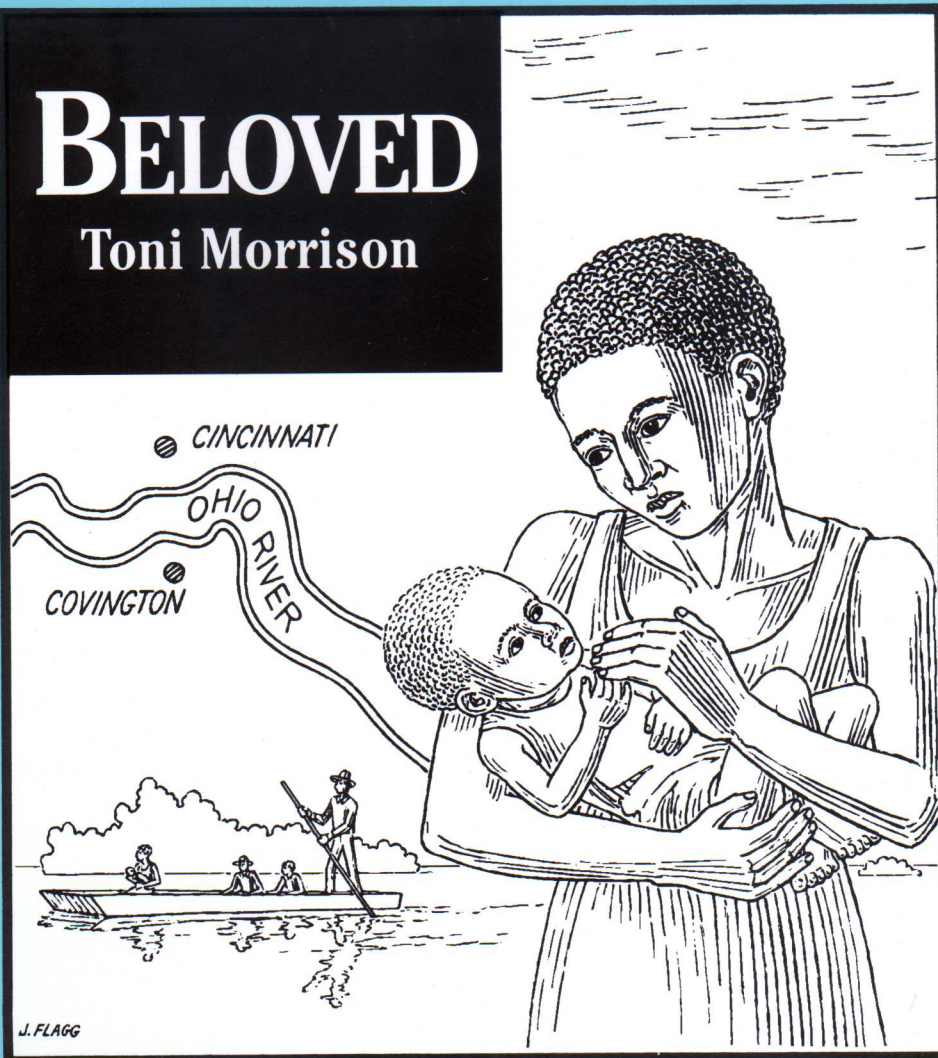


Novel·Ties

BELOVED

Toni Morrison



A Study Guide

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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Read the short biography of the author, Toni Morrison, on page four of this study guide and do some additional research to learn more about her life. Have you ever read any other books she has written, or have you ever seen her on television or in person? As you read *Beloved*, try to determine how her background and life experience influenced her writing.
2. Read the History of Slavery on page two of this study guide and do some additional research on the subject. Then begin a K-W-L chart, such as the one below. Add to it as you read the book.

Slavery

| What I Know - K - | What I Want to Know - W - | What I Learned - L - |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | |

3. *Beloved* won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Do some research to learn about these two prestigious prizes. As you read *Beloved*, assess whether this book fits the criteria for each prize.
4. Spend some time looking over primary source documents about the lives of African slaves in America. A good compilation that may be available at your library is *The Black Book* (Random House, 1974). This collection of photos, newspaper clippings, recipes, anecdotes, jokes, bills of sale for slaves, songs, and other materials offers special insight into the lives of African Americans of the past. Visit the website <http://vi.uh.edu/pages/mintz/primary.htm> to learn about Margaret Garner, whose story was the inspiration for this book. Discuss the importance of materials like these to an author who is trying to recreate history. In addition, you may read some excerpts from one of these classic slave narratives:
 - Douglass, Frederick. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Written in 1845. Published by Signet, 1968.
 - Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Written in 1861. Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin and published by Harvard University Press, 1987.
5. Have you ever read a novel or seen a play or a film in which supernatural elements played a significant part? As you read *Beloved*, consider why an author would introduce the supernatural in an otherwise realistic work.
6. Read the dedication at the beginning of the book. Who were the “Sixty million and more”? Then read the Biblical passage, also at the beginning of the book. How do you think Toni Morrison is preparing readers for what they will encounter as they read?

PART ONE: PAGES 86 - 124

Vocabulary: Use a word from the Word Box to replace each underlined word or phrase in the following sentences. Write the words on the lines below the sentences.

| <i>WORD BOX</i> | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| chamois | decimated | dissipated | domination |
| fugitives | reproach | resurrection | speculations |

- Once their government was defeated in a bloody war, former officials became escapees who needed to make their homes in a new land.

- Use a soft cloth instead of steel wool to polish your new car.

- After the rain dispersed, the remainder of our camping trip became a delight of sunny days and starry nights.

- People have always engaged in theories about the origin of the universe.

- The daffodils and crocuses were always the first flowers to herald the rebirth of spring.

- Most slaves were too frightened and intimidated to try to escape from the control of the master.

- Even though the army was reduced in number, they were determined to keep fighting for their cause.

- Not knowing I had broken a rule, I begged my parents not to blame me.

Questions:

- What message had Baby Suggs brought to those who heard her preach?
- Why did Sethe now long for her departed mother-in-law? Why did she go to the clearing?

PART ONE: PAGES 125 - 165

Vocabulary: Synonyms are words with similar meanings. Draw a line from each word on the left to its synonym on the right. Then use the words in column A to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- | <u>A</u> | <u>B</u> |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. futility | a. excused |
| 2. commandeer | b. abundant |
| 3. exempted | c. seize |
| 4. cleave | d. unapproachable |
| 5. apprehension | e. hopelessness |
| 6. rife | f. sorrowful |
| 7. inaccessible | g. anxiety |
| 8. melancholy | h. sever |

.....

1. A police officer is permitted to _____ a citizen's vehicle to pursue a criminal.
2. Those going on the band trip will be _____ from taking the test on Friday.
3. Since only very small dogs are permitted in the new apartment complex, it is _____ with chihuahuas and toy poodles.
4. Afraid that I would be unable to answer a single question, a wave of _____ swept over me as soon as the exams were given out.
5. As soon as I noticed the _____ expression on your face, I knew your best friend had moved away.
6. Frustrated by the _____ of ever hitting a home run, Jessica decided to quit the baseball team.
7. With a sharp axe, Richard could _____ a log in two with just one blow.
8. Living far inland and having no car, the seashore was _____ to me.

CLOZE ACTIVITY

The following excerpt was taken from page twenty-three of the book. Read it through entirely. Then fill in each blank with a word that makes sense. When you have finished, you may compare your language with that of the author.

It made sense for a lot of reasons because in all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone _____,¹ who hadn't run off or been hanged, _____² rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought _____,³ stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. _____⁴ Baby's eight children had six fathers. What _____⁵ called the nastiness of life was the _____⁶ she received upon learning that nobody stopped _____⁷ checkers just because the pieces included her _____.⁸ Halle she was able to keep the _____.⁹ Twenty years. A lifetime. Given to her, _____¹⁰ doubt, to make up for *hearing* that _____¹¹ two girls, neither of whom had their _____¹² teeth, were sold and gone and she _____¹³ not been able to wave goodbye. To _____¹⁴ up for coupling with a straw boss _____¹⁵ four months in exchange for keeping her _____¹⁶ child, a boy, with her—only to _____¹⁷ him traded for lumber in the spring _____¹⁸ the next year and to find herself _____¹⁹ by the man who promised not to _____²⁰ did. That child she could not love _____²¹ the rest she would not. "God take _____²² He would," she said. And He did, _____²³ He did, and He did and then _____²⁴ her Halle who gave her freedom when _____²⁵ didn't mean a thing.

Sethe had the _____²⁶ luck of six whole years of marriage _____²⁷ that "somebody" son who had fathered every _____²⁸ of her children. A blessing she was _____²⁹ enough to take for granted, lean on, _____³⁰ though Sweet Home really was one. As _____³¹ a handful of myrtle stuck in the _____³² of a pressing iron propped against the _____³³ in a white woman's kitchen could make it _____³⁴. As though mint sprig in the mouth _____³⁵ the breath as well as its odor. A bigger fool never lived.