said, “What

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happened to you? And she said, "I'll tell you tomorrow.

"I'll tell you tomorrow." That's all she would say. And

apparently her ex-boyfriend or somebody who was

jealous had come into the party with a gun and a

silencer and shot her. And she kept saying "I'll tell you

tomorrow." Because she wanted him to get away. And

he did."^{xvii}

The newspaper fragment of Margaret Garner and Van Der Zee's photostory provided the historical or "real life" basis of the novel. Toni Morrison says that she does not know how she connected these two stories. However, something is clear for her: In both cases, a woman loves something more than herself, and she places all the value of her life on something outside of herself. Toni saw in Margaret's story how slavery denied black mothers the right to feel maternal love and how a mother becomes capable of making unthinkable

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sacrifices to protect her children. Beloved is not about slavery as an institution; it is about those anonymous people called slaves. This novel explores the effects of slavery on the characters and how they later became integrated into society after their emancipation.^{xviii}

Beloved is composed of flashbacks, memories and nightmares, and only at the end of the novel do the pieces of the puzzle fit together. The story is told by different characters. Some episodes are told by Sethe; others by Denver, Beloved, and Paul D. That is the reason why the novel changes its point of view repeatedly. Although the novel is not unified by time, place, character or point of view, it is clearly developed around its main theme: the necessity of dealing with the painful past of slavery. All the characters must deal with their history in order to heal themselves in the present and continue their recovery in the future.^{xix}

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2.2. CHARACTERS

The construction of the characters is based on their individual identities after slavery. The novel illustrates the characters' struggle to obtain a true sense of self and self-worth; a process that can only be successful if they work both individually and on a collective level. Margaret Garner provided the model for one of the main characters, "Sethe" which was historically true in essence. The heroine represents the acceptance of the consequences of choosing infanticide and the claiming of her own freedom. Moreover, Morrison makes the characters move from one place to another in order to discover what will happen then and why. In that way Toni Morrison compels the reader to become active rather than passive. The emphasis is on interpretation and not on the actual words of the narrative.

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2.2.1. LIST OF CHARACTERS

SETHE

Sethe was a black slave woman who was brought to a slave plantation in Kentucky named “Sweet Home” when she was a teenager. In Sweet Home she took for her husband a slave man named Halle Suggs and had four children: Buglar, Howard, Beloved, and Denver. Sethe ran away from Sweet Home when she was pregnant with Denver, her second daughter, but she was pursued by the Schoolteacher, the tyrannical master of the plantation. The love for her children and the fear she felt of slavery made her want to kill her children in order to keep them out of a terrible suffering. Murdering only her oldest



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daughter, Beloved, Sethe lived tortured from her past at 124 Bluestone Road, outside of Cincinnati with Denver and her lover Paul D.

BELOVED

Beloved was the ghost of the third child and oldest daughter of Sethe. She was killed at the age of two by her mother to protect her from slavery. Her resentful spirit haunted Sethe's house, first as a ghost and after that as a flesh and blood woman.

DENVER

Denver was the fourth and youngest child of Sethe. She was born on a boat when Sethe was running away from the Sweet Home Plantation. She was a lonely and isolated eighteen-year-old

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girl who focused her love and devotion on Beloved's spirit. At the end of the novel Denver became an independent woman getting a job and helping her mother.

HALLE SUGGS

Halle was the youngest son of Baby Suggs' eight children. He was the husband of Sethe and the father of all of her children. For years, Halle worked extra hours in order to save sufficient money to buy freedom for his mother. Halle witnessed the brutal mistreatment his wife suffered from the nephews of the Schoolteacher, the new owner of the Sweet Home Plantation. He planned to escape, but the escape plot was discovered and



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halted by the schoolteacher. Halle is never heard from again.

BABY SUGGS

Baby Suggs was the mother of Halle and Sethe's mother-in-law. After her son Halle bought her freedom she went to Cincinnati. Baby became a preacher for the black people of that community and provided a stabilizing force for Sethe and Denver.

BUGLAR AND HOWARD

Buglar and Howard were Sethe and Halle's sons. They were frightened because once, when the Schoolteacher went to catch them, their mother tried to kill them, but she failed. They were

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also afraid of Beloved's ghost. They left home shortly after Baby Suggs's death and never returned.

AMY DENVER

Amy Denver was a young white girl who worked as an indentured servant. Amy and Sethe met while they were running away from their masters. When she found Sethe, Amy helped to deliver Sethe's fourth child. For this reason Sethe named the baby, Denver, in her honor.

MR. BUDDY

Mr. Buddy was an inhuman person who mistreated his servant, Amy Denver, by beating her all the time. As a consequence of his actions, Amy ran away from him.

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MR. GARNER

Mr. Garner was the old owner of Sweet Home who treated his slaves humanely.

MRS. LILLIAN GARNER

Mrs. Garner was Mr. Garner's wife and treated Baby Suggs and Sethe kindly. She gave Sethe a pair of crystal earrings as a wedding gift, but she did not let her have a wedding because she thought that it would be inappropriate. After Mr. Garner's death, she became very ill and asked her cruel brother-in-law, the Schoolteacher, to run Sweet Home Plantation.



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PAUL F. GARNER

There were three slaves at Sweet Home Plantation called Paul: Paul F., Paul A. and Paul D. Paul F was one of the slaves and was sold to another farm to pay some debts that Mr. Garner had before he died.

PAUL D. GARNER

Paul D. Garner was a former slave from the Sweet Home Plantation and the last of the male slaves from the Plantation who remained alive after the physical and emotional horrors suffered during his life as a slave. He arrived at 124 Bluestone Road after eighteen years of separation from Sethe and tried to make a new life with her.



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PAUL A. GARNER

Paul A. was executed by the Schoolteacher after being caught when he tried to escape with Halle, Paul D, Sixo and Sethe. His death was a warning to the other slaves not to run away from the plantation.

SIXO

Sixo was another slave from Sweet Home Plantation. He found out how the Underground Railroad worked and started to think of a plan to escape from the plantation with his true love, Pasty. When he was trying to escape he was caught and burned alive by the Schoolteacher. He was considered courageous because while the flame was consuming his body he smiled, thinking



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about his unborn son who would be born into freedom.

PASTY

Pasty was also called the “The Thirty Mile Woman” because she lived on a plantation thirty miles away of distance from her boyfriend, Sixo. With the hope of having Sixo’s baby in a free place, she joined the slaves from Sweet Home while they were trying to escape. Unfortunately, the other slaves were caught by Schoolteacher, but she could escape.

THE SCHOOLTEACHER

The new overseer of Sweet Home Plantation after Mr. Garner’s death was the Schoolteacher.

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He was the widower of Mr. Garner's sister and was asked by Mrs. Garner to help her manage Sweet Home. He was a cruel master and treated slaves as animals. On the plantation he imposed rigid rules and punishments on the slaves who did not follow his wishes.

THE SCHOOLTEACHER'S NEPHEWS

The Schoolteacher's nephews were two white boys who arrived at Sweet Home with their cruel uncle. They were as merciless as their uncle when they abused Sethe and stole her milk while she was pregnant. The Schoolteacher never punished them for their terrible mistreatment of Sethe.

STAMP PAID

Stamp Paid, the husband of Vashti, was a former slave who belonged to the Underground



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Railroad and helped Sethe and Denver cross the Ohio River. For his devotion in helping fugitive slaves get freedom, he was considered by the African American community of Cincinnati as a figure of salvation. His original name was Joshua, but he renamed himself "Stamp Paid" due to a sacrifice made during his enslavement.

VASHTI

Vashti was Stamp Paid's wife. During her life as a slave, she was mistreated by her slaveholder and forced to have sex with her slaveholder's son.

EDWARD BODWIN

He was a white abolitionist who lived in Cincinnati, Ohio. Edward Bodwin worked for the



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Underground Railroad. He helped Baby Suggs settle in Cincinnati by letting her stay in his old family house. When Sethe was accused of killing her baby, Mr. Bodwin saved her from being hanged.

MISS BODWIN

Miss Bodwin was the unmarried sister of Mr. Bodwin. She showed a condescending interest in helping Denver experiment new things in her life. As a white abolitionist she had an important role in helping fugitive slaves get their freedom.

ELLA

Ella was one of the members of the Underground Railroad and a neighbor of Baby

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Suggs in Cincinnati. She helped Sethe and Denver find Baby Suggs' house when they arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her years as an adolescent were traumatized when a white man and his son brutalized her sexually. In the novel, Ella organized the women of the community to exorcise Beloved from Sethe's house.

LADY JONES

Lady Jones was a light skinned black woman who hated her race because it revealed her mixed heritage. In spite of her scorn for her race, she was a humane woman who thought about the unfortunate children of the community. Lady Jones was a friend of Denver and assisted her when she needed help.

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NELSON LORD

Nelson Lord was Denver's schoolmate. She left school when he revealed the tragic secret of Beloved's murder.

SAWYER

Sawyer was a white man who was the owner of a restaurant where Sethe worked as a cook.

REVEREND PIKE

The Reverend Pike was the minister of the Church of the Holy Redeemer in Cincinnati, Ohio.



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NAN

Nan was one of the women whose responsibility was to nurse and care for the children of the slaveholders and the slaves at the plantation. She crossed the ocean in the same ship that carried Sethe's mother from Africa. Sethe was cared by Nan when she was a little child, and she had more memories about Nan than her own mother.

MA'AM

She was Sethe's unnamed mother, who was taken from Africa. Ma'am could not spend time with her daughter, Sethe, due to the hard labor she had to do on the fields. She is killed when Sethe is only a little child.



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2.3 ANALYSIS OF BELOVED THROUGH THE MAIN CHARACTERS

SETHE

Sethe was a black woman and a former slave who was orphaned by the death of her slave parents. She was Halle's wife, who disappeared before the start of the novel; she was the mother of Buglar, Howard, Beloved, Denver, and later Paul D's lover. She tried to murder all four of her children to save them from slavery and succeeded in killing her oldest daughter. While she lived at 124 Bluestone Road outside of Cincinnati, Sethe was haunted by the ghost of her daughter, Beloved. During the novel, she worked as a seamstress and as a cook at Sawyer's house.

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Sethe Suggs was a strong woman who lived under an oppressive cultural and social system. Sethe was hurt severely by her mother's inability to care for her because of the slave environment in which they lived. She was taken from her mother as an infant and saw her mother only a few times in her life. As a result, she had only pitiful pieces of memories of her mother. Sethe's mother was one of the African slaves who experienced the Middle Pass from Africa to America. In the present time of the novel in Ohio in 1873, Sethe hardly remembers her mother,

"her own mother, who was pointed out to her by the eight-year-old child who watched over the young ones pointed her out as the one among many backs who turned away from her, stopping in a watery field. Patiently Sethe waited for this particular back to gain the row's end and stand. What she saw was a cloth hat

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*as opposed to a straw one, singularity enough in that
world of cooing women each of whom was called
Ma´ma”^{XX}*

This is mainly how she remembers her mother, simply as an image, a woman in a field with a stooped back who was wearing a cloth hat. Also, Sethe has other specific memories of this obscure mother, of what may have been her only interaction with her, following the two weeks the nameless Ma´ma was allowed to nurse her. She remembers that Ma´ma

*“picked me up and carried me behind the
smokehouse. Back there she opened up her dress front
and lifted her breast and pointed under it. Right on her
rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin. She
said, “This is your ma´ma. This and she pointed. “I am
the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If
something happens to me and you can´t tell me by my*

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face, you can know me by this mark.” Scared me so. All I could think of was how important this was and how I needed to have something important to say back, but I couldn’t think of anything so I just said what I thought. “Yes, Ma’ma,” I said. “But how will you know me? How will you know me? Mark me, too, “I said. “Mark the mark on me too.”^{XXI}

When she became an adult, she understood that her mother was constrained by slavery and literally unable to tend to her. However, as a child she could not understand the lack of attention from her mother herself. Her mother’s abandonment affected Sethe deeply and helps explain the choice she made as a mother. Sethe resolved not to do the same thing to her children. Sethe refused to leave them without a mother when they went away of Sweet Home ahead to the Ohio river, and she risked her own life to reach them.

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She did not want to face the reality that her children might be sent back into slavery. Sethe chose to free them through death rather than allow them to encounter even a portion of her past experiences. In Sethe's mind, killing her children to save them from slavery was the ultimate expression of a mother's love.

Slavery did not allow Sethe to nurture her children and to take care of her infants because they were taken from her in order to permit her to do slave labor. Additionally, she was separated from other slave women and could not learn about caring for her children. However, she knew milk was important for them; it was the only thing she could give her sons and daughters because she did not have money to buy things for them. When her milk was brutally stolen by the schoolteacher's nephews, she felt robbed of her ability to be a mother and nurture her children.

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Sethe is haunted not only by the ghost of her dead daughter but also by the memories of her life as a slave. The brutal whipping she received as punishment for her attempt to run away from Sweet Home plantation caused a scar on her back that was so deep and elaborate that it looked like a tree. When Sethe finally escaped from the schoolteacher's dominion she still was afraid to be caught, and for that reason Sethe gave Amy Denver a false name, "Lu", instead of her real name. Amy, a runaway white girl, described Sethe's back as a chokecherry tree:

"It's a tree, Lu, A chokeberry tree. See, here's she trunk- it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain't blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. What

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*God have in mind, I wonder. I had me some whippings,
but I don't remember nothing like that.*^{xxii}

The scars on Sethe's back symbolized the presence of her past which was carved permanently into her flesh. For Sethe, the past has the power to make her either a captive or free. Her feelings, hopes, desires, and perceptions were all connected with past incidents and events. Her preoccupation with the past made it impossible for her to process new experiences. Sethe had to learn to overcome the past to construct her future despite her sorrowful plight.

Sethe had been hurt by the physical brutality of the schoolteacher's nephews but she seemed even more deeply disturbed by the discovery that most white people viewed her as nothing more than an animal. Schoolteacher read and wrote about Sethe and her kind as subhuman things. He listed on a paper what he

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called “animal characteristics”. Sethe resolved that nobody on the earth was going to list her daughter’s characteristics on the animal side of the paper. She showed a strong personality through her determination to gain freedom and to give her children a free life. She escaped from Sweet Home and demonstrated the force of her will to overcome impossible circumstances; she would take desperate measures to keep her children from becoming slaves.

Sethe attempts to be a stable mother for her four children, even under the system of slavery. Sethe suffered many crimes inflicted upon her as well as the crimes she committed due to the violent and oppressive nature of slavery. Even though she believed she was acting reasonably and in good faith, Sethe’s recovery depends on her facing and dealing with her past. When she tried to leave the past behind, it came back to her



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embodied in the form of Beloved. Sethe tried to repair her past by giving everything to the child she had injured. Sethe's process of healing occurred when she acknowledged her act and accepted her responsibility. Perhaps, she was not guilty at all, but just a person who had suffered with very painful experiences. She remembered how her mother had killed the children fathered by white men who raped her. As Nan, Sethe's grandmother told her that her mother threw all of these children away without names, except for Sethe. At the end, Sethe was able to accept herself and became a symbol for all black people who had suffered from slavery or racism.

BELOVED

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There are some debates about the identity of Beloved. Some critics say that she was the spirit of Sethe's murdered daughter; others argue that she was a human woman who was mentally unstable. However, the most common interpretation of the Beloved character is that she was the spirit of Sethe's dead child, and, as Denver said, "*Something more.*"^{xxiii} During the course of the novel, Beloved is something different to everyone who comes into contact with her. Beloved's identity was as Sethe originally believed, that of an ordinary woman who was locked up by a white man and never let out of doors. Her limited linguistic ability, neediness, baby-soft skin, and emotional instability are explained by a lifetime spent in captivity. But these traits could also support the theory that Beloved is the embodied spirit of Sethe's dead daughter. Beloved was the age the baby would have



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been if she had lived. She first appeared to Sethe wet, as if she were newly born, and Sethe had the sensation of her water breaking when she saw her. Additionally, Beloved knew about a pair of earrings that Sethe had possessed long ago, and she hummed a song Sethe had composed for her children. Moreover, Beloved had a long scar under her chin where her death-wound would have been dealt, and her breath smelled like milk.

Beloved, first an infant ghost and then a reincarnated young woman, came back to haunt the mother who had murdered her. In fact, Beloved was the ghost and reincarnation of Sethe's older daughter, who was murdered by her mother to keep the child out of slavery. Angry over what had happened to her, Beloved came back as a ghost and haunted Sethe's

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house. With the ghost's presence, Sethe remembered her painful past all the time and had to deal with it; meanwhile Denver accepted the ghost and looked at it as if it were her best friend. When Paul D arrived at 124 Bluestone, Beloved got furious and it was almost impossible to live there. So, Paul D drove the infant ghost out of the house. Then she returned as a female intent on devouring Sethe. Because she was deprived of nurturing as an infant and felt betrayed by her mother, she had a deep need for love. When she returned to live at 124 Bluestone, she attempted to possess Sethe and almost devoured her in the process. She was so demanding of her mother's emotions that Sethe had nothing left over for Denver or herself.

Another interpretation of the character of Beloved is the representation of Sethe's dead mother. Because

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Sethe's mother came from Africa, the experience that Beloved remembered is also Sethe's mother's experience. Beloved is not only Sethe's daughter but her mother as well. Beloved told memories that corresponded to those that Sethe's mother might have had on her passage from Africa to America and, also she had a strange manner of speaking. Then during the novel, Sethe and Beloved changed roles; Beloved started acting as the mother and Sethe as the child. Beloved became so strong that Sethe found it almost impossible to care for her health. On a more general level, Beloved could also represent all of the slaves who had made the passage across the Atlantic. She gives voice to the collective unconsciousness of all those oppressed by slavery's history and legacy.

Because Beloved is supernatural and represents the spirits of many people, Morrison does not develop



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her character as an individual. Beloved acts as a force rather than a person, compelling Sethe, Denver, and Paul D to behave in certain ways. Beloved defines herself through Sethe's experiences and actions. In the beginning, she acts as a somewhat positive force, helping Sethe to face the past by asking her to tell stories about her life. In the end, however, Beloved's need to overwhelm and her attachment to Sethe become destructive.^{xxiv}

Beloved represents the past which returns to haunt the present. The characters' confrontations with Beloved are really complex. When Sethe was with Beloved, Sethe was frozen in the past. She devoted all her attention to make Beloved understand why she reacted to schoolteacher's arrival the way she did.

Beloved's presence was sweet and soft and at the

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same time it was destructive. Beloved inspired Sethe to tell the stories she never told. These stories were about her own feelings of abandonment by her mother, about the harshest indignities she suffered at Sweet Home, and about her motivations for murdering her daughter. When Sethe was engaged with her past, she began to learn about herself and also learned to live in the present.

Likewise, Beloved inspired the growth of other characters in the novel. For example, Paul D's hatred for Beloved never ceased; however, their strange, sexual encounter opened a door which allowed him to remember, feel, and love again. Moreover, Denver benefited from Beloved's presence indirectly. At first she felt an intense dependence on Beloved, but later Beloved's malevolent, temperamental, self-centered

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actions alerted Denver of the danger that Beloved represented. Beloved's tyranny over Sethe forced Denver to leave 124 and look for help in the community. Finally, Denver left 124 and it marked the beginning of her social integration and her search for independence.

"To the Sixty Million and more"; Morrison dedicated this novel to an estimated number of people who died in slavery. Beloved represented Sethe's unnamed child, and also the unnamed masses that died and were forgotten. Beloved served as the catalyst for change for Sethe, Paul D, Denver, and the community. Beloved became the symbol for the collective pain of the black community that had suffered the horror and pain of slavery and racism and who had been put aside and forgotten. In conclusion, in this novel, Morrison states that all these people are beloved as well.

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Although Beloved vanished at the end of the book, she was preserved by the inhabitants of the community through what they had learned about their painful past. Beloved represented a destructive and painful past, but she also showed the possibility of a brighter future. She gave the people of 124 the chance to engage in the memories they had suppressed. Through confrontation, the community reclaimed its past and learned from the forgotten and ignored memories.

DENVER

Denver represents the African American hope for the future and she experiences the most positive personal growth in Beloved. Moreover, she is the most dynamic character in the novel. She was shy,

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intelligent, introspective, sensitive, and inclined to spend hours alone in her “*emerald closet*,”^{XXV} Her mother, Sethe, considered Denver as a charmed but strong child; she seemed to be the only one to be able to overcome impossible circumstances. However, physical survival was not enough. Denver’s innocence was destroyed when she discovered what Sethe had done to her sister and what her mother apparently planned to do to her as well.

Because of the loss of her brothers and grandmother, Denver had been condemned emotionally to live in an isolated way for years. This solitude caused Denver to become an isolated and self-centered girl. Her attitude was very childlike even as a young woman. At eighteen, she acted much younger and had an intense fear of the world outside 124. Denver’s identity



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is defined in relation to Sethe and to her sister; first in the form of the baby ghost, then in the form of Beloved. When Paul D arrived at 124 Bluestone, Denver felt that she was being excluded from her family's attention. For example, when her mother devoted her energies to Paul D, Denver felt angry and she treated Paul D coldly most of the time. She behaved rudely towards Paul D. For example, Denver only wanted to hear stories about herself. Her immaturity demonstrated that Sethe was unable to escape from her past and that this past had also trapped her daughters. One daughter, Beloved, was dead and brought back the past as an infant ghost haunting their house. The other daughter, Denver, lived as a child and had never gone beyond her own yard.

Beloved's arrival at 124 marked the beginning of Denver's transformation. She finally had someone to



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devote herself to or someone to love. As Beloved gradually took over the house and Sethe, Denver recognized that the family's survival rested upon her shoulders. Denver was finally able to leave Sethe's world and begin her own life. Denver was forced to look beyond the world of 124. Filled with a sense of duty, purpose, and courage, she asked for the help of the community and cared for her sick mother and her ever more demanding sister. She received a series of lessons with Miss Bodwin and considered attending Oberlin College someday. By the end of the novel, Denver is a mature young woman who has become part of a larger community; she appears to have a future of love and family closeness ahead of her. Her last conversation with Paul D demonstrates her new maturity. She presents herself with more civility and sincerity than in the past.

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In the novel, the two sisters represented different perspectives of life. Beloved represented the need to forget, while Denver represented the loving view and the need to remember. In fact, Denver was the daughter of history and became the daughter of hope. Denver was the first to recognize that Beloved was the reincarnation of the infant ghost that haunted 124. She also was the first to understand the necessity of returning to life and of interacting with the community. In this way, she had to deal with and confront her past, and her mother's as well, in order to face the future, just as everyone in the novel, even though she was only interested in the present.

Denver experienced two crucial moments in the novel. The first one was when she went to the other side of the forest. She had not been there for many



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years, since the time she was a little child because she had isolated herself. The only places she knew about and needed were her house and the yard. This experience occurred when Denver had the first recognition of danger about Beloved in *“the Clearing”*^{xxvi}. It happened when Sethe went to commune with her dead mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, and suddenly she felt that someone was choking her.

“You did it, I saw you,” said Denver.

“What?”

“I saw your face. You made her choke.”

“I didn’t do it. “

“You told me you love her.”

“I fixed it, didn’t I? Didn’t I fix her neck?”

“After. After you choked her neck.”



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*"I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it. The circle of iron
choked it"*

"I saw you." Denver grabbed Beloved's arms.

*"Look out, girl," said Beloved and, snatching her arms
away, ran ahead as fast as she could along the stream
that sang on the other side of the woods.^{xxvii}*

After Denver got angry with Beloved and fought with her in the water for trying to kill Sethe, Denver went back home and reflected about how Beloved tried to choke her mother, Sethe. While she thought about that, she remembered the moment that had caused her isolation. She was only seven when she entered Mrs. Jones's classes. For a year, she attended school; there she learned to read and write. She was very happy about that and she did not care about her classmates who invented excuses for not talking to or walking next to her. One day, Nelson Lord, a classmate of her who

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was as smart as she was, asked questions about her mother. At this age, she decided not to answer these questions and did not ask her mother to explain. Instead, she preferred the comfort she received from the ghost. From that day, she never returned to school. The fact was she did not want to face her past even though she knew it was true. Reflecting on both the last incident in the Clearing and on the moment Nelson Lord ended her adventure in the world forever, Denver began the process of confronting her past.

As Beloved became more demanding, Denver realized that she might change her initial behavior towards Beloved. *“Anything she wanted she got, and when Sethe ran out of things to give her, Beloved invented desire”^{xxviii}* At the beginning, when Beloved arrived at 124, Denver’s goal was to protect her sister.

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Her initial choice was based on her fear of her mother because she knew that Sethe had killed one of her own daughters. Then Denver was altered when she noticed how Sethe was being consumed by Beloved.

“Then Sethe spit out something she had not eaten and it rocked Denver like gunshot. The job she started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved”^{xxix}

The second crucial moment in Denver’s life is when she assumed the responsibility of facing her own and her mother’s past. For all of the reasons mentioned before, Denver had to leave her house and ask for help in the community. As she did so, she recognized the long history of slave sufferings, and understood why her mother had acted in that way. While Denver stood on



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the steps, she remembered her grandmother's final words: *"Lay down your swords. This ain't a battle; it's a rout."*^{xxx} Then she received a visit from her dead grandmother, Baby Suggs. Baby Suggs made Denver reflect on her situation inside 124, and she advised Denver to leave 124 and face her past. Denver followed her advice. Denver began to understand and became a more mature girl.

PAUL D

Paul D was one of the most touching men in the novel. He was a kind and meditative man who never knew his parents. He was the last survivor of the males among the slaves of Sweet Home Plantation. While he was at Sweet Home, he wanted Sethe to become his wife. He lusted after Sethe and was sad when Sethe



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chose Halle for her husband instead of him. Mr. Garner was very kind to his slaves, and on one occasion he told Paul D he was a man, and gave him hope for a better future. Mr. Garner believed that Paul D would be able to protect and provide for his people. When Mr. Garner died, the schoolteacher arrived to be the new slaveholder and he stripped Paul D of all his human dignity. When he escaped from Sweet Home, Paul D had no idea how to be a man, and thus he wandered aimlessly for years.

Although Paul D was filled with passion and emotion, he had difficulty expressing his true feelings. Some time ago, he had watched all of his friends perish after trying to escape from Sweet Home Plantation. After that, he was sent to a chain gang prison camp where his heart was hardened, everyday more and

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more; he preferred not to love his people too much; in this way he would not suffer for them. He remembered the savage treatment he had suffered with ten other slaves while they were transported to a brutal prison for the crime of trying to kill Brandywine, the man who bought him from schoolteacher after Sweet Home. Then he was transferred to Kentucky and from this place to Virginia; then to Alfred, Georgia.^{xxxix}

During those years, he suffered a lot because he was sold to other places where he was obligated to do forced labor and other humiliating things. Paul D had to confront the problem of defining his manhood. As a slave, he was treated as property and on several occasions was forced to satisfy his owners' sexual desires. Each morning, the white guards made the black men get down on their knees, and some of them

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were chosen to perform oral sex on the guards before beginning the day. After eighty-six days of the cruel sentence, the prisoners escaped. They ran away to a Cherokee camp where the Native Americans helped them and released them from their leg irons. The Cherokee, like their black brothers, knew the suffering generated by Whites and generously shared mush, tools, and information about the trail of blossoms that would lead Paul D to freedom.

“Paul D finally woke up and, admitting his ignorance, asked how he might get North. Free North. Magical North. Welcoming, benevolent North. The Cherokee smiled and looked around. The flood rains of a month ago had turned everything to steam blossoms. “That way,” he said, pointing. “Follow the tree flowers,” he said. “Only the tree flowers. As they go, you go. You will be where you want to be when they are gone.”” xxxii

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Once they felt secure, the survivors discussed alternatives about where to start a new life. Paul D was the last to make a decision, and a month after his escape, he headed north to Delaware where he was taken in by a weaver lady, and lived with her some years.^{xxxiii}

Through many years of being without any contact with Sethe, Paul D arrived at 124 Bluestone Road. In a conversation, Sethe revealed some memories of her life: the catastrophic events that caused her to escape from Sweet Home; she also revealed that her oldest girl had died, but did not tell him that it was she who had cut her daughter's throat. Paul D was touched by Sethe's experience as a slave by the scars on Sethe's back. He became Sethe's lover after eighteen years of separation. Paul D told her he had never found anyone

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to love truly because his heart had become hardened. The ghost of Sethe's dead daughter, who haunted her house, reacted angrily to Sethe and Paul D's closeness. Paul D authoritatively banished the ghost and exorcised the house. As a result, Sethe asked him to stay with her permanently.^{xxxiv}

At the beginning, Denver did not accept him at all. She thought he was going to affect her relationship with her mother. Moreover, Paul D exorcised the house and took the ghost, who was Denver's only company, away. Then they started to look at the future and Paul D helped Sethe and Denver to start a new life. Because he came from her past and they shared some of the experiences that haunted her, Sethe could open herself up to Paul D. She found some relief in sharing her memories. In order to ease the tension, Paul D invited

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Sethe and Denver to go to a carnival, but upon their return, they found Beloved. This event stopped Sethe's movement toward what Paul D represented, a hope of constructing a future together. Intelligent and perceptive, Paul D recognized the danger of Beloved's presence but was unable to do anything about it. ^{xxxv}

When Paul D had begun to be accepted, Beloved appeared and tried to separate him from Sethe. Beloved was asking for stories all the time, waiting for Sethe's arrival, and occupying Paul D's place in Sethe's bed; each time she demanded more and more. Paul D started to feel apart from Sethe, and one autumn night, Beloved seduced him until Paul D could not stand it anymore. Paul D was involved with Beloved during three months. Then he felt guilty for being unfaithful to Sethe. He tried to tell Sethe the truth, but instead he

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asked her to have a baby, and could not confront his guilt.

After all this happened, things were worse at 124 Bluestone. Stamp Paid showed him an old newspaper about Sethe's infanticide. He confronted Sethe and said, "*your love is too thick*"^{xxxvi}. She responded by telling him "*love is or it ain't*". Although Paul D lived with the philosophy of "*Don't love nothing*", he knew what she meant: to get to a place where they could choose without asking permission. Also, he told her she acted like an animal instead of a person. It hurt Sethe a lot. When he found out that Sethe had murdered her oldest daughter, he deserted Sethe's house.



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His decision made him miserable, and he drank to put away the pain. Later, he returned to help Sethe find wholeness. Whereas Sethe's past continued to dominate her, Paul D had begun to move beyond his past and to envision a future of hope. His entrance into Sethe's life represented the potential for a happier future for her and Denver. Paul D provided a healing force for Sethe, offering her the possibility of a brighter future. At the end of the novel, he convinced her that she was her own best thing. By loving and accepting her, he also healed himself.^{xxxvii}

"Sethe," he says, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."

He leans over and takes her hand. With the other he touches her face. "You your best thing, Sethe. You



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are.” His holding fingers are holding hers. “Me?

Me?^{xxxviii}

BABY SUGGS

Baby Suggs is Halle’s mother and Sethe’s mother-in-law. She lived sixty years as a slave and lost eight of her sons. They were sold and she never saw them again. She did not know if they were sold or if they died because they were taken from her from the time they were very young. The only child who stayed with her during the Sweet Home time was Halle, her eighth and favorite child, whom Mr. Garner bought when he bought Baby Suggs, too, from Carolina to assist his wife with kitchen chores. Halle was only ten when he arrived at Sweet Home and cost more than his mother who had been a real bargain because of her hurt hip.



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Sweet Home was not as big as the places Baby Suggs had been before. Mr. Garner, Mrs. Garner, the three Pauls, Sixo, Halle, and Baby Suggs were the only inhabitants of that place. The Garners did not let Baby Suggs work in the field. They never mistreated their slaves or called them offensive names. They gave them a special kind of slavery: they treated them like paid labor, listened to what they said, taught them what they wanted know. In fact, Baby Suggs and the other slaves ran Sweet Home and enjoyed their lives there. It worried Baby Suggs because she thought that if they were sold to another farm, they would suffer. The pain in Baby Suggs' hip was increasing over the years. It bothered Halle so much that he persuaded Mr. Garner to let him hire himself out on Sundays to pay for his mother's freedom. Garner, who usually protected his slaves at Sweet Home, agreed to the arrangement. In



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her 60s, Baby Suggs received her emancipation papers. She thought it was her opportunity to ask for something she had wanted to ask for a long time before leaving Sweet Home. She asked Mr. Garner why they called her “Jenny”. Then, before The Garners delivered her to the Bodwins in Cincinnati, they revealed that Baby Suggs’ bill of sale name was Jenny Whitlow.

“Mr. Garner,” she said, “why you all call me
Jenny?”

“Cause that what’s on your sales ticket, gal. Ain’t
that your name? what you call yourself?”

“Nothing”, she said. “I don’t call myself nothing.”

Mr. Garner went red with laughter. “When I took
you out of Carolina, Whitlow called you Jenny . Didn’t
he call you Jenny?”

“No, sir. If he did I didn’t hear it.”



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“What did you answer to?” “Anything, but Suggs is what my husband name.” “Is that Halle’s daddy?” “No, sir.”

“Why you call him Suggs, then?” “Suggs is my name, sir. From my husband. He didn’t call me Jenny.”

What he call you?” “Baby.”

“Well,” said Mr. Garner, going pink again, “If I was you I’d stick to Jenny Whitlow. Mrs. Baby Suggs ain’t no name for a freed Negro”^{xxxix}

“The benevolent masters often did more harm than good”^{xl}. This phrase was Baby Suggs’ opinion about the Garners. A clear example of that is shown through Mr. Garner’s relationship with his slaves. Although Mr. Garner never abused or mistreated them, he did not prepare his slaves for the harsh world outside Sweet



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Home. By playing God and creating an artificial paradise, Garner ill-prepared his slaves for the shock of the new master, one disinterested in humanitarianism, concerned primarily with his own profit. Another revelation was Mr. Garner's opinion about Baby Suggs's slave name. It was her only tie with her first mate in a row of eight children. He thought it was undignified and also inappropriate for Halle, who had another slave father. Garner reevaluated Baby Suggs' experiences as a mother and wife by saying that Jenny Whitlow was a better name for a freed Negro. However, Baby Suggs decided to keep her decision of not changing her name.

Mr. Garner took her to the Bodwins' house. There, they offered her some money to work as a washwoman, seamstress, and canner. Also, they offered their old

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grandparents' house to Baby Suggs which was at 124 Bluestone. After two years of freedom, she received good news. Halle had gotten married and a baby was coming. Then she dedicated herself to support the community necessity of loving themselves by preaching in a place in the woods called "The Clearing."

Deep in Baby Suggs' memories, she recalled Sethe's arrival at 124 Bluestone in Cincinnati, Ohio. One summer night, Ella and John delivered her two grandchildren and a little girl, who was still crawling, to Baby Suggs' door. Two feelings emerged from her breast; the first was happiness and the other was fear. She felt happiness because she had met her first and only three grandchildren; however, she feared not to see Halle and Sethe again. She worried because nobody had escaped alone. It was almost impossible. They had been caught like animals or they had lost their



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way. The last option was the worst because if they lost their way, they could be lost forever and die.

When Sethe arrived with another baby in her arms, Baby Suggs was really happy. They decided to prepare something delicious to have a big party. She invited her congregation of ninety people to celebrate with her. It was a huge feast and they cooked the best desserts and meals for her guests. In the midst of the event, ill feelings began to grow toward Baby Suggs and her family. The neighbors who were at the party grew envious and jealous of her. Of her two-story-house, her well, and her relationship with the Bodwins, the local Quaker abolitionists who let her live at 124. They decided that Baby Suggs had not suffered as they had.^{xli}

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The next day, while Stamp Paid helped her with the housekeeping after the great party, Baby Suggs began to feel that something was going to happen. She thought maybe she had offended their friends by giving them too much and that they felt humiliated by the excess. Baby Suggs was betrayed by her community and nobody warned her that the schoolteacher and his nephews were approaching to catch Sethe and her sons again. After that, Baby Suggs lost her faith in people and that led her to an internal world without any force to live. Without having any reason to live and after Sethe had killed her daughter, Baby Suggs left herself die some years later.^{xlii}

In African American folk religion, preachers are called to their profession; they become workers in Christ's vineyard. So, Baby Suggs becomes "holy", and

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uses the form of religious rituals to impart advice to the community. She is a woman of words and her verbal skills are admired, and at the same time enviable. The respect given to Baby Suggs is demonstrated not only among the crowd at “the Clearing” but also in her house since it is a way station on the Underground Railroad and a general community center. The healing ritual has three stages: the first stage is the repression of memories that occur from the traumas of slavery; the second stage is the reconciliation of the person with these memories; and the third stage is the metaphor of “the Clearing” a symbolic rebirth of the sufferer. Although the neighbors become angry with her later, they do not erase the significance of the position she has historically held among them. ^{xliii}

When Denver decides she must leave the house to save her mother from madness and from Beloved,

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she fears and doubts herself. However, she is encouraged by Baby Suggs' presence although she is dead. Baby's words conjure the history of her family's struggle for survival and freedom, and Denver says:

But you said there was no defense.

"There's ain't."

Then what do I do?"

"Know it, and go on out the yard. Go on"^{xliv}

Although Baby Suggs decided not to struggle at the end of her life, her knowledge and spirit, and the knowledge of her past, made it possible for Denver to become valiant and go out into the world.^{xlv}



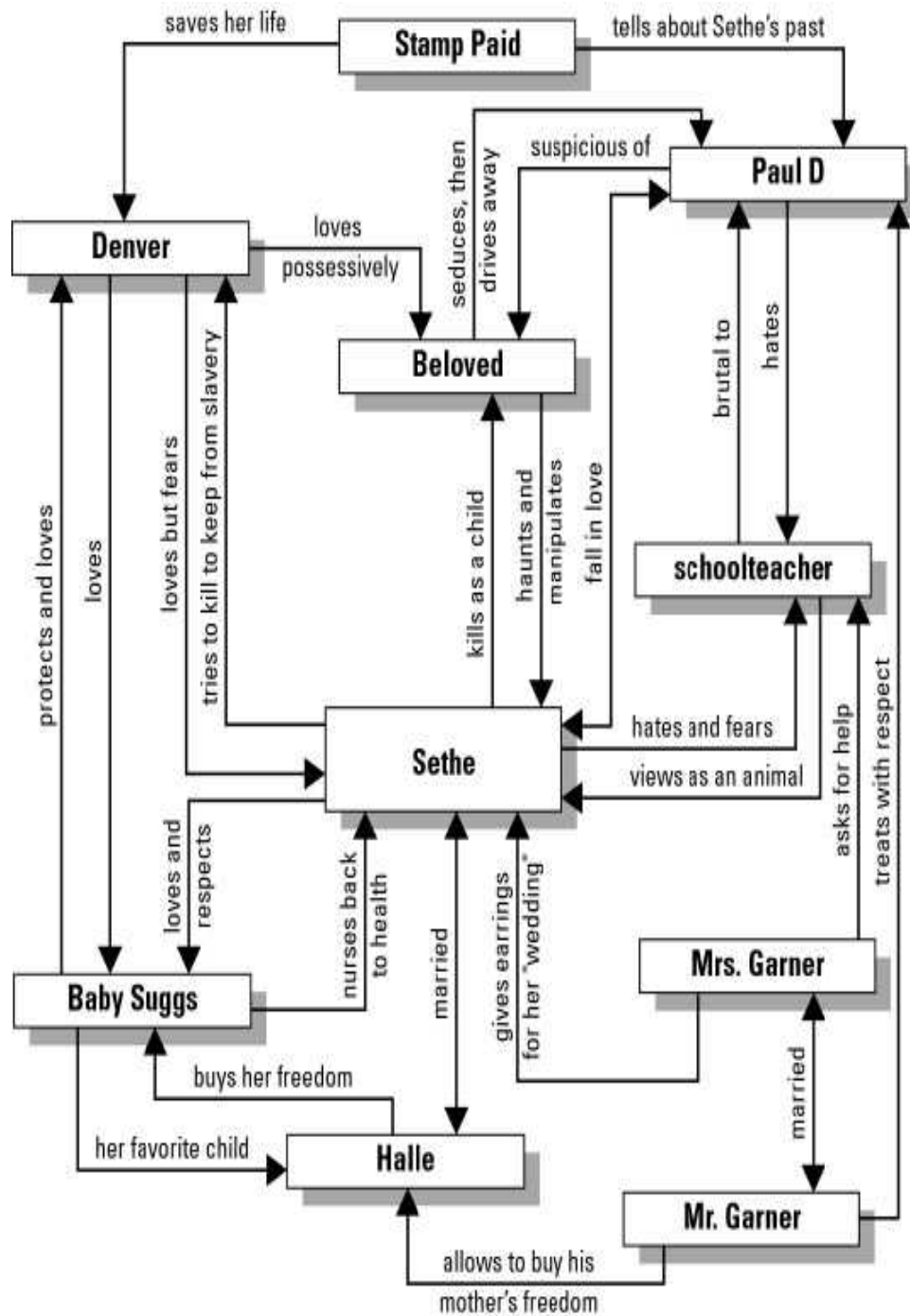
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2.3.1 CHARACTER MAP

Each character in Beloved moves from one stage to another. Toni Morrison uses flashbacks in order to make the reader become involved in the novel's time and in the characters' historical background. The following character map is a representation of the character's relationship and what happened to them.^{xlvi}



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2.4 A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVENTS IN BELOVED.

Toni Morrison structures her narrative in circular form. For this reason, events are revealed through the speakers' dialogues. They usually appear after the fact and out of time order. The following events try to retell the story and restructure the events chronologically including certain historical events that support the plot.

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1795 | Baby Suggs is born as a slave. |
| 1803 | Ohio becomes a state |
| 1805 | Edward Bodwin is born |
| 1808 | The Bodwin family moves from Bluestone Road to Court Street. |
| 1818 | Tyree and John, Baby Suggs's sons, run away. |

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- 1835 Sethe is born to “Ma’am” either in Carolina or Louisiana. Also, Halle, Baby Suggs’ son, is born and Paul D arrives at Sweet Home.
- 1838 Garner purchases Baby Suggs and Halle. The Garners learn of the Bodwins’ kindness toward slaves.
- 1848 Sethe arrives at Sweet Home in Kentucky to replace Baby Suggs, whose freedom Halle has purchased with extra work.
- 1849 Mrs. Garner agrees to Halle’s marriage to Sethe. She secretly sews a “wedding dress” from pillow cases, a dresser scarf, and mosquito netting.
- Saturday: Halle consummates his marriage to Sethe in the cornfield.



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Sunday: Mrs. Garner presents Sethe with crystal earrings as a wedding gift.

1850 Halle's wife, Sethe, is going to give birth to their first baby, Howard.

1851 Sethe's second son, Buglar, is born.

1853 Mr. Garner dies and Mrs. Garner sells Paul F. After that, Mrs. Garner's health starts to deteriorate, so she asks for help and schoolteacher and his boys come to run Sweet Home.

Also, a twenty year period of northern migration for runaway and emancipated blacks begins.

1854 Beloved, Halle and Sethe's third child and first daughter, is born in November.



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1855-1857

Baby Suggs instinctively selects

1855 as the year that Halle died. The Sweet Home slaves unsuccessfully try to escape from schoolteacher and his nephews but they are caught. Later, Sethe is sexually abused and mistreated for letting her children run away to Baby Suggs's home. Finally, she escapes from Sweet Home.

Sethe fears Halle is dead. Amy Denver helps deliver Sethe's last child, Denver, near the Ohio River. Ella, Baby Suggs' neighbor, leads them to 124 Bluestone Road, where Baby Suggs tends Sethe. Weeks later, Stamp Paid, who helps slaves cross the Ohio River, delivers two buckets of berries to Baby Suggs, who expands the gift into a feast for 90 people. The next day, Sethe kills her

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oldest daughter and tries to kill her other children to avoid letting schoolteacher take them back to Sweet Home. Sethe and Denver are taken to jail.

1856 Paul D is locked onto a chain for 83 days in a prison camp in Albert, Georgia.

1857 January: Mudslides force the Albert, Georgia, convicts to flee to a Cherokee camp. In February of the same year, Paul D starts to immigrate north. In July Paul D arrives in Delaware.

1858 Mr. Bodwin helps Sethe to get a job in the kitchen of Sawyer's restaurant.

1860 January: Paul D gets a job with the North Point Bank and Railroad Company. Then he leaves Delaware.



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- 1862 Denver attends Lady Jones' school.
- 1863-1864 Nelson Lord ends Denver's school days by questioning her about Sethe's jail term. The next year, Denver starts to hear the crawling ghost on the stairs and at Christmas time, Sethe and Denver receive gifts from Miss. Bodwin.
- 1865 Buglar and Howard leave home and later Baby Suggs dies. Denver misses her grandmother and asks Sethe to move away from Bluestone Road.
- 1866 Paul D finds a job in Trenton, New Jersey.
- 1873 Monday in August: Paul D comes to 124 Bluestone Road in Cincinnati. Thursday in the morning, Paul D goes with Denver and Sethe to the carnival beside the lumberyard.



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In the afternoon, Beloved appears in the flesh sitting on a stump outside Sethe's house.

Four weeks after Beloved's arrival, Beloved asks about Sethe's mother and about Sethe's diamond earrings. Later, Paul D presses Beloved for some information about herself. Paul D confesses to Sethe that he saw schoolteacher's nephews hit and abuse her before her escape from Sweet Home.

By fall of the same year, Paul D moves out of Sethe's bed and in winter Beloved seduces Paul D. Three weeks later, Paul D feels guilty about his infidelity. He meets Sethe at Sawyer's restaurant and he tries to confess everything, but instead he asks her to bear his child.



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1874 Stamp Paid reads a newspaper to Paul D that tells the story of Beloved's murder. Paul D confronts Sethe about her deed and then leaves 124 Bluestone Road. For six consecutive days, Stamp Paid approaches Sethe's door, each time leaving without knocking.

1875 January: Denver, Beloved and Sethe play and enjoy each other's company on the frozen creek.

March: Sethe discovers the scar on Beloved's neck, which was made when Sethe killed her. By the end of the month, Sethe spends all her money on fancy food and clothes in an attempt to appease Beloved.



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April: Denver realizes that their situation is becoming worse and worse. Denver asks Lady Jones for work. Lady Jones gives her food. Then on Friday in summer thirty women praying and singing approach 124 Bluestone Road. They think that the devil is in Sethe's house. Also, Edwin Bodwin goes there in order to pick Denver up for Denver's first day of work. Thinking Bodwin intends to take her children, Sethe tries to kill him with an ice pick. Ella stops her and Denver wrestles her to the ground. A very pregnant Beloved vanishes from the porch. In the days that follow, Beloved disappears and many tales emerge about her. Sethe is very sick in bed; Paul D returns and helps her to learn to live again.



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2.5. SETTINGS

Since the publication of her first novel in 1970, Toni Morrison's work has provided a new voice for African Americans and has focused clearly her interest on Black American History. Most of the action of Beloved takes place at 124 Bluestone Road, the address of a gray and white house located outside of Cincinnati, on the free side of the Ohio River. The house had previously served as a way station, run by Baby Suggs, the mother-in-law of Sethe. 124 was a space of spiritual healing where runaway slaves were officially free to meet with their lost relatives.

The settings of Beloved are the result of Morrison's research for an earlier project, in which she discovered a newspaper clipping about Margaret Garner, a fugitive slave who escaped to Ohio through the Underground

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Railroad. The novel is largely set in 1873, after the Civil War, but there are many flashbacks which take us to a variety of times in the early 1850s, and different locations such as Sweet Home Plantation in Kentucky and the prison in Alfred, Georgia. Kentucky is one of the principal stages where Toni Morrison set her novel. Sweet Home Plantation is placed in the rural areas of Kentucky where Sethe, Halle, and Paul D and Baby Suggs were slaves. The Ohio River represents the line of demarcation between the slave states and the free states. Also, the river was the place where Denver was born. In Beloved Toni Morrison writes about the most important place for Baby Suggs "The Clearing"; it is located just outside 124. The Clearing was a holy place where Baby Suggs preached to the black community about loving themselves. Most of the names of the places in Beloved belong to African Americans' history;

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however, Toni's imagination combines these real events with some fictional facts. As a result we have a significant literary work which has contributed a modern writing style and a wonderful language.^{xlvii}

2.6. PLOT

Beloved begins in 1873 in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Sethe, a former slave, lived with her eighteen-year-old daughter Denver. Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, lived with them until her death eight years earlier. Howard and Buglar, Sethe's sons ran away from home just before Baby Suggs's death. Sethe believed that her sons went away because they were afraid of the malevolent presence of an abusive ghost that haunted their house at 124 Bluestone Road for years. However, Denver liked the ghost, which everyone believed to be the spirit of her dead sister.

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The plot of Beloved has an intentional loose structure. It never proceeds in a straight line. Instead, it is told with flashbacks and storytelling, through forty years, from Sethe's birth in 1835 and after Paul D's arrival at 124 Bluestone. The novel begins with the arrival of Paul D, whom Sethe had not seen since they worked together on Mr. Garner's Sweet Home Plantation in Kentucky. It was approximately twenty years earlier. Paul D's presence causes many of the flashbacks in the story because he and Sethe constantly talked about their past lives. He resurrected memories that had been buried in Sethe's mind for almost two decades. From this point in the novel, the story unfolds into two planes: The present in Cincinnati is the first plane, and a series of events that took place



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around twenty years earlier, mostly in Kentucky, constitutes another plane.

The later plane is developed and described through fragmented flashbacks^{xlviii} of the major characters. Some of the stories are told by Sethe; others are told by Denver, Beloved, and Paul D. These flashbacks appear several times throughout the novel. It means that the story is told from different perspectives; each successive narration of an event adds more information to the previous ones. Although the novel is not unified by time, place, character, or point of view, it is clearly developed around its main theme; the necessity of dealing with the painful past caused by slavery. All of the characters must deal with their history in order to heal themselves in the present.

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The story begins to emerge from these fragmented memories. Sethe, the protagonist, was born in the South to an African mother that she never knew. When she was thirteen, she was sold to the Garners. They were the owners of Sweet Home and practiced a benevolent kind of slavery. There were other men slaves in the plantation. Their names were Sixo, Paul D, Paul A, Paul F, and Halle. They felt an intense attraction for Sethe, specially Halle and Paul D; however, they respected her and never touched her. After a time, Sethe and Halle fell in love, and married although Ms Garner did not agree at all. Sethe chose to marry Halle, because she felt captivated by his generosity which he had proved when he bought his mother's freedom by hiring himself out on the weekends. Together, Sethe and Halle had two sons, Howard and Buglar, as well as a baby daughter whose



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name does not appear in the novel. When she left Sweet Home, Sethe was pregnant with a fourth child.

After Mr. Garner died of a grotesque throat tumor, the widowed Mrs. Garner asked her sadistic and racist brother-in-law to help her run the farm. He was known to the slaves as schoolteacher and changed the human slavery that Mr. Garner practiced with mistreatments and abuses. He made the slaves' lives as miserable as he could. Schoolteacher prohibited Halle of having extra jobs on the farm. Halle knew that without the extra jobs, it was almost impossible to buy his wife and children's liberty as he had planned. He was afraid the cruel schoolteacher might sell their children away from Sweet Home Plantation.



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Sixo was the first one who started the idea of escaping. At nights, he used to climb the trees in the plantation and raise his hands to the sky. He thought in that way he could feel freedom. One of these nights, he saw the train, and discovered the way they could get their liberty. Sixo told this experience to the other slaves. Halle and his family decided to think of a plan in order to escape. Sometime later, he discussed his decision with Paul D, Paul A, and Sixo, and they joined him in his plan. They made a connection to a person who was going to help them. The signal was that when the corn was over their heads and the moon of that night was full and round, they should be in the corn field waiting for the wagon of the train. When the signal for the train came, Sethe and her children were ready.

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By the time of the escape, Sethe was six months pregnant but she still planned to run away with their children and the men. She had decided her children would not suffer slavery. Unfortunately, things went wrong on the day of the escape. Halle was stopped before he could get away from Sweet Home, Paul A disappeared from the farm but later he was lynched and his body mutilated. Paul D and Sixo escaped and met Sixo's lover, Thirty-Mile Woman, at the creek as planned. However, the two men were caught by Schoolteacher and his nephews. When Sixo saw a rifle pointed at him, he ran toward it. As a result, Sixo was hit on his head with the rifle and tied to a tree in order to be burned alive. While the flames were surrounding him, Sixo laughed and called out, "Seven-O", the name he had given to his unborn child that Thirty-Mile Woman was carrying. He died smiling because he thought



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about his unborn son who would be born in freedom. Schoolteacher brought Paul D back to Sweet Home, where Paul D saw Sethe for what he believed would be the last time.

Although Sethe was captured, she still had the intention of running away. Having already sent her children ahead to her mother-in-law Baby Suggs' house in Cincinnati, she was altered and furious from the recent capture. Schoolteacher's nephews took Sethe to the barn, and raped her. They stole the milk from her breast which belonged to her infant daughter. While this atrocity was happening, Halle was watching the event and lay frozen with horror. After that, Halle went mad: Paul D saw him sitting with butter all over his face and incoherent. Paul D, meanwhile, was forced to suffer the indignity of wearing an iron bit in his mouth.

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When schoolteacher found out that Sethe had reported his and his nephews' misdeeds to Mrs. Garner, he whipped her severely, despite the fact that she was pregnant. Nobody was paying attention to her because they thought it would be impossible to escape in her condition. It was hard for Sethe to walk because of the terrible wounds on her back and the heaviness of her pregnancy. Swollen and scarred, Sethe nevertheless ran away to look for her children. Along the way, she collapsed from exhaustion in a forest near the Ohio River, which runs between Kentucky (a slave state) and Ohio (a free state). A white girl, Amy Denver, found her and nursed her back to health; Amy later helped Sethe to deliver her fourth baby in a boat. Sethe named this second daughter Denver in honor of the girl who helped her. Stamp Paid, a member of the

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Underground Railroad, found Sethe and took her and the new born baby to freedom. Finally, Sethe arrived at Baby Suggs' house in Cincinnati.

Sethe spends twenty-eight wonderful days in Cincinnati, where Baby Suggs served as an unofficial preacher to the black community. However, on the last day, Schoolteacher came to take Sethe and her children back to Sweet Home. When she saw the horses approaching and the Schoolteacher's hat, she gathered all her children and ran to the empty woodshed. She intended to kill her children and then herself rather than let her children go back to a life of dehumanizing slavery. She only had time to kill her oldest daughter before the other children were rescued by Stamp Paid; her throat was cut with a knife by Sethe.

Later, she arranged for the baby's headstone to be

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carved with the word “*Beloved*.” The sheriff took Sethe and Denver to jail, but a group of white abolitionists, led by the Bodwins, fought for her release. Sethe returned to the house at 124, where Baby Suggs had sunk into a deep depression and had lost her will to live. The community isolated the house and the family. In fact, the community did not speak to them again for eighteen years.

One month after Baby Suggs’ death, Sethe’s sons went away from their mother. They were afraid of her because they thought she was going to kill them as she had their sister. Sethe and Denver stayed on, alone in the house. Meanwhile, Paul D suffered torturous experiences in a chain gang in Alfred, Georgia, where he was sent to prison after trying to kill Brandywine, a slave owner to whom he was sold by Schoolteacher. At the prison, he was forced to live in underground



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darkness and to perform oral sex on the prison guards. His traumatic experiences caused him to put his memories, emotions, and ability to love away from his heart. One day, a fortuitous rainstorm allowed Paul D and the other chain gang members to escape. They ran until they arrived at a camp of Cherokee Indians who helped them. He stayed with them for a long time and then he traveled northward by following the blossoming spring flowers. He moved on to many places such as Wilmington and Delaware. During the Civil War, he worked in the death fields, sorting the dead from the wounded. After that, he was sent to work in a foundry until the Civil War ended. He wandered away from Sethe several years until he decided to find her. Years later, he arrived on Sethe's porch in Cincinnati.



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Sethe and Denver had become accustomed to live isolated from the community. Inside Sethe's house, the infant ghost of Sethe's dead daughter came to live with them and haunted the house. Denver had not any playmates or brothers at home, so she thought that the ghost of her dead sister was her best friend. Sethe tolerated the ghost but its presence reminded her of what she had done. With Paul D's arrival at 124 Bluestone, a series of strange events took place inside the house. It looked as if the ghost was angry at Paul D's presence in Sethe's home. That was the reason why Paul D chased the ghost away from the house. It caused that the already lonely Denver to resent him from the beginning. Moreover, Sethe, who felt very lonely, asked him to stay with her.



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Sethe and Paul D were beginning a promising future together, until one day, on their way home from a carnival, they encountered a strange young woman sleeping near the steps of 124. She told them that her name was Beloved. She did not remember her past life and wore a black silk dress. Most of the characters in the novel believe that the woman who called herself Beloved was the embodied spirit of Sethe's dead daughter. Denver soon realized that she was the ghost of her dead sister who had come back in flesh. The lonely Denver loved her immediately, enjoyed her company and protected her from Sethe. Denver believed her mother would try to kill Beloved again. Denver developed an obsessive attachment to Beloved. Unfortunately for Denver, Beloved only cared about Sethe and wanted to possess her as her own. Beloved's attachment to Sethe increased with the pass of the



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days. When she saw Paul D kissing Sethe, Beloved was upset and silently tried to break their relationship. Paul D and Beloved hated each other; however, Beloved intended to seduce him in order to make him leave Sethe. When he resisted her temptations, she got furious and insisted until he could not refuse. Paul D felt very guilty about having sex with Beloved because he cared about Sethe and wanted to create a future with her. Then Paul D realized that Beloved had a power over him and manipulated him as she wanted, so he decided that he had to tell Sethe what had happened. In the end, he could not confess his fault to her, and instead he told Sethe he wanted to have a baby.

Stamp Paid had decided that Paul D should know about Sethe's murder of her child. He showed Paul D

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an old newspaper that described what had happened in the woodshed of Sethe's house. Paul D could not believe it and confronted her about it. She explained to him that it was better to see their children in the afterlife than in slavery. He was horrified over what he heard, and after knowing the story of Sethe's infanticide, he left 124. Before he left the house, he told her that she had acted like an animal. His accusation hurt her a lot because in her past white people had talked about slaves having animal traits and had treated them like animals as well. In his absence, Sethe and Beloved's relationship became more intense and exclusive. Both Denver and Beloved were delighted that Paul D had left 124 Bluestone. One night, the girls convinced Sethe to take them ice skating and when they returned home, Sethe put them to bed. While she looked at them, she



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saw their similarities and finally accepted that Beloved was her dead daughter who had come back to her.

At first, Sethe was happy about having her daughter with her, but then Beloved became more abusive, manipulative, and parasitic. Each day, Beloved demanded more and more of her mother, and Sethe just tried to satisfy her wishes. The only thing Sethe could think about was to make her understand why she had murdered her. She was so distracted in satisfying Beloved that she forgot her job at the restaurant; as a consequence, Sawyer fired her. Sometime later, they did not have any money coming in and no friends to help them. The family had almost nothing to eat. Ironically, Sethe became thinner and weaker and Beloved larger and stronger, as if she were devouring her mother.



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Denver worried about the way her mother was wasting everything they had to survive. She realized what was happening and changed her opinion about Beloved. She turned her loyalty from Beloved to Sethe. Denver left 124 for the first time in twelve years in order to look for help from Lady Jones, her former teacher. She knew that she had to find help for her mother; otherwise, Sethe could die. She walked to Lady Jones' house, where she attended to her lessons and told her that Sethe was sick and without a job. She explained to Lady Jones that they did not have any food at home. She was encouraged by Lady Jones and the black women in the community decided to help Denver. They began to regularly provide the family with food outside the yard, and told the family their names. Denver always returned the dishes in which the food was delivered; in that way, she met the women of the



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community. Then Denver became brave enough to go to the Bodwins and ask for work. She was greeted there by a kind black woman called Janey Wagon. Denver told her what was happening at 124 Bluestone and later Janey spread the news in the community that Sethe was being haunted by her dead daughter. The women organized a rescue party in order to save Sethe. Under the leadership of Ella, a woman who had worked on the Underground Railroad and helped Sethe to escape, they decided to exorcise Beloved from 124. When they arrived at Sethe's house, they saw Sethe on the porch with Beloved, who was smiling at them, naked and pregnant. Mr. Bodwin, who had come to 124 to take Denver to her new job, arrived at the house. Sethe confused him with Schoolteacher and ran toward Mr. Bodwin with an ice pick. She was restrained, but in the confusion Beloved disappeared, and never returned.

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After Beloved's disappearance, Paul D talked for a while with Denver in the downtown area. She told him Sethe was very sick and that she would probably die. After that, Paul D went to see her and found she had retreated to Baby Suggs' bed singing a lullaby. He told her that he would stay with her at night while Denver stayed with her during the day. Mourning Beloved, Sethe lamented, "*She was my best thing*"^{xlix} but Paul D replied, "*You your best thing, Sethe*".^l The novel ends with a warning that says "*it was not a story to pass on.*"^{li} The towns, and even the residents of 124, have forgotten Beloved like an unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep.^{lii}



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2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF BELOVED IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Toni Morrison wrote Beloved because she wanted to explore the nature of slavery, not from an intellectual or slave narrative perspective, but within the day to day experiences lived by the slaves. Toni has said on various occasions that she included the places and spaces in her narratives so that the reader could participate. Her novels belong to a form of literature she calls “village literature”. This kind of literature is able to identify those things in the past that are useful and that feed traditions and culture. Toni Morrison affirms that it was necessary for her to write Beloved because black oral historical traditions do not explain the way slaves suffered.

“We don’t live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don’t sit around and tell their

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children those classical mythological stories that we heard years ago.”

Those stories must have a place in African American culture and they have found their place in the novel. The novel becomes for Toni the site of an oral history passed from generation to generation.^{liii}

In Beloved, Toni Morrison uses several literary techniques that combine modernist and post-modernist innovations. The novel is filled with stream-of-consciousness narration, where the author goes into the mind of her characters and reveals their free association of thought. It attempts to capture the way people think as much as what they think. A second major technique Morrison employs is shifting points of view. Instead of choosing one main character whose



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point of view is followed throughout the novel, Morrison shifts from character to character, thereby ensuring that the reader sees the stories of the past from several perspectives. A third technique employed in the novel is the use of magical realism, where fantastic events are presented as if they were real; this is particularly obvious in the way Morrison handles the ghosts in the novel. Also, Toni Morrison uses details, memories and lyrical commentaries as her form of writing. One example of this is shown when Paul D arrives at Sweet Home and sings some of the lyrics he learned while he was in prison.

"Lay my head on the railroad line,

Train come along, pacify my mind.

If I had my weight in lime,

I'd whip my captain till he went stone blind.

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Five-cent nickel,

Ten-cent dime,

Busting rocks is busting time.^{liv}

Toni Morrison wrote Beloved the way she did precisely because her style of repetition is a consistent narrative device in black women' literature. The message is that this is not a story to forget. "Pass on" means to go through, continue or tell, and Morrison carried on information through her novel. Morrison writes narrative "plays" not just with language but also with the traces of ideology that leave their mark in language. Language becomes a powerful means of getting across a point. Morrison says,

"It was not a story to pass on.

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*They forgot her like a bad dream. After they made up
their tales, shaped and decorated them, those that saw
her that day on the porch quickly and deliberately forgot
her...in the end, they forgot her too. Remembering
seemed unwise.*

It was not a story to pass on.

This is not a story to pass on.^{iv}

What Toni Morrison is really saying is that this is a story to pass on. People need to know the details of slavery. People need to know what it was like to be a slave.



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CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL EVENTS OF TONI MORRISON'S TIME

3.1 THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The Great Depression was an economic slump in North America, Europe, and other industrialized areas of the world that began in 1929 and lasted until about 1939. It was the longest and most severe depression ever experienced by the industrialized Western world. The great Depression began in the United States in 1929 with a catastrophic collapse of stock-market prices on the New York Stock Exchange. During the next three years stock prices in the United States continued to fall, until by late 1932 they had dropped to only about 20 percent of their value in 1929. Besides ruining many

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thousands of individual investors, this precipitous decline in the value of assets greatly strained banks and other financial institutions, particularly those holding stocks in their portfolios. Many banks were consequently forced into insolvency; by 1933, 11,000 of the United States' 25,000 banks had failed. The result was drastically falling output and drastically rising unemployment; by 1932, U.S. manufacturing output had fallen to 54 percent of its 1929 level, and unemployment had risen to between 12 and 15 million workers, or 25-30 percent of the work force.

The Great Depression began in the United States but quickly turned into a worldwide economic slump owing to the special and intimate relationships that had been forgotten between the United States and

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European economies after World War I. The United States had emerged from the war as the major creditor and financier of postwar Europe, whose national economies had been greatly weakened by the war itself, by war debts, and, in the case of Germany and other defeated nations, by the need to pay war reparations. Almost all nations sought to protect their domestic production by imposing tariffs, raising existing ones, and setting quotas on foreign imports. The effect of these restrictive measures was to greatly reduce the volume of international trade: by 1932 the total value of world trade had fallen by more than half as country after country took measures against the importation of foreign goods.^{lvi}

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The Great Depression had important consequences in the political area. In the United States, economic distress led to the election of the Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency in late 1932. Roosevelt introduced a number of major changes in the structure of the American economy, using increased government regulation and massive public-works projects to promote a recovery. But despite this active intervention, mass unemployment and economic stagnation continued, though on a somewhat reduced scale, with about 15 percent of the work force still unemployed in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. After that, unemployment dropped rapidly as American factories were flooded with orders from overseas for armaments and munitions. The depression ended completely soon after the United States' entry into World War II in 1941. In Europe, the Great Depression

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strengthened extremist forces and lowered the prestige of liberal democracy. In Germany, economic distress directly contributed to Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The Nazis' public-works projects and their rapid expansion of munitions production ended the Depression there by 1936.

At least in part, the Great Depression was caused by underlying weaknesses and imbalances within the U.S. economy that had been obscured by the boom psychology and speculative euphoria of the 1920s. The Depression exposed those weaknesses, as it did the inability of the nation's political and financial institutions to cope with the vicious downward economic cycle that had set in by 1930. Prior to the Great Depression, governments traditionally took little or no action in times

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of business downturn, relying instead on impersonal market forces to achieve the necessary economic correction. But market forces alone proved unable to achieve the desired recovery in the early years of the Great Depression, and this painful discovery eventually inspired some fundamental changes in the United States' economic structure. After the Great Depression, government action, whether in the form of taxation, industrial regulation, public works, social insurance, social-welfare services, or deficit spending, came to assume a principal role in ensuring economic stability in most industrial nations with market economies.

The Great Depression spread rapidly around the world because the responses made by governments were flawed. When faced with falling export earnings

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they overreacted and severely increased tariffs on imports, thus further reducing trade. Moreover, since deflation was the only policy supported by economic theory at the time, the initial response of every government was to cut their spending. As a result consumer demand fell even further. Deflationary policies were critically linked to exchange rates. Under the Gold Standard, which linked currencies to the value of gold, governments were committed to maintaining fixed exchange rates. However, during the Depression they were forced to keep interest rates high to persuade banks to buy and hold their currency. Since prices were falling, interest-rate repayments rose in real terms, making it too expensive for both businesses and individuals to borrow.^{lvii}



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3. 2 WORLD WAR II

World War II was a global military conflict which involved most of the world's nations, including all great powers, organized into two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. The war involved the mobilization of over one hundred million military personnel, making it the most widespread war in history. In a state of "total war," the major participants placed their entire economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities at the service of the war effort, erasing the distinction between civilian and military resources. Over seventy million people, the majority civilians, were killed, making it the deadliest conflict in human history.

A variety of events led to the escalation of hostilities between the Axis and Allied powers to start the war. In the aftermath of World War I, a defeated

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Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles. This caused Germany to lose around 13% of its territory, stripped it of its colonies, prohibited German annexation of other states, imposed massive reparations and limited the size and makeup of Germany's armed forces. The Russian Civil War led to the creation of the Soviet Union, which soon was under the control of Joseph Stalin. In Italy, Benito Mussolini seized power as a fascist dictator promising to create a "New Roman Empire." The Kuomintang (KMT) party in China launched a unification campaign against regional warlords and nominally unified China in the mid-1920s, but was soon embroiled in a civil war against its former Chinese communist allies. In 1931, an increasingly militaristic Japanese Empire, which had long sought influence in China as the first step of its right to rule Asia, used the Mukden Incident as justification to

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invade Manchuria and annex two Chinese provinces. Then the two nations fought several small conflicts, in Shanghai, Rehe and Hebei, until the Tanggu Truce in 1933. Thereafter, Chinese volunteer forces continued resistance to Japanese aggression in Manchuria, and Chahar and Suiyuan.

The war broke out principally for two main reasons. In September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland and on September 3 Britain and France declared war on Germany. There were two groups: the Axis and the Allies. The Axis group was formed by Germany, Japan and Italy (before 1943). They invaded almost the whole European and the Asian continent. Germany was one of the strongest countries which defeated its enemies and dominated each country very quickly, leaving a weak England as the only one

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opponent. At that time, the United States of America did not want get involved in those problems. President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a neutral position but was not indifferent about this situation. In November 1939, the American Neutrality Act was amended to allow “Cash and carry” purchases to the Allies.^{lviii}

At the end of September 1940, *The Tripartite Pact* united Japan, Italy, and Germany to formalize the Axis Powers. The pact stipulated that any country, with the exception of the Soviet Union, which attacked any Axis power, would be forced to go to war against all three. On March 1941, the United States implemented a rent and loan policy which allowed providing goods and war weapons to the Allies, creating a security zone spanning half of the Atlantic Ocean where the United States Navy protected British convoys. As a result,

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Germany and the United States found themselves engaged in sustained but undeclared naval warfare in the North and Central Atlantic by October 1941, even though the United States remained officially neutral.

Among the Allies group were France, Britain, The United States, The Soviet Union (after 1941) and Italy (after 1943). On June 1941 Hitler betrayed Stalin, and Germany invaded the Soviet Union. So Stalin declared war on Germany. Britain did not have money to support the high cost of war, so the United States helped England with 50 used destroyers as a gift for the naval bases in the western Atlantic. Later, President Roosevelt convinced Congress to lend 13.5 thousand million in war supplies to England and 9 thousand million to the Soviet Union which had been invaded by Germany as mentioned before.

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In the East, Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931, China in 1937, and French Indochina in July 1941. The United States reaction to these aggressions was to refuse to export scrap iron, steel and oil to Japan. Thus Japan lost more than 95% of its oil supply. Also, they ended the Japanese credit in the United States. Japan did not have more war supplies, and it was a problem for Japan if it wanted to continue with the expansion of its empire. Japan had to choose whether to retreat from the invaded countries, and accept some territorial limitations, or to declare war on the United States. As we know, Japan chose to prepare itself with all they had and to hurt the United States with an unexpected attack on Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands.

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The attack took place on a sunny Sunday morning. A minimal contingent of soldiers was on duty at the time. Most of the offices on the Pearl Harbor base were closed and many servicemen had left for the weekend. The new radar, mounted on Opana Point, was in place and functioned at the time of the attack. The Japanese attack planes were detected by the radar and reported, but were mistaken for an incoming group of American planes. At 7:55 a.m., the first bombs and torpedoes were dropped. After two hours, the U.S. sustained 18 ships sunk and about 170 aircraft destroyed.

Pearl Harbor Naval Base was attacked by a Japanese torpedo and bomber planes on December 7, 1941. Pearl Harbor is located on the south coast of Oahu Island, Hawaii. At the time, the naval base was about 22,000 acres in size. Pearl Harbor had been the

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center of American naval power since King Kalakua gave the right to the U.S. to develop a coal station there in 1887. On December 8, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the American Congress, and the nation, to detail the attack. In that address, the president asked Congress to pass a declaration of war. Congress obliged, voted and passed the U.S. Declaration of war on Japan, on the same day. That was America's formal entry into World War II.^{lix}



Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941.

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After the attack at Pearl Harbor, the United States took measures to prepare for war. Among these measures are the following: they set controls on wages and prices, raised taxes, and rationed gasoline and some food products. Moreover, the production of cars, homes, and other products was stopped. The government spent almost \$2 thousand million on a secret project to defend themselves from Germany. The United States was afraid that Germany was developing a nuclear weapon and would attack them suddenly. Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, on August 14, 1941, to develop the Atlantic Charter which consisted of planning all their efforts toward the Mediterranean.

After a series of battles, Japan bombed the Allied naval base in Australia. This threat was ended in the

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“Battle of the Coral Sea” on May 8, 1942. After that, Japanese forces were stopped at the “Battle of Midway” when they attempted to go to Hawaii and attack again. Fortunately, American code deciphers understood Japanese codes and knew the whereabouts of the Japanese navy. In the next three years, Americans advanced toward some important strategic islands such as Iwo Jima in March and Okinawa in June 1945. These places helped Americans to make some important attacks on Japan. American bombers destroyed Japanese cities, and American submarines cut off Japanese imports.

Several changes in leadership occurred during this period. On April 12, 1945, right after the war, the American President Roosevelt died; he was succeeded by Harry Truman. Benito Mussolini was killed by Italian

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partisans on April 28 in the same year. Two days later, Hitler committed suicide, and was succeeded by Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz. In 1945 the war ended in a victory for the Allies. The Soviet Union and the United States subsequently emerged as the world's superpowers, setting the stage for the *Cold War*, which lasted for the next 46 years. The United Nations was formed in the hope of preventing another world conflict. The acceptance of the principle of self-determination accelerated decolonization movements in Asia and Africa, while Western Europe itself began moving toward integration.

During this time, there were many protests in The United States. African American people demanded racial justice. They asked President Harry Truman who had taken over the presidency after President

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Roosevelt's death to prohibit discrimination in the military and industries. On September 1945, the Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, appointed a board of three general officers to investigate the Army's policy with respect to African Americans and to prepare a new policy that would provide the efficient use of African Americans in the Army. This board is called the "*Gillem Board*".

In April 1946, the report of the Gillem Board, Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy, was published. The report stated that the Army's future policy should be to eliminate any special consideration based on race. However, the report did not question that segregation would continue to underlie the Army's policy toward African Americans. Later, The Secretary of the Army, Kenneth Royall, characterized

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the policy recommended by the Gillem Board as
"equality of opportunity on the basis of segregation."



African American and white soldiers during
World War II.

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The inclusion of African Americans in the World War II was very restrictive and Blacks were used only to do unimportant things which had little to do with the Army or Navy. Black soldiers suffered racial discrimination during the battles in World War II. Many of the African American soldiers were sent first to the front in case the enemies attacked them suddenly. If that happened, they were killed first in order to protect white soldiers. After the Pearl Harbor attack, many African American soldiers were decorated for their bravery and courage. Among these men was Doris Miller, a black soldier who was the first African American to receive an award for his valiant participation in the Pearl Harbor battle. This event marked the beginning of desegregation in the Army and was the first step for racial justice.

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Doris Miller, a black hero of Pearl Harbor.

The battle at Pearl Harbor had its own heroes. One of them was Doris Miller, called Dorrie. He was a heavyweight boxing champion from West Virginia. He was black, and like all African Americans in the Navy or Army at that time, he was assigned to do only menial tasks. In his case, he was a mess attendant. On the day of the attack, Dorrie carried his wounded captain to a safe place. Then he manned a sub-machine gun and shot down three enemy planes. The extraordinary

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characteristic of this man is that Dorrie had never handled a machine gun before. Fourteen men received America's highest military award for heroism on that day, except Dorrie. Instead, he received the Navy Cross. He was the first black to receive that medal. However, he was passed over for the highest honor.

Dr. Stephen Ambrose, historian and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, says in Legacy of Attack ,

"The beginning of the breakdown of racial segregation in the United States started here in Pearl Harbor. Black men, just like everybody else, saw a buddy down there in that oil-covered water with fire going on ... and they dove in to save him. That happened again and again. White America began to learn that there's an awful lot of bravery, skill, endurance and character in black America."

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Dorrie Miller was killed two years after Pearl Harbor, when his ship was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.

3.3 FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, FDR, was the 32nd President of the United States. He was born on January 30, 1882, in Hyde Park, New York. His father, James, and his mother, Sara, were part of the New York aristocracy of that time. Roosevelt grew up in an atmosphere of privilege with frequent trips to Europe that made Roosevelt versed in German and French. His parents were Roosevelt's best influence in his early years. Being James' and Sara's only child, they wanted the best education for him. During his first years he was educated by private tutors at home. After that, he went to Groton, an Episcopal private school in

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Massachusetts, in 1896. At Groton he discovered his tendency toward a political career when Endicott Peabody, the head of the school, became an important influence in FRD's life preaching the duty of Christians to help the less fortunate and urging students to enter into public service.

During his life at Groton, FDR was a notable and enthusiastic student who did well enough at his studies to go on to Harvard in 1900. At Harvard he put much of his energy into his social life and extracurricular activities. His greatest accomplishments were to become president of the Harvard Crimson, the campus newspaper, and the leader of the Alpha Delta Phi Fraternity. In 1902 he met his future wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt's niece, at a White House reception. Three years later they were married in



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New York, on St. Patrick's Day. Roosevelt resumed his studies at Columbia University Law School in 1905. He never completed the courses needed to receive an LL.B. degree but he passed the bar examination at the end of three years and began a law practice in New York City in 1908.

The faultless life of Roosevelt was invaded by two negative situations. The first one was a love affair outside his marriage with Lucy Mercer, Eleanor Roosevelt's social secretary. According to Roosevelt's family, Eleanor offered FDR a divorce, but it would have been a scandal in their social circle and also it would have badly damaged his political career. FDR decided to stay married and promised never to see Lucy again. This episode was the principal factor in altering the relationship with his wife causing Eleanor to search for



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social and political fulfillment independently of FDR. The second negative incident in the life of Roosevelt took place in August 1921 while the Roosevelts were vacationing at Campobello Island, New Brunswick; FDR contracted the illness of polio, which resulted in his total and permanent paralysis from the waist down.

For the rest of his life, Roosevelt refused to accept that he was permanently paralyzed; he set about trying to recover the use of his legs with characteristic energy, optimism, ingenuity, and determination. He began an ambitious regimen of exercise and searched out new treatments. Although he increased his strength, particularly in his upper body, he would never walk unaided again. In 1924, he discovered the restorative powers of the mineral waters at Warm Springs, Georgia. Not content with trying to heal himself alone,



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he bought the old resort hotel at Warm Springs and in 1927 established the Warm Springs Foundation; it is now a center for the rehabilitation of polio patients and for what is called today, “independent living.” After he became President, he helped to found the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (now known as the March of Dimes). He remained devoted to these institutions for the rest of his life, returning almost every year to celebrate Thanksgiving with his fellow “polios” and in other occasions to restore his body and spirit.

Roosevelt was president during the Great Depression of the 1930s in the US. Roosevelt’s approach to the economic situation he inherited is known as the New Deal. The New Deal consisted both of executive orders and legislation pushed through Congress. Executive orders included the bank holiday declared when he first came to office; legislation



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created new government agencies, such as the Works Progress Administration and the National Recovery Administration, with the intent of creating new jobs for the unemployed.

During the Civil Rights Movement, Roosevelt was a hero to large minority groups, especially African Americans, Catholics and Jews, and was highly successful in attracting large majorities of these groups into his New Deal coalition. African Americans and Native Americans fared well in the New Deal relief programs. In terms of the New Deal, economic and regulatory policies favored white Americans and placed hardships on African Americans. According to some historians during The New Deal, black people were among the major victims of that program. In Roosevelt's Justice Department, the Civil Rights Section worked

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closely with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Roosevelt worked with other civil rights groups on cases dealing with police brutality, lynching, and voting rights abuses. It is argued that these actions sent a powerful message to white supremacists in the South and their political allies in Washington. Franklin Roosevelt was the only American president elected to more than two terms. He won his first of four presidential elections in 1932, while the United States was in the depths of the Great Depression and he led the United States through most of World War II.^{ix}

3.4 PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN

President Harry Truman was born on May 8, 1884, in Lamar, Missouri. He grew up on farms, and when Truman was six, his family settled in Independence,

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Missouri, in 1890. He attended the Presbyterian Church Sunday School. Harry had bad eyesight when he was a child, but he loved to read. He liked history and government. He was an excellent piano player. In his early years, it was natural for him to be a racist because it was part of southern culture at that time. Any elderly African American who lived in Independence had been a slave before 1865. Truman's ancestors had owned slaves. In Independence, white people lived in pleasant tree-lined avenues, while African Americans lived in hovels. Such poverty and squalor led to the African Americans being involved in crimes and problems. The whites of Independence referred to the African Americans as "niggers", "coons" or simply as "boy" - regardless of the age of the person being spoken to. Harry Truman criticized African Americans, Jews and Chinese culture as most of the youth in Independence.

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After graduating from Independence High School (now William Chrisman High School) in 1901, Truman worked as a timekeeper on the Santa Fe Railroad. Then he worked at a series of clerical jobs and in the mail room of the Kansas City Star. He had all these jobs in order to make money for his family. He was the last president in the United States that did not have a college degree. His poor eyesight and financial problems prevented him from applying to West Point (his childhood dream). He did, however, study for two years toward a law degree at the Kansas City Law School (now the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law) in the early 1920s.



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When Truman could not continue with his career, he returned to help on his father's farm in 1906 and stayed there until 1917. After that, he went into military service. Truman enlisted in the Missouri Army National Guard in 1905, and served until 1911. Later, he went to France during World War I as a captain in the Field Artillery. After the war, he married Elizabeth Virginia Wallace, and opened a haberdashery in Kansas City which went bankrupt during the recession of 1921. In 1922 Truman was elected as a judge of the County Court of the eastern district of Jackson County with the help of the Kansas City Democratic machine led by boss Tom Pendergast, From 1926 to 1934, he was the head judge of the county. In the same year, Truman gave a friend \$10 for an initiation fee for the Klu Klux Klan. Later he asked to get his money back. He was



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never initiated, never attended a meeting, and never claimed a membership.

As mentioned before, Truman used to express anger towards Jews in his diaries. Also, Truman's attitudes toward African Americans were typical of white Missourians of his era, and were expressed in his casual use of terms like "nigger". Later, he changed his opinion about people with a different culture. He knew Edward Jacobson, his business partner and close friend, who was Jewish. Years later, other reasons, such as tales of abuse, violence, and persecution suffered by many African American veterans upon their return from World War II, infuriated Truman, and were major factors in his decision to issue Executive Order 9981, in July 1948, to back civil rights initiatives and desegregate the armed forces.



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From 1935-1945, he served as a Democratic Senator representing Missouri. Then in 1945 he became President Franklin D. Roosevelt's third vice president and he succeeded to the presidency on April 12, 1945, when President Roosevelt died less than three months after beginning his fourth term. He was the 33rd President of the United States (1945–1953). Truman took over the position of president without being elected to it. Truman had been vice president for only 82 days when President Roosevelt died. He had had very little meaningful communication with Roosevelt about world affairs or domestic politics after being sworn in as vice president, and no major initiatives relating to the successful prosecution of the war. One example is the top secret Manhattan Project, which was about to test the world's first atomic bomb. One of the most important decisions made by Truman



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or possibly any other president was the use of the atomic bombs in Japan. He ordered two bombs to be dropped: one against Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and one against Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. Truman's goal was to stop the war quickly avoiding further losses of allied troops. Japan sued for peace on August 10th and surrendered on September 2, 1945.

Following the end of World War II, Truman's main priority was to deal with Stalin and the USSR at the start of the Cold War. Truman did not have any opportunities to advance the cause of civil rights. Then in 1946, Truman did establish a civil rights committee whose task was to examine violence against African Americans within America itself. This committee was filled with known liberals who Truman knew would produce a report that would and should shock

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mainstream America. The report was issued in October 1947 and Truman's administration titled it "To Secure These Rights". In July 26, 1948, Truman issued two Executive Orders. He banned segregation in the armed forces and guaranteed fair employment practices in the civil service. He provided for "equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed forces without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin." The military took two years to push through the law and very few African Americans became officers. However, the number of front line troops who were African American did increase in the Korean War compared to World War II.

Not all Truman's efforts for ending racial segregation succeeded. His urban renewal program did not work at all. The program was designed to make squalid urban areas more pleasant to live in which meant to make housing estates and buildings more

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open to the people. His idea was to make more pleasant what had been previously ghettos. However, the program built few houses and many African American families became homeless.

Toni Morrison first expressed her criticism of the Civil Rights Movement more than two decades earlier in her 1974 New York Times article, "Rediscovering Black History." This article criticizes both the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Nationalist Movement for separating African Americans from each other and their past. She claims that both movements were created in an "absolute fit of reacting to white values," leading them into reactionary politics that devalued the African American lived experience as "uneducated" in favor of either middle-class white values or romanticized notions

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of African beauty that focused on physical appearance rather than "intelligence" and "spiritual health". Although she acknowledges the pain and trauma of this complex history, she also recognizes and rescues those qualities of resistance, excellence and integrity that were so much part of the African American's past and so useful to the generations of blacks now growing up in America. Morrison contends:

In the legitimate and necessary drive for better jobs and housing, we abandoned the past and a lot of the truth and sustenance that went with it. And when Civil Rights became Black

Power, we frequently chose exoticism over reality. The old verities that made being black and alive in this country

the most dynamic existence imaginable-so

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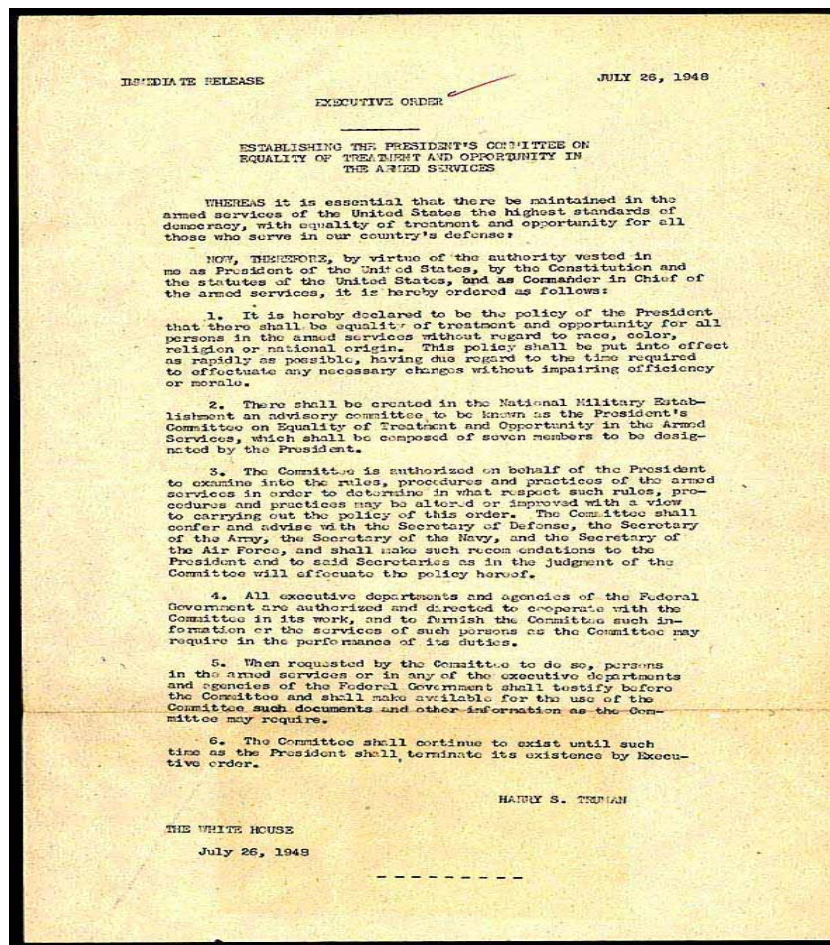
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*much of what was satisfying, challenging and simply
more interesting—were being driven underground—by
blacks In trying to
cure the cancer of slavery and its consequences,
some healthy as well as
malignant cells were destroyed.^{lxi}*



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Executive Order No. 9981, establishing the President's
Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in
the Armed Forces, July 26, 1948.^{lxii}



Chicago Daily Defender, July 31, 1948.

Chicago, Illinois.^{lxiii}

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3.5 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a black clergyman and activist who was the leader of the African American Civil Rights movement. His most important goal was to secure progress in civil rights in the United States. Martin Luther King was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929. His parents were the Reverend Martin Luther King and Alberta William King. Growing up in Atlanta, Martin attended Booker T. Washington High School. He was a very smart student and for that reason he skipped ninth and twelfth grades. He did not have a formal graduation from the high school and went to Morehouse College at age fifteen. In 1948 he graduated from Morehouse with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. After that he enrolled and graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951. His doctoral studies took place in Crozer Theological

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Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, from which he transferred to Boston University and there he received his Doctor of Philosophy on June 5, 1955.^{lxiv}

In Boston he met and married Coretta Scott, a young woman of uncommon intellectual and artistic attainments. King and Scott had four children: Yolanda King, Martin Luther King III, Dexter Scott King, and Bernice King. In 1954, when he was twenty-five years old, Martin Luther King, Jr. became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. By this time King was a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the leading organization of its kind in the nation. He was ready, then, early in December, 1955, to accept the leadership of the first great Negro nonviolent demonstration of



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contemporary times in the United States, The Bus Boycott. The Boycott lasted 382 days. On December 21, 1956, after the Supreme Court of the United States had declared unconstitutional the laws requiring segregation on buses, negroes and whites rode the buses as equals. During these days of boycott, King was arrested, his home was bombed, and he was subjected to personal abuse. Later, in 1957 he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to provide new leadership for the now burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. He took from Christianity the ideals for this organization; its operational techniques from Gandhi. In the eleven-year period between 1957 and 1968, King traveled over six million miles and spoke over twenty-five hundred times, appearing wherever there was



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injustice, protest, and action; and meanwhile he wrote five books as well as numerous articles.

During these years, he led a massive protest in Birmingham, Alabama, that caught the attention of the entire world, providing what he called a coalition of conscience and inspiring his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", a manifesto of the Negro revolution. He planned the drives in Alabama for the registration of Negroes as voters; he directed the peaceful march on Washington, D.C., of 250,000 people to whom he delivered his address, "I Have a Dream". He conferred with President John F. Kennedy and campaigned for President Lyndon B. Johnson; he was arrested upwards of twenty times and assaulted at least four times. King was awarded five honorary degrees; he was named Man of the Year by Time magazine in 1963, and became not only the



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symbolic leader of American blacks but also a world figure. At the age of thirty-five, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end racial segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-violent means. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money of \$54,123 to the furtherance of the civil rights movement. On the evening of April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking garbage workers of that city, he was assassinated.^{lxv}

3.5.1 THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a political and social protest which started in 1955 in



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Montgomery, Alabama, USA, which intended to oppose the city's policy of racial segregation towards its public transit system. Many historically significant figures of the civil rights movement were involved in the boycott, including Martin Luther King, Jr. The boycott resulted in a crippling financial deficit for the Montgomery public transit system, because the city's black population who were the drivers of the boycott were also the bulk of the system's ridership. The ensuing struggle lasted from December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks, an African American woman, was arrested for refusing to surrender her seat to a white person, to December 20, 1956, when a federal ruling took effect, and led to a United States Supreme Court decision that declared the Alabama and



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Montgomery laws requiring segregated buses to be unconstitutional.

The system of segregation used on Montgomery buses consisted of white people who boarded the bus, took seats in the front rows, filling the bus toward the back. African American people who boarded the bus took seats in the back rows, filling the bus toward the front. Eventually, the two sections would meet, and the bus would be full. If another black person boarded the bus, he was required to stand. If another white person boarded the bus, then everyone in the black row nearest the front had to get up and stand, so that a new row for white people could be created. Often when boarding the buses, black people were required to pay at the front, get off, and reenter the bus through a separate door at the back. On



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December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was sitting in the front-most row for black people. When a white man boarded the bus, the bus driver, James F. Blake, told everyone in her row to move back to create a new row for the whites. While all of the other colored people in her row complied, Rosa was the first black woman who refused to give her seat to a white, and was arrested for failing to obey the driver's seat assignments, as city ordinance did not explicitly mandate segregation, but did give the bus driver authority to assign seats. When found guilty on December 5, Parks was fined \$10 plus a court cost of \$4, but she appealed. The boycott was triggered by her arrest. As a result, Rosa Parks is considered one of the pioneers of the civil rights movement.



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The boycott officially ended December 20, 1956. The boycott of the buses had lasted for 381 days. Martin Luther King, Jr. capped off the victory with a magnanimous speech to encourage acceptance of the decision. The Montgomery Bus Boycott also had ramifications that reached far beyond the desegregation of public buses and provided more than just a positive answer to the Supreme Court's action against racial segregation. The Montgomery Bus Boycott reverberated throughout the United States and stimulated the national Civil Rights Movement.^{lxvi}

3. 6 PRESIDENT JOHN F KENNEDY

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President in the United States was born on May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts. He came from a rich and privileged



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Irish-American family. His great grandfather, Patrick Joseph Kennedy, had emigrated from Ireland in 1849. His great grandfathers, Patrick Kennedy and John Francis Fitzgerald were important political figures in Boston. Likewise, Kennedy's father was a highly successful businessman who years later served as ambassador of Great Britain from 1937-1940. His mother was Rose Fitzgerald. Although Kennedy's family was rich, they had to leave Boston and they moved to New York because the rich families of Boston saw their Irish background as vulgar, and the family's wealth as lacking class. The family hoped that the more cosmopolitan New York would allow them to access high society.

In 1940 Kennedy graduated from Harvard University with a science degree. The same year he

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publicized Why England Slept, a book about foreign policy. Then he joined the United States Navy in 1941 and became an intelligence officer. After the United States entered the Second World War, Kennedy was transferred to the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron where he was given command of a PT boat. In 1943 Kennedy was sent to the South Pacific where his boat was hit by a Japanese destroyer. After five hours of struggle, Kennedy and few men of his crew managed to get to an island five miles from where the original incident took place. On December 1943, he suffered a bad back injury and was sent back to the United States. When he recovered, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant and became a PT instructor in Florida. After a further operation on his back he returned to civilian life in March 1945. The next twelve months he worked as a



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journalist covering the United Nations Conference in San Francisco and the 1945 General Election in Britain.

After Kennedy became a member of the *Democratic Party* of the Boston Area, he won the election to the House of Representatives in 1946. Years later, he established himself as a loyal supporter of Harry S. Truman. In 1953 he was elected to the Senate. The following year, on September 12, 1953, he married Jacqueline Bouvier. She was the daughter of a New York financier and she gave Kennedy four children. Two of them died and only two survived, Caroline and John. In October 1954 and February 1955, Kennedy had two operations due to his suffering from back problems. While recovering in hospital he wrote the Profiles in Courage, which won the Pulitzer Prize in history.

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In 1956 Kennedy almost gained the Democratic nomination for vice president. However, in 1960, he was a first-ballot nominee for president. Millions of people watched the television debate between the Republican opponent, Richard M. Nixon and Kennedy. Winning by a narrow margin in the popular vote, Kennedy became the first Roman Catholic President. He selected Lyndon B. Johnson, as his running mate. In the 1960 presidential election campaign, John F. Kennedy argued for a new Civil Rights Act. After the election it was discovered that over 70 per cent of the African American vote went to Kennedy. After his election as President, he took serious action in the cause of equal rights, calling for new civil rights legislation.

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At Kennedy's inaugural address on 20th January, 1961, Kennedy challenged the people of the United States with the statement: *"Ask not what your country can do for you, but rather what you can do for your country."*^{lxvii}

Kennedy also wanted the young people of the country to help the undeveloped world. After that, Kennedy permitted a band of Cuban exiles to invade their homeland. They tried to overthrow the regime of Fidel Castro but failed. Immediately, the Soviet Union renewed its campaign against West Berlin. Kennedy replied to this action by reinforcing the Berlin garrison and increasing the Nation's military strength. Then the Russians installed nuclear missiles in Cuba. In October 1962, the Russian move was discovered by air reconnaissance of American forces. The world trembled with the idea of a nuclear war. On October 26,

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Khrushchev sent Kennedy a letter. He proposed that the Soviet Union would remove the missiles in Cuba if the United States would not invade Cuba. The next day a second letter from Khrushchev arrived; he asked the United States to remove their nuclear bases in Turkey. In this way, the Russians backed down and agreed to take the missiles away. After the Cuban crisis, there was significant progress toward Kennedy's goal of "*a world of law and free choice, banishing the world of war and coercion.*" Thus his administration saw the beginning of new hope for both the equal rights of Americans and the peace of the world.^{lxviii}

During the first two years of his presidency, Kennedy failed to put forward his promised legislation. However, Kennedy's Civil Rights bill was brought before



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Congress in 1963 and in a speech on television on 11th June, Kennedy pointed out that:

"The Negro baby born in America today, regardless of the section of the nation in which he is born, has about one-half as much chance of completing high school as a white baby born in the same place on the same day; one third as much chance of completing college; one third as much chance of becoming a professional man; twice as much chance of becoming unemployed; about one-seventh as much chance of earning \$10,000 a year; a life expectancy which is seven years shorter; and the prospects of earning only half as much."^{lxx}

Now as president, Kennedy could either ignore discrimination or he could act. He had promised in his campaign speeches to work in the Civil Rights Act of 1957^{lxx} if he was elected. The 1960 report by the Civil

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Rights Commission showed clear statistics about how badly discrimination had affected the African American community: 57% of African American housing was unacceptable, African American life expectancy was 7 years less than whites, African American infant mortality was twice that of whites. It was a great deal if an African American family moved into a neighborhood that was not a ghetto.

Once Kennedy was in the presidency, he put pressure on federal government organizations to employ more African Americans. Any African American who were employed were usually in the lowest paid posts and in jobs that had little prospect of professional progress. As a result, he appointed 40 African Americans to senior federal positions including five as



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federal judges. Also, he desegregated many schools in the southern states which did not accept African Americans at all. In September 1962, James Meredith applied to a white-only college (the University of Mississippi) to earn a doctorate but he was not accepted, although he had served in the US Air Force for 10 years. He was rejected because of his color. Meredith got legal aid and fought his case. The Supreme Court ruled in his favor. When Meredith went to enroll, Bobby Kennedy, the attorney general and John F Kennedy's brother sent 500 marshals to ensure that law and order was maintained, but it was not.

Nearly 200 of the marshals were injured and two were shot by those who were adamant that Meredith would not go to college. Kennedy federalized the Mississippi National Guard and sent federal troops to

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the university. At the end, Meredith did enroll in the university. Kennedy was further provoked into action when a civil rights crisis erupted in Birmingham, Alabama, in the spring of 1963. In May, black demonstrators, including many high school and some elementary school children, marched in defiance of a city ban. Police and firemen attacked the marchers with police dogs that bit several demonstrators and high-pressure fire hoses that knocked marchers down and tore off their clothes. The TV images, broadcast across the country and around the world, showed out-of-control racists abusing innocent young who advocated equal rights. Kennedy had looked at a picture on the front page of The New York Times of a dog biting a teenager in the stomach. He said that the photo made him sick. Public facilities were desegregated and employment



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prospects for African Americans in Birmingham did improve somewhat after this incident.

In many senses Kennedy was damned if he did and damned if he did not. If he helped the African Americans in the South, he lost the support of the powerful Democrats there. If he did nothing, he faced world-wide condemnation, especially after the scenes in Birmingham. The majority population in the North was white and this group felt that its problems were being ignored while the problems of the African Americans were being addressed.

On November 22, 1963, when he was hardly past his first thousand days in office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was killed in Dallas, Texas. About 12.30 p.m.

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the presidential limousine entered Elm Street. Then shots rang out and Kennedy was hit by bullets in the head and the left shoulder. Another bullet hit John Connally in the back. Both men were carried into separate emergency rooms. Connally had wounds in his back, chest, wrist and thigh. Kennedy's injuries were more serious, and at 1 p.m. he was declared dead. Within two hours of the killing, a suspect, Lee Harvey Oswald, was arrested. Throughout the time Oswald was in custody, he stuck to his story that he had not been involved in the assassination. On 24th November, while being transported by the Dallas police from the city to the county jail, Oswald was shot dead by Jack Ruby. Kennedy was the youngest man elected President to die.^{lxxi}



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3. 7 PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON

Richard Milhous Nixon was the 37th President of the United States from 1969 to 1974 and was also the 36th Vice President of the United States from 1953 to 1961. Nixon has been the only President to resign the office and also the only person to be elected twice in both the offices of the Presidency and vice presidency. Nixon was born on January 9, 1913 in Yorba Linda, California. He grew up in California in poverty, helping out at his father's grocery store. He was raised as a Quaker. He had two brothers who died of tuberculosis. He went to local public schools. After completing undergraduate work at Whittier College, he graduated from Duke University School of Law in 1937 and returned to California to practice law in La Habra.

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After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he joined the United States Navy, serving in the Pacific theater, and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander during World War II. He was elected in 1946 as a Republican to the House of Representatives representing California's 12th Congressional district, and in 1950 to the United States Senate. He was selected to be the running mate of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican Party nominee, in the 1952 Presidential election, becoming one of the youngest Vice Presidents in history. He waged an unsuccessful presidential campaign in 1960, narrowly losing to John F. Kennedy, and an unsuccessful campaign for Governor of California in 1962; following these losses, Nixon announced his withdrawal from the political scene. In 1968, however, he ran again for president of the United States and was elected. The most immediate task facing President Nixon was a



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resolution of the Vietnam War. He initially escalated the conflict, overseeing incursions into neighboring countries, though American military personnel were gradually withdrawn and he successfully negotiated a ceasefire with North Vietnam in 1973, effectively ending American involvement in the war. His foreign policy initiatives were largely successful: his groundbreaking visit to the People's Republic of China in 1972 opened diplomatic relations between the two nations, and he initiated détente and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union. On the domestic front, he implemented new economic policies which called for wage and price control and the abolition of the gold standard. He was reelected by a landslide in 1972. In his second term, the nation was afflicted with economic difficulties. In the face of likely impeachment for his role in the Watergate scandal, Nixon resigned on August 9,

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1974. He was later pardoned by his successor, Gerald Ford, for any federal crimes he may have committed while in office.

In his retirement, Nixon became a prolific author and undertook many foreign trips. His work as an elder statesman helped to rehabilitate his public image. He suffered a debilitating stroke on April 18, 1994, and died four days later at the age of 81. Nixon played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement. Nixon tied desegregation to improving the quality of education and enforced the law after the Supreme Court, in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (1969), prohibited further delays. By fall of 1970, two million southern black children enrolled in newly created unitary fully integrated school districts; this meant that only 18% of Southern black children attended all-black schools, a decrease from 70% when Nixon came to office. Nixon's



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Cabinet Committee on Education, under the leadership of Labor Secretary George P. Shultz, quietly set up local biracial committees to assure smooth compliance without violence or political grandstanding. "In this sense, Nixon was the greatest school desegregator in American history," historian Dean Kotlowksi concluded. Author Conrad Black concurred: "In his singular, unsung way, Richard Nixon defanged and healed one of the potentially greatest controversies of the time. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Nixon's presidential counselor, commented in 1970, *"There has been more change in the structure of American public school education in the last month than in the past 100 years"*^{xxii}.

In addition to desegregating public schools, Nixon implemented the Philadelphia Plan, the first significant



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federal affirmative action program in 1970. Nixon also endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment after it passed both houses of Congress in 1972 and went to the states for ratification as a Constitutional amendment. Nixon had campaigned as an ERA supporter in 1968, though feminists criticized him for doing little to help the ERA or their cause after his election, which led to a much stronger women's rights agenda. Nixon increased the number of female appointees to administration positions. Nixon signed the landmark laws Title IX in 1972, prohibiting gender discrimination in all federally funded schools and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. In 1970 Nixon had vetoed the Comprehensive Child Development Act, denouncing the universal child-care bill, but signed into law Title X, which was a step forward for family planning and contraceptives. It was during the Nixon Presidency that the Supreme Court



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issued its *Roe v. Wade* ruling, legalizing abortion. Nixon himself did not speak out publicly on the abortion issue, but was personally pro-choice, and believed that, in certain cases such as rape, or an interracial child, abortion was an option.^{lxxiii}

3 .8 PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

Ronald Wilson Reagan was born on February 6, 1911, in Tampico, Illinois. His family moved to Dixon when he was nine. His father was John Edward Reagan, a shoe salesman. His mother was Nelle Wilson Reagan who taught Reagan to read when he was five. He had a very happy childhood and worked at various jobs while he was growing up. He attended local public schools. Then he went to Eureka College in Illinois where he played football and made average grades. He graduated in 1932. After graduating from

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Eureka College, Reagan began his career as a radio announcer in 1932. He worked as a radio sports announcer for WOC radio in Davenport. He became the voice of Major League Baseball. In 1937 Reagan was asked to play radio advertising while he was visiting California in the film *Love is In the Air*. It was the beginning of his film career. He got a seven-year contract with Warner Brothers. Years later, he became a very famous movie star who worked on four to seven movies a year. Then he moved to Hollywood and in 1964 he acted in his last film, *The Killers*; by this time he had appeared in almost 50 films. Moreover, he had been elected as the Screen Actors Guild President from 1947 and served until 1952, and was reelected again from 1959 to 1960.

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Reagan was a very busy person; however, he still had time for his personal life. On January 26, 1940, Reagan married actress Jane Wyman. They had two sons: Maureen and one adopted child, Michael. Right after the United States entered into World War II on December 1941, Reagan enrolled in the army. He was in the Army from 1942 to 1945, and rose to the level of Captain. Reagan never took part in combat and remained stateside. His near-sightedness kept him away from the front. He spent three years in the army working for the Motion Picture Army Unit doing training and advertising films. His absence and other factors caused major problems in his marriage. Some believe it was because Reagan was becoming very active in politics. Others thought he was too busy with his work as president of the Screen Actors Guild. Or it was the trauma when Wyman gave birth four months

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prematurely to a baby girl who did not live in June 1947. They were married for eight years, but they got divorced on June 28, 1948.

On March 4, 1952, Reagan married the woman he would spend the rest of his life with. He married Nancy Davis who was an actress, too. They had two children: Patricia who was born in October 1952 and Ronald in May 1958. By 1954, Reagan's film career had gone down hill and he was hired by General Electric to host a television program. He spent eight years in this job. During this time, he was involved in disputes about Communism in the film industry, and changed his ideas from Liberal to Conservative. Also, he became a spokesman for Conservatism. He actively supported Nixon's campaign for president in 1960. Reagan switched political parties and officially became a

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Republican in 1962. In 1966 he was elected Governor of California and was re-elected in 1970. Reagan continued to look for a place in politics, and at both the 1968 and 1974 Republican National Conventions, Reagan was considered a potential presidential candidate.

In the 1980 election, Reagan won the Republican nomination and defeated Jimmy Carter for president. On January 20, 1981, Reagan took office and two months later, he was shot by John W. Hinckley, Jr outside the Hilton Colon in Washington DC. After that, he recovered quickly and returned to duty. Republican Ronald Reagan became the oldest President elected when he took office as the 40th President of the United States. He served two terms as President, from 1981 to 1989. In the second election of 1984, he defeated

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Democrat Walter Mondale. During Reagan's first period, he cut taxes, increased national defense, met several times with the Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and made the first major move forward in the Cold War when the two nations agreed to eliminate some of their nuclear weapons.

In Reagan's second term of 1984, he reviewed some income taxes and eliminated many deductions, he exempted millions of people with low incomes. At the end of his administration, the Nation was enjoying its longest recorded period of peacetime prosperity without recession or depression. Moreover, Ronald Reagan appointed the first woman to the Supreme Court, and signed legislation for a national holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. He also sent an amendment to the Congress to restore prayer to public schools. Reagan

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said that Founding Fathers never intended to construct a wall between government and religious belief and that the schoolchildren of the United States were entitled to the same privileges.

Reagan was a kind person and had a good sense of humor; however, he wasn't very popular among African Americans. According to historians, it's considered that he did less than other presidents for African Americans. The president was so isolated from African Americans that he sometimes did not realize when he was offending them. One example occurred when Reagan supported Bob Jones University in a lawsuit to obtain federal tax exemptions that had been denied by the IRS. The IRS denied tax exemptions that segregated private schools. Bob Jones University enrolled a minority of black students but prohibited

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interracial dating and marriage. For this reason, the IRS denied the tax exemption. Later, Reagan said that the case had never been presented to him as a civil rights issue. More astonishingly, he did not know that many Christian schools practiced segregation. Another reason for Reagan's unpopularity among African Americans was that he never supported the use of federal power to provide them with civil rights. He opposed the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965. He said that in 1980 The Voting Rights Act had been "humiliating to the South." He tried to make some political points, but while he was doing that he did not accept any comment about his attitude. He reacted to criticisms as attacks on his personal integrity.^{lxxiv}

After two terms of serving, Reagan retired to California. In November, 1994 he announced he was

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officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Instead of keeping his diagnosis secret, he decided to tell the American people about his disease in an open letter to the public on November 5, 1994. Over the next decade, Reagan's health continued to deteriorate, as did his memory. On June 5, 2004, Reagan passed away from pneumonia at the age of ninety three.

3.9 PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

Bill Clinton was the third-youngest president; only Theodore Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy were younger when entering office. He became president at the end of the Cold War; he was born in the period after World War II in Hope, Arkansas, on August 19, 1946. Clinton earned a bachelor's degree in international affairs from Georgetown University in 1968. After he

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graduated from Yale University law school from in 1973, Bill Clinton returned to Arkansas to teach law at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. There he could concentrate on his goal of running for political office. In 1974, he had his first opportunity when he ran for Congress against Republican John Paul Hammerschmidt. Although he lost the race, Bill Clinton learned much about politics and met people who have remained his lifelong friends. Bill met Hillary in Arkansas and she helped him with his campaign. She also began teaching at the University of Arkansas. They were married on October 11, 1975. In 1978 he became the youngest governor in the United States as governor of Arkansas and was reelected in 1982.



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Bill Clinton's most important goal as governor was to improve the quality of education in the state. He raised teachers' salaries and began a program of testing students after the third, sixth, and eighth grades. He also encouraged parents to participate in their children's education. His new educational standards ensured that every child in Arkansas, regardless of the size or wealth of his or her community or of family income level, would receive a quality education.

By the fall of 1991, Governor Clinton believed that the country needed a person with a new vision and plan, and he decided to run for President. He wanted to reinforce the health care system, to improve the school system, and, most of all, to strengthen the economy and create new jobs. Governor Clinton was nominated



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as the Democratic presidential candidate. He brought his message to the country by going door to door to meet the people of America and to talk about their concerns and their hopes for the future. They campaigned on the concept of "putting people first" preserving the American Dream, restoring the hopes of the middle class, and reclaiming the future for the nation's children. On November 3, 1992, Bill Clinton was elected the 42nd President of the United States and Al Gore the 45th Vice President. They had succeeded in bringing the people together in their efforts to change the country. On November 5, 1996, Bill Clinton was once again elected by the American people to serve a second term as President of the United States. Clinton had strong support from the African American community and made improving race relations a major theme of his presidency. In 1998, Toni

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Morrison, Nobel Prize-winning author, called Clinton "the first African American president," saying, "*Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas,*" and comparing Clinton's sex life, scrutinized despite his career accomplishments, to the stereotyping and double standards that blacks typically endure".^{lxxv}

Throughout his life, Clinton has worked to make a difference in the lives of American people. To him, Hope means more than a small town in Arkansas; it means working to ensure that each American has the opportunity to fulfill his or her dream.^{lxxvi}



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3.10 PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Barack Hussein Obama was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He has a multiracial heritage: his father was Barack Obama, a Kenyan, and his mother was Ann Dunham, an American from Kansas State. Obama's father was a foreign student who had won a scholarship at East-West Center University of Hawaii at Manoa. This scholarship allowed him to leave Kenya in pursuit of his dreams in Hawaii. At that place, he met his wife, Ann. They got married and Obama was born soon. When Barack Obama was two years old, his parents separated and later divorced in 1964. After that, Obama's father went to Harvard to pursue Ph.D. studies and then returned to Kenya. Obama and his mother then moved to stay with his maternal grandparents in the Manoa district.

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His mother married Lolo Soetoro, another East–West Center student from Indonesia. In 1967, the family moved to Jakarta, where Obama's half-sister Maya Soetoro was born. Obama attended schools in Jakarta, where classes were taught in the Indonesian language. When he was ten, he returned to Honolulu, Hawaii, to live with his maternal grandparents, Madelyn and Stanley Dunham. From his father's other marriage, Obama has two half sisters and five half brothers, all of them in Kenya. His father became Finance Minister in Kenya and eventually died in a road accident in the year 1982. Before his death, his father met Obama only once in 1971 when he visited Hawaii, so all he knows about his father is through his stories and photographs. He stayed with his grandparents until his graduation.



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During Obama's childhood, he struggled with finding answers about his multiracial heritage. He had found it difficult to accept the differences between his mother's and father's skin color. Obama attended Punahou Academy where he graduated with honors in 1979. He was one of the three black students at the school. At that time, he realized what it meant to be an African American and what racism was all about. Obama described how he faced the social perceptions of his multiracial heritage. He admitted using alcohol, marijuana and cocaine during his teenage years in order to deal with his internal conflicts. Now, he thinks he was wrong and that it was a big mistake. He never touched illegal drugs after those years.

After Obama finished high school, he moved to Los Angeles and studied at Occidental College for two

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years. Then he went to Columbia College in New York where he majored in Political Science with a specialization in International relations in 1983. After he spent four years in New York and working in the Business International Corporation and New Public Interest Group (NYPIRG), he moved to Chicago. He was hired as Community organizer for developing Communities Projects. The Organization wanted a young black man to help them collaborate with black churches in the South. He worked to improve the living conditions of poor neighborhoods. From 1985 to 1988, he worked as a Director of the Organization. This experience taught him organizational skills; he became known for making good speeches. He could connect emotionally to the people. It was during this time that Obama, who had said that he was not raised in a religious household, joined the Trinity United Church of



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Christ. In 1988 Obama traveled for the first time to Europe and then to Kenya for a few weeks in order to met his sister from his mother's side and his father's family. It included an emotional visit to the graves of his father and paternal grandfather.

In late 1988, Obama entered Harvard Law School. He felt that law was a medium which could facilitate activism and community organization. In 1989 he worked as an associate at Sidley and Austin law firms. He met his future wife, Michelle, also a lawyer, there. On February 1990, he was elected the first African American editor of the Harvard Law Review while he was in his second year of college. Finally, Obama graduated from Harvard in 1991. After that, he moved back again to Chicago where he practiced as a civil rights lawyer and joined the firm of Miner, Barnhill & Galland. Also, he helped to organize voter registration

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drives during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. During this time, he married Michelle Robinson on October 3, 1992, and lived in Kenwood on Chicago's South Side with their daughters, Malia (born 1998) and Sasha (born 2001). He taught Constitutional Law at the University of Chicago law school from 1992 to 2004. He wrote a book on racial relations which included a bit of his personal life. In mid 1995 the book was published and was named Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance. A few months after this publication, his mother died from ovarian cancer. Later, he won the Grammy Award for the audio version of this book.

Obama's advocacy work led him to run for the Illinois State Senate as a Democrat. He was elected in 1996 from the south side neighborhood of Hyde Park.

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During these years, Obama worked with both Democrats and Republicans in drafting legislation on ethics, expanded health care services, and early childhood education programs for the poor. He also created a state-earned income tax credit for the working poor. After a number of inmates on death row were found innocent, Obama worked with law enforcement officials to require the videotaping of interrogations and confessions in all capital cases. Following the September 11 attacks, Obama was an early opponent of President George W. Bush's push for war with Iraq. Obama was still a state senator when he spoke against a resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq during a rally at Chicago's Federal Plaza in October 2002. The war with Iraq began in 2003 and Obama decided to run for the U.S. Senate open seat vacated by Republican Peter Fitzgerald. In the 2004 Democratic



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primary, he won 52 percent of the vote, defeating multimillionaire businessman Blair Hull and Illinois Comptroller Daniel Hynes. In the November 2004 general election, Obama received 70% of the vote to Keyes's 27%, the largest electoral victory in Illinois history. Barack Obama became the third African-American elected to the U.S. Senate since Reconstruction.

Though young and inexperienced, as he has not spent much time in Washington, Barack Obama has worked for the last twenty years as a community organizer, a civil rights attorney, a constitutional law professor, a State Senator and then U.S. Senator. His second book, The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream, was published in October 2006. On February 2007, Obama made

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headlines when he announced his candidacy for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. He was locked in a tight battle with former first lady and then U.S. Senator from New York, Hillary Rodham Clinton, until he became the presumptive nominee on June 3, 2008. On November 4th, 2008, Barack Obama defeated Republican presidential nominee John McCain for the position of U.S. President. His stance on ethics, stressing government transparency, education as his priority with George W Bush' educational law "No Child left behind", and affordable and accessible health care to all, has made him a favorite of many Americans. People have very high hopes for him. He is now the 44th president of the United States and the first African-American to hold this office.



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TONI MORRISON`S LETTER TO OBAMA

Dear Senator Obama,

This letter represents a first for me--a public endorsement of a Presidential candidate. I feel driven to let you know why I am writing it. One reason is it may help gather other supporters; another is that this is one of those singular moments that nations ignore at their peril. I will not rehearse the multiple crises facing us, but of one thing I am certain: this opportunity for a national evolution (even revolution) will not come again soon, and I am convinced you are the person to capture it.

May I describe to you my thoughts?

I have admired Senator Clinton for years. Her knowledge always seemed to me exhaustive; her negotiation of politics expert. However I am more compelled by the quality of mind (as far as I can measure it) of a candidate. I cared little for her gender as a source of my admiration, and the little I did care was based on the fact that no liberal woman has ever ruled in America. Only conservative or "new-centrist" ones are allowed into that realm. Nor do I care very

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much for your race[s]. I would not support you if that was all you had to offer or because it might make me "proud."

In thinking carefully about the strengths of the candidates, I stunned myself when I came to the following conclusion: that in addition to keen intelligence, integrity and a rare authenticity, you exhibit something that has nothing to do with age, experience, race or gender and something I don't see in other candidates. That something is a creative imagination which coupled with brilliance equals wisdom. It is too bad if we associate it only with gray hair and old age. Or if we call searing vision naivete. Or if we believe cunning is insight. Or if we settle for finessing cures tailored for each ravaged tree in the forest while ignoring the poisonous landscape that feeds and surrounds it. Wisdom is a gift; you can't train for it, inherit it, learn it in a class, or earn it in the workplace-- that access can foster the acquisition of knowledge, but not wisdom.

When, I wondered, was the last time this country was guided by such a leader? Someone whose moral center

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was un-embargoed? Someone with courage instead of mere ambition? Someone who truly thinks of his country's citizens as "we," not "they"? Someone who understands what it will take to help America realize the virtues it fancies about itself, what it desperately needs to become in the world?

Our future is ripe, outrageously rich in its possibilities. Yet unleashing the glory of that future will require a difficult labor, and some may be so frightened of its birth they will refuse to abandon their nostalgia for the womb.

There have been a few prescient leaders in our past, but you are the man for this time.

Good luck to you and to us.

Toni Morrison^{lxxvii}

Obama responded to Morrison's endorsement with a written statement:

"Toni Morrison has touched a nation with the grace and beauty of her words, and I was deeply



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moved and honored by the letter she wrote and the support she is giving our campaign.^{11xxviii}

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE HISTORY OF TONI MORRISON'S TIME IS REFLECTED IN HER WORKS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

During the years immediately after World War I, many new opportunities were given to the growing and expanding group of African American people who lived in the North of the United States. Almost 500, 000 African Americans moved to the northern states between 1910 and 1920. This was the beginning of a

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continuing migration northward. More than 1,500,000 blacks went north in the 1930's and 2, 500,000 in the 1940's. Life in the North was very hard for African American people. Race riots, slum housing, and restricted job opportunities were only a few of the many hardships that African American people had to face at this time. Families often had to separate, social agencies were overcrowded with people that needed help, crime rates increased and many other problems appeared.^{lxxix}

In Toni Morrison's novels, there is always an analysis of the conflicts experienced by the black population in the United States, especially, “women’s problems.” Morrison talks about the formation of the African American identity under the predominant group of white people who had ethnic characteristics different

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from those of Blacks. The African American population lived through very important historical events in which Blacks had to fight to establish their position in American society. Events such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s influenced Toni to write her novels, especially because during this historical time she became conscious of herself as an African American woman; she became aware of her race and her origins.^{lxxx}

During that time, black people were active in politics and literature. Blacks had already created an African American novelist tradition which became pronounced in the 1960s. This generation of writers precedes Toni's and had a great influence on her. The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved

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and Jazz are the greatest of Toni Morrison's works. These novels reflect the historical events of Morrison's time. In her novels, the author tries to change the stereotype of the black woman that had prevailed in African American literature. She looked for something different in her novels, and that's why she created female personages with their own identity. Toni was conscious of her black heritage, and of African Americans' need to understand their history.^{lxxxix}

Toni's novels are written without chronological order because she tries to recover a bit of her roots as an African American. Toni has said that she writes the kind of books she wants to read. She wants to have in her novels a kind of oral quality, which could be compared to the tribal storytelling tradition of African American people. As mentioned before, she writes for black women; however, she rejects the black feminist

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model in her works. She recalls that when she began writing in the 1960s and 1970s there was a lack of books about black women, but her intention was not to address men. *There was no fiction representing her experience: “this person, this female, this black did not exist centre-self.”* lxxxii

Toni's novels go from the rural slave-holding South, where her direct descendants were from, to the great migration to the North where her grandparents moved in order to find better living conditions. The Post-World War I period, and the Great Depression, obligated her parents to work at extra jobs, such as car washing, and road construction, to support their family and survive. During one of those times, when Toni was two years old, her parents could not pay the four dollars



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they owed for their rent. The landlord asked them to leave, but her father refused. The landlord set fire to the house with the family inside. Nobody was injured, but it was a story her parents told Toni while she was growing up. lxxxiii

Other historical events such as the pre-Civil Rights era, the Civil Rights Movement and its most important personages, along with its political and social aspects, are presented in Toni Morrison's background and novels. Moreover, these events are crucial for understanding other aspects of her works. Her development as a writer is not just about narrative techniques, but also about the political concerns of contemporary society. While Toni worked as a senior at Random House, she knocked on many doors of

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publishing houses and many of them refused to print her works. This kind of treatment led to the organization of women's liberation groups. So, Toni had to fight for her rights as a woman as well as for her rights as a black person. It's very interesting that at a historical moment in which civil liberties in the United States seemed to improve, Toni focused on "pursuits of freedom". Ironically, black communities which have suffered slavery and discrimination have had the responsibility of finding the "American Dream" for Blacks.^{lxxxiv}

4.2 THE BLUEST EYE

The Bluest Eye is Toni Morrison's first novel written while she was teaching at Howard University and raising her two sons in her hometown from 1957 to 1964. She moved to Syracuse, New York, in 1965 when

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she saw an ad in *The New York Review of Books* for an editing position. It was her opportunity; the Civil Rights movement was putting pressure on schools to revise the way blacks were being presented in the curriculum. She started to write the novel in 1962 and eventually published it in the midst of the Civil Rights movement in 1970. The 1960's was not only an important decade in the fight for Civil Rights, it was an era filled with many changes in the United States. The book was published when she was thirty years old and had a solid career as an editor at Random House. Some of Toni's students became famous: Claude Brown, author of *Manchild in the Promised Land* and *Children of Ham*, and Stokely Carmichael, a civil rights activist in the 1960s. He was later known as Kwame Ture. The story of The Bluest Eye is about a young black girl in Lorain, Ohio, named Pecola. She is a black nine-year-old girl who felt ugly

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and unloved by her family. She wished to have blue eyes because they represented beauty to her and she thought she would be loved and appreciated by people if she had them. At the end, her obsession for having blue eyes drove her to madness.

The story takes place in the Midwest, Toni's home in the years following the Great Depression. The story is from the perspective of Claudia MacTeer (Pecola's friend), as a child and later as an adult. Claudia began her story with the words Toni heard many times when she was growing up, "*Quiet as it's kept...*" ^{lxxxv} The Bluest Eye shows how racial prejudices can affect a child and it is a very controversial book which deals with racism, incest, and child molestation. It was reviewed in several well-known

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publications such as The New York Times Book Review, Newsweek, the New Yorker, and the Chicago Tribune. Critics praised Toni's use of language and called her style, "poetic", although she did not agree at all. She has tried to write in the language used by the people she knows. Although the book had modest sales, she became recognized as a critic and scholar of the African American culture. Most of the reviewers agreed that it was a very impressive first novel.^{lxxxvi}

Toni Morrison's desire was to create a book about the culture in which she grew up, and the African American girls with whom she identified. She admits that the novel was inspired by her own hometown of Lorain, Ohio. *"I think most first novels are pretty autobiographical in some way because you are*

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frightened to pull from too many places.^{lxxxvii} She used streets and landmarks from her hometown in the book. She also used pieces of events from her childhood. Likewise, in the opening paragraph of the novel, Toni cited some lines from a basic reading series that was used in the school at one time. She, as millions of other children, learned to read using those books which were about a brother and a sister named Dick and Jane. They lived in a pretty green and white house with their cat, and everyone was always happy. The primer with white children was the way life was presented to black people. It stood as the only visible model for happiness, but Toni wanted to change that image.^{lxxxviii}

The Bluest Eye has a genuine description of African American culture in 1940 and describes many ethnic problems and social changes of that time. The historical background is the migration to the North of

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African American people and their integration into the society there. Also, Toni mentions how the film industry was growing at that time and how it influenced the African American community. She shows this influence through Pecola's mother, Pauline, who changed her attitude and created ideas of a wonderful world of white heroes and happy endings. This factor made Pecola forget her family and reject her race. The movie culture industry created the perfect world of white people which influenced Pecola, too. ^{lxxxix}

Toni shows the great influence of the film industry at that time and how it formed the people's perception of life. This influence explains Pecola's desire to have blue eyes and become "beautiful". Toni Morrison refers to such a cultural changing process as

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the oppressive power of the white culture, the increasing control of the film industry, the economic situation and its influence on personal, family and social stability. Thus, the novel handles the problem of the individual and ethnic identity of Blacks at that time. This novel is not only enriching as literature but is also historically significant because it gives the background of American culture in 1940.^{xc}

4.3 SULA

As mentioned before, Toni's first novel was not commercially successful at the time of its publication. However, while Toni still worked as an editor, she became a frequent critic working for the *New York Times* and an authoritative commenter on black culture and women's concerns. Moreover, her essays, articles, and book reviews appeared in well-known newspapers

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and magazines and helped her to gain national recognition. Toni wrote twenty-eight book reviews and an essay about how African American women viewed the women's liberation movement. This article appeared in the New York Times magazine on August 2, 1971. Toni said that the women's liberation movement mostly benefited white, middle-class women.^{xc}

Three years after Toni's first novel, she published her second novel, Sula, in 1973. The novel takes place from 1919 to 1965 and examines a Midwestern black community, called The Bottom in Medallion, Ohio. The story focuses on the friendship of two black girls during their childhood and analyzes the importance of friendships. The main personages are Sula Peace and Nel Wright. When they grow up, they



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become two different women. Sula is a very outgoing and adventurous person who goes to college and comes back to her town to see the friend of her childhood. She does not care about what people and her community think about her. Also, she started dating many white men and broke all codes of her community, including sleeping with married men. On the other hand, Nel is a very conservative woman who grows up to marry and have children. Their friendship ended because of Nel's husband's sexual betrayal with Sula.^{xcii}

The city of Bottom in Medallion is fictional, but it has an historical precedent. In an interview with Toni Morrison, she stated that "Medallion" emerged from a story her mother had told her when she was a child. When her parents got married, they moved to



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Pittsburgh. In those days, at first, all black people lived in the hills of the city, but later they lived surrounded by the smoke and dirt in the heart of the city. This story shows the displacement of Toni Morrison's family through the people of Medallion in Sula. Her maternal grandparents, John Solomon and Ardelia Willis, were sharecroppers from Alabama, who settled in the north to escape racism and poverty. Their movement demonstrates how other African Americans moved to the north during the first half of the twentieth century and during the First World War. This historical event influenced Toni Morrison's themes.^{xciii}

The character of Sula develops over forty years, from 1919 to 1965. The first part of the book occurs in the years of the First World War and the second part in

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the beginning of World War II. Toni's purpose was to shift toward the past and experience the nostalgia of the history of that period. The war in Europe opened new opportunities in the industrial north in manufacturing and war production jobs. Natural disasters, such as boll weevil infestation, and flooding in the Mississippi Delta from 1915 to 1916, destroyed cotton crops and contributed to the migration. Many black men and women filled thousands of jobs in the steel mills in rail and shipyards, as well as in domestic and hotel staff service work.

Also, many African Americans served in the military forces and fought under French command because white officers in the U.S. Army refused to serve with black soldiers. African Americans fought

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valiantly and many of them obtained France's highest military honor, "The Croix de Guerre". Meanwhile, women working in factories with better wages replaced the men who had gone to war. These economic and military opportunities, along with some political organizations such as the NAACP, (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), gave black people racial equality. Returning black soldiers who had fought to defend democracy abroad received good treatment, for example. This racial equality changed the attitude of African Americans. The new African Americans were aggressive and outspoken against the racial hatred they had suffered for years. However, the response of white people to the changing attitudes of African Americans was often violent, and many of them were lynched. Toni Morrison was born years later these troubles but she connects all these



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events to her novel, *Sula*, because of her parents' tradition of storytelling. This novel is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically.^{xciv}

When Toni Morrison wrote *Sula*, she was venturing into new territory. Friendship had not been the main theme in a novel in the past. It was a difficult time for Toni to write this novel because she was so busy enjoying her sons or going out with friends. She dedicated *Sula* to her sons, Ford and Slade. *Sula* was well received among critics who called it “thought-provoking”. Reviewers praised Toni’s dialogue and her ability to create interesting characters. The novel carried commercial and critical triumph. Some excerpts of the novel were published in Redbook magazine and

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in 1975 it was nominated for the National Book Award in fiction. In the same year, she also won the Ohioana Book Award. In conclusion, the Great Migration at the beginning of the twentieth century implied a desire for liberation of self, both physically and psychologically, after the forced dislocation of African Americans due to slavery. Morrison's character, Sula, embodies this desire of self-liberation.^{xcv}

4.4 SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Salomon was Toni Morrison's third book and was published in 1977. It was inspired by her curiosity, concerning the way a person who had left the African American community to get an education could survive without self-destructive needs for material things. The novel follows the life of Macon "Milkman" Dead, an African American male living in Michigan,

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from birth to adulthood. The main theme in the novel is Milkman's quest for identity as a black man in the 20th-century in the United States. He tries to piece together the history of his ancestors. He does this by taking a journey into his father and aunt's past. He tries to find fortune in the caves of Virginia but he obtains something more important which is the understanding of his ancestors' history and origins.^{x cvi}

The novel is written in the third person, but the narrative weaves in and out of different character viewpoints, beliefs, and egos. The search for identity, the effects of geographical displacement on African Americans, and the effects of distorted love all play out as important themes in the novel. Another major theme is the idea that the individual must find freedom from not just saving himself or herself. Song of Solomon is set during the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the action in

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the novel is the result of events that happened at the turn of the century, including the Great Migration and World War I and its aftermath; as in Toni's first two novels. The Great Migration involved the movement of millions of southern Blacks to the urban North in search of jobs and freedom in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. In her novel, Toni gives voice to one of those families, the Deads. According to Morrison, the Great Migration represented marginal material progress, but it also resulted in the loss of a traditional rural culture.^{xcvii}

Morrison's first two novels took place in Ohio communities, but Song of Solomon covered a larger area. Milkman's journey took him from his home in Michigan to Pennsylvania and to Virginia. The title of the book came from a song Milkman heard from a group of children singing in Virginia that had been sung

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by Milkman's great-grandfather, Solomon. There were two circumstances in Toni's life which made Song of Solomon difficult to write: she admitted that to be a single parent was not easy, especially because one of her sons was becoming a man. The other reason that made writing hard for Toni was that her father had just died. Moreover, the novel is told from a male point of view; Milkman was the first male personage fully developed in her novels. She used the traits she had seen in the men in her family.^{xcviii}

One of the most important moments in Song of Solomon is when Milkman finds Guitar in the barbershop, and listens to a report about the murder of Emmett Till. Till was a fourteen year old from Chicago who visited Mississippi in 1955. He had whistled at a white woman and was murdered by whites. Nobody was convicted for his murder; however, it was one of

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the catalysts for a renewal of the civil-rights movement. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had been arguing against the legality of segregation in the courts, and Martin Luther King, Jr. and others began using nonviolent action to desegregate the South. In 1963, King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, which inspired many Americans. After many nonviolent manifestations, white people bombed a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, and killed four young girls. Later, this event was described as a crucial moment in the struggle. However, many Blacks started to lose their hopes of freedom. Some civil-rights workers became radical, and no longer believed in nonviolent action. This is echoed in the character of Guitar, whose violence is stronger after he kills the girls.^{xcix}



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Song of Solomon was the first novel written by a black writer to become a Book-of-the-Month Club selection since Richard Wright's novel, Native Son, was published in 1940. Toni received the National Book Critics Circle Award in the year of its publication. In 1978, she was appointed to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and was named Distinguished Writer of the Year. The novel sold over three million copies and was on The New York Times best-seller list for sixteen months. Morrison became a member of the National Council of the Arts. At that time, Toni's fiction began to be compared to that of writers such as Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner. ^c

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4.5 TAR BABY

In 1981, Toni Morrison's fourth novel was published. Tar Baby gave Toni Morrison the opportunity to be the second African American woman to have the distinction of appearing on the cover of Newsweek magazine. She worked on her novel for three and one half years. Toni's work was influenced by the civil rights and black power movements. In the 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement was working hard to end segregation and violence against African Americans in order to stop discrimination and increase economic opportunities for Blacks. The movement went from peaceful protestations to violence to make white people recognize the worth of Blacks and treat them with equality.^{ci}

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Tar Baby was based on a story from African American folklore that Morrison had heard as a child. In the foreword to Tar Baby, Morrison recalls the importance of storytelling in her childhood. She grew up listening to the adults in her family entertain one another with tales. Morrison dedicated Tar Baby to the many women, whose first education was based both on listening to and telling stories, including her mother and grandmothers. Like most folktales, there were several versions of the story about Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby. In an interview, Morrison talked about the version she knew. In that story, a white farmer made a tar baby and clothed it in a bonnet and dress to trap a pesky rabbit that had been stealing from the farmer's garden. The rabbit saw the tar baby and said, "good morning," expecting to get a civilized response. The tar baby did not answer, which made the rabbit so angry that he hit

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the rabbit and got stuck in the tar. When the rabbit realized he was caught, he tried to outwit the farmer. He begged the farmer to boil him in oil or skin him alive, but not to throw him in the briar patch. The farmer fell into the rabbit's trick and threw the rabbit into the briars. The rabbit took advantage of the situation and ran away through the briar patch. ^{cii}

Much of the action in Morrison's fourth novel takes place on a Caribbean Island called Isle des Chevaliers. However, some scenes also branch out to other areas, such as New York City, Philadelphia, Paris, and a small town in northern Florida. . In Tar Baby, for the first time Toni Morrison gives white characters significant roles. These characters are Valerian Street, a retired candy manufacturer from Philadelphia, and his longtime African American butler and cook. The tar baby in Morrison's story was Jadine Childs, a well-educated



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Paris model. Jadine was indebted to the “Streets” because one of the members of this family, Valerian, paid for Jadine’s education. In the original story, the tar baby is made by a white man and that had to be the case with Jadine. She had received a marriage proposal from a wealthy Frenchman and had returned to “Isle des Chavaliers” to be with her family and to think about her decision. The rabbit was an African American man named Son Green who was on the run from a manslaughter charge. He jumped ship and hid in the Street home for four days before he was caught. Although Son’s presence upset other members of the household, Valerian Street decided to treat Son as a guest. He allowed Son to sleep in the guest room and eat meals with the family. Son was the one who caused feelings of racism in both the black and white members of the story. Tar Baby is not a protest novel; Morrison is



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not looking for someone to blame for white oppression of African Americans. Toni explores the division among the characters, their dysfunctional identities, displacement and materialism. Through their story Toni discusses the racial fears sometimes felt by both whites and blacks.^{ciii}

Important changes in Toni Morrison's life occurred after the publication of Tar Baby. Toni become nationally famous for her work, and Tar Baby appeared on the New York Times best seller list during four months. Also Toni Morrison was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Writer's Guild, and the Author's League. During that year Toni promoted her book in fourteen cities; she also gave many television interviews and appeared on NBC's Today show.^{civ}



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4.6 BELOVED

The culmination of Morrison's storytelling skills, and the book most often considered her masterpiece, is Beloved. Published in 1987 and inspired by an incident from history, Morrison bases the central event of the novel on a historical account of a slave woman named Margaret Garner. Like Morrison's character, Sethe, Margaret Garner escaped from slavery with her four children, and later, when her slaveholder attempted to take them back to slavery, she killed one of the children. Morrison also sets the entire novel in a historical frame, referring to many actual events. There are many historical references about the Middle Passage, a designation for the ocean voyage of slaves from Africa to the Caribbean. During the passage, slave traders crowded the Africans into the holds of ships and chained them together by twos, at their hands and feet.

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They had no room for movement and no chance for exercise. Smallpox epidemics were common. Approximately one half of the slaves died during their journey or became permanently debilitated. Many committed suicide by jumping into the sea. The African trade was officially closed in 1808 at which time the domestic trade became highly profitable for European Americans.

A historical event of importance in the novel is the Fugitive Slave Law, passed in 1850. The law made it a crime to harbor a fugitive slave in a free state and gave slaveholders from Southern states jurisdiction to search for and take slaves back to slave states. It meant that slavery was the law of the land, not just of the slave states. Fugitive slaves who had made it north had to live their lives in fear of recapture. As a result, many of them expatriated to Canada and other

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countries. The Underground Railroad is another historical reality pictured in the book. The Underground Railroad began in 1819, even though the term for it was not coined until after 1831. The railroad originated in Ohio, but quickly spread in an effort to help slaves gain freedom. At the beginning, most of the fugitives were men, but later, women and children found help through the various routes of the Underground Railroad. Travel usually took place at night, and the stations of refuge were close together, usually ten to fifteen miles apart. Through an organized network, word was quickly passed to the next station that fugitives were on the way. The Railroad was largely funded by Quakers and other abolitionist groups. At one point, 3,200 workers supposedly helped with the Underground Railroad, and approximately 100,000 slaves were helped to freedom.



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The novel gives a very realistic picture of slavery. Marriage and the slave family were seldom recognized by the slaveholders. When slaves did marry, they were always threatened with separation according to the economic needs of the slaveholder. Although childbearing was encouraged, for it produced new slaves, it was extremely difficult for slave women. They did not receive medical care and their diet was usually inadequate for prenatal health. The death rate of infants among slaves was extremely high. A common practice in slavery was the use of slave women to nurse the infants of European-American slaveholders. Often one slave woman acted as the nursemaid for several infants on the plantation. If the master's infant was among them, she was forced to give preference to it. Child rearing was also next to impossible. Slave women were frequently not allowed the opportunity to develop



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attachment to their children due to separation and excessively long work hours. The use of slave women by slave owners and slave foremen for sex was common practice. Children born of these unions were slaves. Beloved is an attempt by Morrison to provide an alternate point of view to Eurocentric accounts of history, especially slavery. In her novel, Morrison uses the experience of Sethe and others as witnesses to the cruel and barbaric acts that resulted from the slave system.^{cv}

4.7 JAZZ

Toni Morrison divided her time among different activities: writing, reading and teaching left her time for nothing more. 1992 was Morrison's biggest publishing year with the release of three new books, including her

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sixth novel Jazz, which was published that spring. Jazz is set in the Harlem section of New York City in the mid 1920s. Toni was inspired to write about that time period because of the stories her parents had told her about when they were younger. Jazz is a type of music known for its improvisation, which means that musicians create music as they play. Because of that spontaneity, each performance is different, giving the music a special excitement. During the 1920s, jazz was especially popular and the Harlem neighborhood of New York City was an important jazz center.^{cvi}

Toni has consistently described African American communities in various times. Toni has set her novels in hometowns and cities as we can see in Jazz. Jazz shows the development of the theme of creating the place marked by a critical historical event, the African Great Migration. It is the movement of African



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Americans from the rural South to the industrialized North to run away from the intensified racism and to achieve economic freedom. Harlem especially, where the population of African Americans expanded rapidly from 1910 to 1930, was believed to be a promised land for them. Also Jazz represents the main characters' internal changes along with the experience of migration and their lives in the City they finally reached.^{cvii}

Toni said the idea for Jazz came from a book of photographs taken by James Van der Zee titled The Harlem Book of the Dead. One of the photographs was of an eighteen-year-old girl lying in a coffin. Toni learned that the girl in that photograph had gone to a party and was dancing, when suddenly she slumped to the floor. The people around her noticed blood, but no one knew what had happened. They asked her, but all she would say was that she would tell then the next



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day. She died during the night. No one knew she had been shot until after she had died. They discovered that her jealous boyfriend had shot her, using a gun with a silencer. The girl had refused treatment, telling everybody she would explain the next day, but what she was really doing was giving the boyfriend time to get away.^{cviii}

Jazz is an extension of the novel Beloved. It's characters are the children and grandchildren of Sethe's and Paul's D generation that left the rural areas and life on the land with dreams of success in the urban centers. Toni sets her story in 1906 when Joe Trace and his Wife Violet went from the South to the North, to Harlem and elsewhere. Toni explores the African American migrant urban experience of people who left the South in order to escape from poverty and white violence. The action in the novel begins in 1962, in the

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jazz age when Joe, now a fifty-year old salesman shoots his lover Dorcas, an eighteen year old girl. She dies without revealing the identity of the person who killed her. Later his wife Violet angered by her husband's infidelity, goes to the funeral and tries to slash the girl's face. Morrison shows the healing process of her main characters through an insight into the past of each of her characters. Joe Trace was abandoned by his parents when he was a child, and Violet's mother committed suicide because she was tired of living in poverty. Dorcas was orphaned when her parents were killed in riots in St. Louis. ^{cix}

Although some critics said Morrison's lyrical, or musical, style of writing was overdone in this book, most reviewers were enthusiastic in their praise of Jazz. Her novel was The New York Times best seller book of that spring. Toni Morrison is a successful novelist. She



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presents unforgettable characters in language that has been described as lyrical and rich. She invites her readers into her books to participate in the telling of her stories, and in the process, she challenges them to think about ideas they may not want to consider. Toni Morrison's novels: The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved and Jazz have had a deep impact on Americans' lives and they will continue to be a contribution to American literature and culture. Toni's vast cultural knowledge is the source of the richness of her novels. She is also a natural born writer with the ability to describe details, and the skills to invent compelling narrative. She explores and dramatizes the past and presents African American history through the myth and folklore of many people and nations. ^{CX}



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CHAPTER V

A WORKSHOP ON AMERICAN CULTURE AS SEEN THROUGH LITERATURE AT LATINOAMERICANO HIGH SCHOOL.

NOVEL: BELOVED BY TONI MORRISON.

- Subject Area: English
- Level: 10th grade
- Time required: one hundred sixty minutes.

Reading Skills:

- Reading comprehension.
- Reading analysis.
- Identification of unknown words

AIM: At the end of the lesson Students will be able
to...

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- Formulate questions and identify key passages that help them to understand the significance of the literary text.
- Find answers to the questions they have raised while reading and hold discussions and personal inquiries about the text.
- Decode unfamiliar vocabulary taken from context.
- Develop critical thinking about major events, ideas, facts in the text, before, during and after the reading.



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5.1 EXPLORING AMERICAN CULTURE THROUGH MARGARET GARNER, A FUGITIVE SLAVE.

5.1. 1 WARM UP: BRAINSTORMING

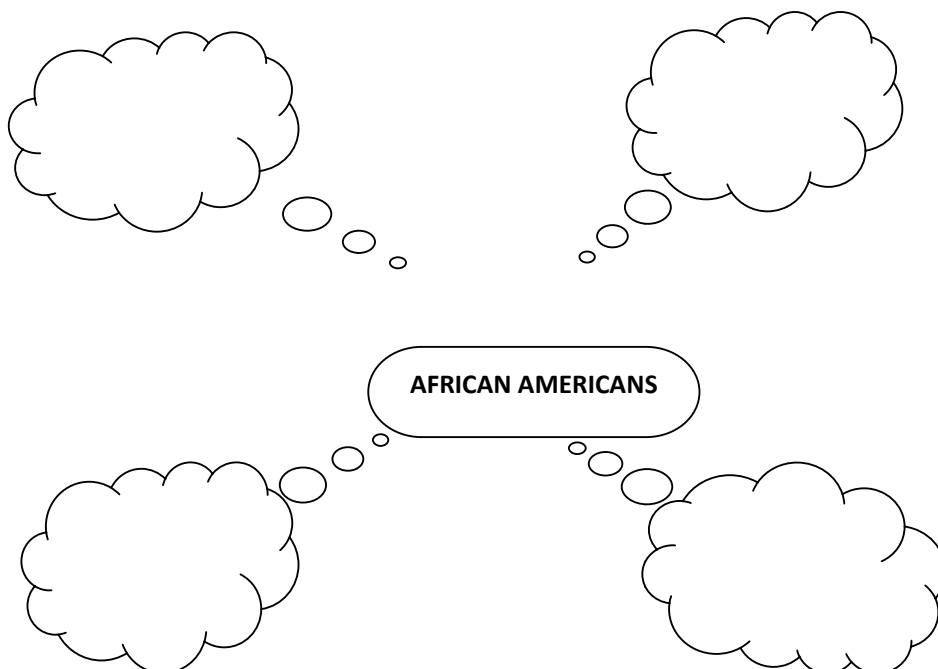
Teacher writes a major idea about the reading, and asks for information from the students about the central topic. The aim is to make a brainstorming activity with students' opinions and to engage them in the topic.

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EXAMPLE:



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5.1.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Teacher shares a scene related to the main reading:

The story is about a slave woman named Margaret Garner. She escaped with her children and her husband to Ohio from her evil master who mistreated them constantly. After some days, while they were celebrating their freedom, the evil master arrived with some officers and tried to take them back to slavery. Margaret was desperate and tried to kill her children and then herself in order to avoid the suffering of slavery again. She succeeded in killing just one of her children who probably she loved the best.



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5.1.3 GUIDING QUESTIONS:

The following questions elicit students' responses in order to prepare them for the reading.

- Do you know any famous African American people?
- What do you know about slavery?
- Do you know a famous writer?
- Who's your favorite writer? Why?

5.1.4 VOCABULARY FOR COMPREHENSION:

Teachers can explain the new words by giving synonyms, using them in context or according to the teacher's methodology.

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EXAMPLE:

Degree:

Editor:

Colleges:

Tar:

African

American:

Award:

Critics:

Slavery:

Melodramatic:

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5.1.5 BACKGROUND ABOUT TONI MORRISON.

In class: Students read about Toni Morrison individually, writing short notes as they go.

TONI MORRISON

Toni Morrison, born Chloe Anthony Wofford, was raised in Lorain, Ohio. She has been married and divorced and has two children. She has an undergraduate degree from Howard University and a Masters degree from Cornell University in English. She has been an editor at Random House and taught at many colleges and universities. She currently teaches at Princeton University. In addition to Beloved, Morrison has written the novels The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon,



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Tar Baby, Jazz, and Paradise. She has also written essays and plays.

Toni Morrison published Beloved in 1987. The book received a Pulitzer Prize and a Nobel Prize for Literature, and remains as Morrison's most controversial work. Critics find it melodramatic because it takes issue with its claims about the horrors of slavery. Beloved is based on the true story of an ex-slave named Margaret Garner, who attempted to kill her children to prevent them from returning to slavery. Toni takes this event as the origin for her story and uses the novel to explore the intensity of a mother's relationship with children, particularly under slavery.



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5.1.6 CHECKING UNDERSTANDING: TRUE OR FALSE QUESTIONS.

Teacher can prepare questions in order to check the students' comprehension of the reading.

Example:

Toni Morrison is the real name of the writer

T F

Toni attended Howard and Cornell

Universities T F

Beloved was based on a science fiction story

T F

Toni uses the novel to explore a friendly
relationship T F



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5.1.7 HOMEWORK

Teacher ask students to read pages 74,75,76,77 of Chapter 2 which describes the escape of Sethe (Margaret Garner) to understand the hard reality of slavery in the United States in the 19th century.

5.2 TEACHING BELOVED AS PART OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

5.2.1 WARM UP

Form some workgroups and make students write and discuss about the following word.

Set: Freedom is...



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A) Freely write their answers.

B) How did people of the past feel about freedom?

Tell how different we are today.

5.2.2 READING THE PLOT OF BELOVED: I PART

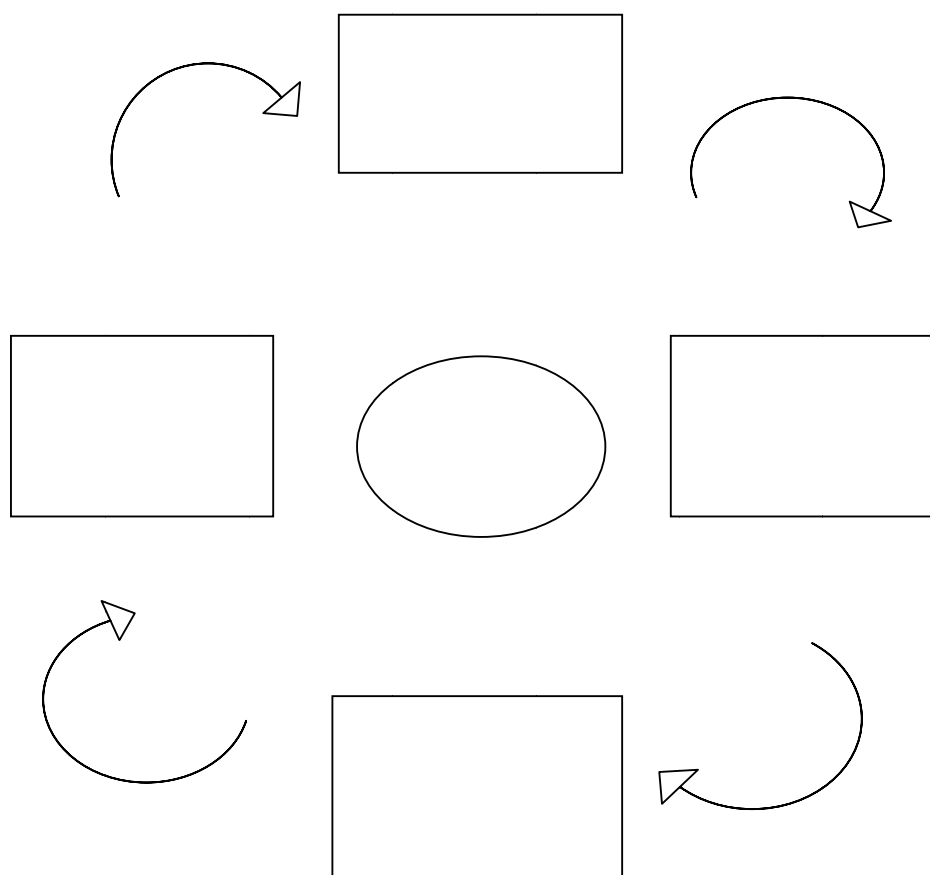
Read the text that was assigned as homework in class. All the class can participate and as they read the text, they can circle the words they did not understand. After the reading, teacher checks the new words in order to improve the students' vocabulary.

5.2.3 GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS.

Give students a copy of graphic organizers and make them explain the story through it.



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5.2.4 EVALUATION

Each group chooses the best graphic organizer and relates it to the story.

5.2.5 HOMEWORK

Students read

5. 3 DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING ON BELOVED.



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5.3.1 FEEDBACK: INTERPRETATION OF KEY PHRASES

Teacher takes some phrases from the reading and asks students to write their opinions about them and share their opinions in class.

EXAMPLE:

Work in pairs. Analyze the following phrases.

Who mentioned that phrase? and why?

- *“better to see their children in the afterlife than in slavery”*
- *“You your best thing, Sethe”*
- *“it was not a story to pass on.”*



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5.3.2 READING THE PLOT OF BELOVED: II PART

Students read the text which was assigned as homework taking turns. They underline the new words in order to check for comprehension.

5.3.3 WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: THINKING A DIFFERENT ENDING.

In class: Teacher can ask students to make workgroups and write a different ending of the novel.

5.3.4 EVALUATION

Students read aloud their endings and the class chooses the best one.



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5.3.5 HOMEWORK: MAKING A COLLAGE

In groups students will present a collage about the reading.

5.4 VISUAL PRESENTATION.

Students watch the movie, Beloved

5.4.1 EVALUATION: BOOK COMPARED TO THE FILM.

Students work in pairs in order to discuss the novel and the film.



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BOOK COMPARED TO THE FILM	BOOK	FILM
SETTING (Where does the story take place?)		
MAIN CHARACTERS (names; their attitude towards each other)		
PROBLEM (What is the main problem that the story deals with?)		
EVENTS (the main things that happen; how the characters try to resolve the		



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problem)		
CLIMAX (What happens to bring about the end?)		
ENDING		

Did you prefer the book or the film? Why?



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CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison's novel, Beloved, is a description of American history during slavery. Toni constructs history through the acts and consciousness of African American slaves. She goes back into history by creating a material of myth and fantasy. Toni relates real black people's experiences, especially black women's, through her imagination and creativity. Although slave history is covered in textbooks, the intimate lives of slave people are rarely discussed by historians who have no insight into that side of slavery. Since slaves seldom knew how to read or write, there are no written accounts of their history; instead the ex-slaves and their descendants passed down the tales of slavery through storytelling, which has been largely ignored in history books. In the novel Toni Morrison shows slave history



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from the perspective of ex-slaves. The central point of the novel is the need for people, specifically people who suffered slavery, to deal with their painful pasts in order to heal them. Moreover, Toni's childhood, which was full of fantasy, dreams, and storytelling about her ancestors, influenced her a great deal.

Toni Morrison sets Beloved, before the Civil War. The novel is based on the story of Margaret Garner, a slave woman who killed her daughter to protect her from the terrible system of slavery. Margaret Garner's life is exemplified by Sethe, a slave woman who runs away from Sweet Home after the arrival of the Schoolteacher. Like the real story, in the novel, Sethe killed her baby in order to save her from the misery of slavery that she had experienced. Although Sethe does not spend much time in jail for crime, she spends most of her life paying for the murder, and is haunted by the



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ghost of her dead baby, and tortured by the painful memories of what she suffered as a slave. Sethe's lack of her mother's affection is reflected in the infanticide. She thinks that through killing her children, she is caring for them. She believes that an afterlife is better than a return to slavery. Sethe also abandons Denver emotionally and herself too, in trying to make it up to Beloved for killing her. At the end, Denver represents both the future and the past; Denver will be the New African American woman teacher. In that way, Denver becomes Morrison's precursor, the woman who has taken the task of carrying the story through generations to our storyteller.

Growing up as black and female were important facts of Toni Morrison's life, from her early years until her transformation into a writer. Although she personally did not suffer segregation, it was not easy for her to



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obtain a career. In the 1960s Negroes were active politically, but, that was not enough. Just as many other black writers, Morrison had to look for an opportunity in many editing houses to publish her works. Nowadays, Toni has set a precedent with her novels which has played a crucial role in American literature and history. Toni fuses past and present eras and enriches American literature with her narrative strategies, techniques and language. She also expresses the political concerns of contemporary society.



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FOOTNOTES

ⁱ The railroad was not a real railroad. Instead it was a path used by slaves to escape to freedom. It existed before and during the Civil War. Slaves usually went to the North.

ⁱⁱ They were farmers who worked for landowners and were paid very little for their work.

ⁱⁱⁱ Patrick-Wexler Diane, Toni Morrison, Contemporary African Americans, Nobel Prizewinner writer Educator, Raintree Steck-Vaughn, Austin Texas 1997, page 16.

^{iv} Kramer Barbara, Toni Morrison, Novel Prize Winning-Author, Enslow Publishers, Inc, page 21.

^v Opcit, page 25

^{vi} Opcit, page 28

^{vii} www.voices.cla.umn.edu/vg/bios/entries/Morrison_Toni.html.

^{viii} Albert Schweitzer (14 January 1875 -4 September 1965) was a German-French theologian, musician, philosopher and physician.

^{ix} A flashback is when an author interrupts the story to tell about something that happened earlier.

^x Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Novel Prize – Winning Author, United States of America, page. 54.

^{xi} Opcit, page. 94

^{xii} Opcit,page 96

^{xiii} Patrick-Wexler Diane, Toni Morrison , Contemporary African Americans, Nobel Prizewinner writer Educator, Raintree Steck-Vaughn, Austin Texas 1997,pag 38.

^{xiv} Opcit,page 40

^{xv} Andrews William and McKay Nellie, “Toni Morrison’s Beloved: A Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, United States of America, 1999, page 25.

^{xvi}. Opcit, page 40



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xvii Opcit, page 83

xviii Robinson Mary and Fulkerson Kris, *CliffNotes Beloved*, Wiley Publishing, New York, United States of America, 2001, page 12.

xix Opcit, page 13

xx Morrison Toni, *Beloved*, Vintage Books, London, 1997, page 30.

xxi Opcit, page 61

xxii Opcit, page 93

xxiii The something more is a collective spirit of all the unnamed slaves who were taken from their homes in Africa and brought to America in the unsanitary holds of white men's ships.

xxiv Plasa Carl, *Columbia Critical Guides, Toni Morrison Beloved*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, page 92.

xxv It was a shady space formed by boxwood bushes where Denver used to play with the infant ghost of her daughter; she spent many hours there.

xxvi It is a place in the forest where Baby Suggs preached to the black community about loving themselves.

xxvii Morrison Toni, *Beloved*, Vintage Books, London, 1997, page 119.

xxviii Andrews William and McKay Nellie, *Toni Morrison, Beloved*, Casebook, page 50.

xxix Opcit, page 51

xxx Opcit, page 51

xxxi Robinson Mary and Fulkerson Kris, *CliffNotes Beloved*, Wiley Publishing, New York, United States of America, 2001, pages, 91-92.

xxxii Morrison Toni, *Beloved*, Vintage Books, London, 1997, pages 132-133.

xxxiii Robinson Mary and Fulkerson Kris, *CliffNotes Beloved*, Wiley Publishing, New York, United States of America, 2001, pages, 48-49.

xxxiv Opcit, page 24

xxxv Opcit, page 51



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xxxvi Andrews William and Mckay Nellie, "Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, United States of America, 1999, page 47.

xxxvii Opcit, page 54

xxxviii Morrison Toni, Beloved, Vintage Books, London, 1997, page, 322.

xxxix Opcit, page 167

xl Robinson Mary and Fulkerson Kris, CliffNotes Beloved, Wiley Publishing, New York, United States of America, 2001, pages 59-60.

xli Morrison Toni, Beloved, Vintage Books, London, 1997, page 159.

xlii Robinson Mary and Fulkerson Kris, CliffNotes Beloved, Wiley Publishing, New York, United States of America, 2001, pages 91.

xliii Andrews William and Mckay Nellie, "Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, United States of America, pages 146-147.

xliv Morrison Toni, Beloved, Vintage Books, London, 1997, pages 288.

xlv Andrews William and Mckay Nellie, "Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, United States of America, page 121.

xlvi Robinson Mary and Fulkerson Kris,, On Morrison's Beloved, Wiley Publishing, Inc, New York, New York, 2001, page 21

xlvii <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/beloved/themes.html>

xlviii A literary or cinematic device in which an earlier event is inserted into the normal chronological order of a narrative.

xlix Morrison Toni, Beloved, Vintage Books, London, 1997, page 321

^I Opcit, page 322

^{II} Opcit, page 324

^{III} Furman Jan, Toni Morrison's fiction, University of South Carolina Press, South Carolina, 1976, pages 74-82.

^{IIII} Andrews William and Mckay Nellie, "Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, United States of America, page 56.

^{liv} Morrison Toni, Beloved, Vintage Books, London, 1997, page 48.



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^{lv} Opcit, pages, 323-324

^{lvi} <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/about.htm>

^{lvii} http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression

^{lviii} D. Dickson Keith, *La Segunda Guerra Mundial para Dummies*, Drupo Editorial Norma, Bogota-Colombia, 2001, pages 2-9.

^{lix} Youman Henley Katherine, *U.S. History and Culture*, Universidad de Cuenca, Cuenca, Ecuador, 1997, pages 92-97.

^{lx} <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/roosevelt-franklin.htm>

^{lxi} <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/johnfkennedy>

^{lxii} Opcit

^{lxiii} Opcit

^{lxiv} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr.

^{lxv} http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html

^{lxvi} <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/67474/African-American/285193/African-American-life-during-the-Great-Depression-and-the-New-Deal>

^{lxvii} <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/johnfkennedy>

^{lxviii} <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAkennedyJ>

^{lxix} Opcit

^{lxx} The Civil Rights Act of 1957 was introduced in Eisenhower's presidency and was the act that started the Civil Rights Legislative Program. It includes the *1964 Civil Rights Act* and the *1965 Voting Rights Act*. The 1957 Civil Rights Bill ensured that all African Americans could exercise their right to vote. http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/presidents/nixon_birthplace.html.

^{lxxi} <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/johnfkennedy>

^{lxxii} http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/presidents/nixon_birthplace.html

^{lxxiii} Opcit



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lxxiv http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Ronald_Reagan_Civil_Rights.html.

lxxv http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Clinton

lxxvi <http://www.biography.com/articles/Bill-Clinton-9251236>

lxxvii <http://www.observer.com/2008/toni-morrison-s-letter-barack-obama.html>

lxxviii Opcit

lxxix http://www.studyworld.com/newsite/Literature/Novel/The_Bluest_Eye.htm

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lxxxi Opcit

lxxxii Furman Jan, Toni Morrison's Fiction, University of South Carolina Press, South Carolina, 1996, page 6.

lxxxiii Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, page 13

lxxxiv <http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp>

lxxxv Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, page 32.

lxxxvi Opcit, page 35

lxxxvii Bessie W, Jones and Audrey L. Vinson, The World of Toni Morrison: Explorations in Literary Criticism, Dubuque, Iowa, Kendall/Hunt, 1985, page 129.

lxxxviii Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, page, 33

lxxxix <http://findarticles.com/p/articles.com>

xc Opcit

xci Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, page 37



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^{xcii} Patrick-Wexler Diane, Toni Morrison, Contemporary African Americans, Nobel Prizewinner, Writer Educator, Raintree Steck-Vaughn, Austin Texas, 1997, page 31.

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^{xciv} Opcit

^{xcv} Furman Jan, Toni Morrison's Fiction, University of South Carolina Press, South Carolina, 1996, page 22.

^{xcvi} <http://www.luminarium.org/contemporary/tonimorrison/toni.htm>

^{xcvii} Opcit

^{xcviii} Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, pages 52-53.

^{xcix} Opcit, pages 52-53

^c L. William Andrews & Y. McKay Nelly, Toni Morrison's Beloved Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999. Casebook, pages 6-7.

^{ci} <http://www.allfreeessays.com/essays/Incompatible-Characters-In-Toni-Morrison-s-Tar/26740.html>

^{cii} Kramer Barbara, African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, page 58.

^{ciii} Furman Jan, Toni Morrison's Fiction, University of South Carolina Press, South Carolina, 1996, page 50.

^{civ} L. William Andrews & Y. McKay Nelly, Toni Morrison's Beloved Casebook, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999. Casebook, page 7.

^{cv} http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/573709/historical_context_of_beloved_morrison_pg4.html?cat=17

^{cvi} Patrick-Wexler Diane, Toni Morrison, Contemporary African Americans, Nobel Prizewinner, Writer Educator, Raintree Steck-Vaughn, Austin Texas, 1997, page 36.



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cx Kramer Barbara, *African American Biographies, Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize – Winning Author*, Enslow Publishers, United States, 1996, page 87.

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