

Beloved Study Guide

Beloved by Toni Morrison

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Plot Summary

Beloved is written by Toni Morrison; a distinguished author of several bestselling novels. Morrison received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. She has been the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. The New York Review of Books calls Morrison "...a major figure in our national literature."

In the Foreword Morrison describes the inspiration behind the story of *Beloved*. Relating her new-found feelings of freedom through the loss of her job; the story of *Beloved* was inspired by a real-life slave, Margaret Garner, who was jailed for killing her child to save it from returning to slavery. Freedom and slavery are the underlying themes of Morrison's journey with *Sethe* and *Beloved*.

In *Sethe*, Morrison brings to life the woman slave who ran from Sweet Home, the farm of the demons of her past. *Sethe's* longing to be with her children in Ohio led her to escape by herself in the last stages of her pregnancy. *Sethe's* children were with her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs who was legally free. Having arrived in Cincinnati with her newborn baby born en route, it took only 28 days for the slave master from Sweet Home to find *Sethe*. She knew what her children's future would be like in slavery under the control of the evil schoolteacher.

Sethe's only answer to survival in that moment was to kill her children. She believed being dead was better than being a victim to the torture of slavery. In the shed, *Sethe* killed her un-named baby girl and attempted to kill the other three. No longer valuable to him, the schoolteacher retreated leaving *Sethe* in the blood of her victims. Years later, the dead girl's ghost was chased away only to return in human form as the nowgrown daughter named *Beloved*.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1

Sethe and her daughter Denver were the only living residents in the house on Bluestone Road, called 124, near Cincinnati, Ohio. It was in 1873 when Sethe's sons Howard and Buglar had run away; they were unable to deal with the destructive and bothersome ghost within the house. Not long after Howard and Buglar left home, Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, died. It was then that Sethe, Denver and the ghost, believed to be Sethe's two-year-old daughter, remained. House 124 was the house the neighbors knew to avoid.

Returning from work, Sethe arrived at 124 to find an old friend Paul D who sat waiting for her on the porch. Paul D was one of the slave boys who lived at Sweet Home. There had been five slave boys when Sethe was brought there; one was Halle Suggs, Sethe's husband. It had been 18 years since Sethe and Paul D had seen each other.

Enjoying their talk about old times, Sethe invited Paul D to stay the night. When Paul D walked through the doorway of the house, he felt an overwhelming sadness. Sethe explained it was the spirit of her dead baby daughter. Her sons eventually ran away from the haunting. Denver didn't like Paul D being there to take her mother's attention.

Sethe shared her story of leaving Sweet Home; about being beaten by some of the schoolteachers' pupils and about how they broke open her back and "stole her milk." The cuts had left a scar that looked like a tree and left her with no feeling in her back. As Paul D approached Sethe, the ghost started shaking the floor boards, Paul D yelled at it to leave. He threw the table knocking things over and throwing what he could to fight off the ghost. Eventually everything settled down. Sethe and Paul D left the kitchen in a mess and went upstairs to her bedroom.

Chapter 2

After sleeping together, Sethe and Paul D laid in bed still and quiet. Paul D remembered how he had yearned for Sethe when they were at Sweet Home. Sethe was the only girl and all of the boys waited to find out which of them she would choose. It was Halle that Sethe ended up with. They were together for six years which was seen as a blessing since the men in their lives were usually killed, sold, taken away, or would run away. Halle was the father to all four of Sethe's children. Halle was the one child Baby Suggs had the longest; twenty years. Halle gained his mother's freedom by being hired out on the weekends to pay for her release.

Lying in bed next to Sethe, Paul D thought of how he had wanted to be with her 25 years ago and he still felt she would be suitable for him. Sethe felt in Paul D's gentle glances something she hadn't felt since being with Halle.



Analysis

In 124 the ghost has caused Sethe's sons to leave home and Baby Suggs who lost her purpose to live, died leaving Sethe and Denver and the ghost alone in the house. The house didn't see visitors; in fact, the carriages sped past to avoid the haunting from inside. This is why it was a surprise for Sethe and Denver when Paul D arrived. Paul D was one of the five Sweet Home Men from their days as slaves in Kentucky.

Both Sethe and Paul D were physically free from Sweet Home but would be forever tied to its memory. Some memories Sethe didn't want to recall but felt she had to let Paul D know of the deformity on her back. Paul D didn't understand when Sethe told him she had a tree on her back, but after seeing it and learning it came from a brutal beating he understood. His gentleness towards Sethe brought forth the ghost from under the floorboards. Paul D took control and by yelling and throwing furniture, was able to rid the house of the ghost.

Denver resented Paul D for taking her mother from her. Now she was upset that he had made the ghost leave. Sethe and the ghost were all Denver had left.

Vocabulary

Spite, intolerable, perfunctory, abolitionist, chamomile, salsify, brine, bristle, myrtle, mockery, gourd



Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3

Denver enjoyed hearing Sethe's story of when she left Sweet Home. Sethe's legs and feet were swollen making walking nearly impossible. Her moaning was heard by a white girl walking through the area. The girl, Amy, told Sethe of a shelter to go to rest.

Denver described her vision of seeing a small dress to Sethe. She wanted to know more of what had happened at Sweet Home aside from the beatings and running away while pregnant. Sethe told her about the schoolteacher who ran the farm after Mr. Garner died. The talk went back to the baby in the white dress; they wondered if it was a sign for something to come.

Sethe reflected on her night with Paul D. She thought about how, for the first time in 18 years, she was able to feel. She wasn't just going through motions to get done; she started to think she might have a reason to look ahead and plan for her future. This was not a familiar concept for Sethe; she wondered if being able to feel was something she could handle.

Asking how Denver would react to Paul D staying, Sethe explained Denver was a charmed child. Sethe explained Denver had brought the white girl from afar to save her life when she was dying in the field after leaving Sweet Home. Sethe started to give another example about Denver's charm when schoolteacher came for her. Paul D questioned schoolteacher's arrival at 124 but Sethe only said she chose to go to jail rather than go back to Sweet Home.

Chapter 4

An argument between Sethe and Paul D about Denver sent a warning to Paul D that Sethe had developed a strong connection to Denver. He knew this was a risk since slave women are not expected to love anyone deeply to avoid being hurt over and over when the person is gone. Paul D said Denver will have to make room for him. He told Sethe to feel safe with him. He told her he was there because of her and he wanted to spend his life with her.

Paul D wanted to take Sethe and Denver to the carnival, even though they were reluctant to go; Denver came to like Paul D by the end of the day. She noticed when the three of them were together she wasn't being stared at in the usual way and people greeted her by name. Paul D met some people in the community and received information on possible work.



Analysis

Denver had a place among the bushes where she went to feel free. She went there more often since Paul D had come and chased the ghost away. The ghost had been company for her. Denver saw through the window a small white dress next to Sethe as she prayed. Denver was reminded of the story Sethe told about when she was born on the way from Sweet Home; how Sethe was near death and found by a white girl who helped find shelter and tended to her wounds.

Sethe was interested in hearing about the dress Denver had seen next to her. She wondered if they would ever learn the meaning of the vision. Sethe began to become more aware of colors especially the lack of color in her surroundings. She felt it was Paul D who began to give her life meaning. Prior to his being there, the only colors familiar to her was that of the blood of her baby and the pink of the stone at her grave.

Paul D wanted Sethe to know he was there for a while and wanted her to inform Denver to get used to his being there. Paul D could see Sethe's relationship with Denver was stronger than most colored's relationships are with their children. It was discouraged for coloreds to get close because it was common for them to lose those they love.

Vocabulary

Noisome, bower, privy, easeful, lisle, condemnation, scramble, sullenly, mediocre, horehound



Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5

Sethe, Denver and Paul D returned home from the carnival to find a stranger sitting near the front of the house. Sethe immediately left to go to the outhouse responding to a strong urge to urinate upon seeing this person. The woman was well-dressed and very thirsty. She looked tired and under-nourished, her skin was very smooth. She told them her name was Beloved.

Beloved did not understand the questions Paul D asked about where she came from. He figured she was wandering away from her past life. Even though they wanted to know her situation, Paul D and Sethe knew not to push her for any information. Each colored had their unique story which may or may not ever be told.

Beloved was so tired, she fell asleep sitting up. She was offered the keeping room to stay in and immediately fell asleep in Baby Suggs' bed. The sound of her breathing made Paul D and Sethe think she was ill. Beloved stayed in bed asleep for four days only waking for water. Denver stayed with her, taking care of her every need. Denver spent all of her time with Beloved hoping her to wake and feel better. Denver was so busy with Beloved, she stayed away from her hiding place in the field.

Chapter 6

Beloved began to follow Sethe, and watching her every move. Beloved got up early as Sethe prepared for work. Beloved watched for Sethe to return home in the afternoon and began to walk to meet her. At one point Beloved asked Sethe about her diamond. Sethe had never had a diamond and didn't know what Beloved meant. However, Sethe remembered having crystal earrings before. Beloved wanted to know about the diamonds.

Sethe told them about how she had gotten the crystal earrings from Mrs. Garner when she and Halle got married. The usual practice of a slave marriage was seeking permission from the owner and if agreed, they were considered married. Mrs. Garner picked out a pair of crystal earrings for Sethe. She never wore the earrings until she got to 124 and Baby Suggs helped her pierce her ears.

Sethe continued telling stories about her mother whom she had only seen a few times in her life. Sethe had seen her mother hanged from a tree at a slave farm. The woman Nan who had taken care of Sethe as a child told her the information she knew about her mother. Denver could not understand how Beloved knew things about her mother such as the earrings. These were things Denver had never known about. Denver was relieved when Sethe came out of her thoughts. Denver couldn't understand the questions Beloved had asked and wondered how she knew about the earrings.



Analysis

Beloved was a mystery to Paul D and Sethe while Denver was intrigued with her. Paul D tried to get Beloved to tell them where she came from but she didn't understand his questions. Paul D thought she was like other women who went in search of family members after being separated.

Denver sat with Beloved not leaving her side until she woke up and began to eat. Denver noticed Beloved only wanted to eat sweet foods and would eat as much as she could get. Paul D wanted to know how long Beloved would be staying but he also knew it wasn't his place to put her out; he was also a guest in the home.

Beloved knew Sethe had diamonds and wanted to know what happened to them. Sethe told the girls that Mrs. Garner had given her crystal earrings after she and Halle were married. Sethe knew about Mr. and Mrs. Garner's wedding and longed for a wedding that was more than the slave master saying it was ok to be married. Sethe had made her a dress from scraps she wore when she and Halle went off together into the corn field on what they called their honeymoon.

Sethe told them stories of Nan; the woman who cared for her after her mother's death. Nan and Sethe's mother came across the sea together; they would be used by the ship's crew for sex and when the babies were born, they wouldn't name them and would throw them over the sides of the ship or leave them on the islands. Nan told Sethe she survived because she was born of a black man. A man that her mother had put her arms around. According to Nan, Sethe was the only baby her mother kept.

Vocabulary

Askew, sorghum, breakneck, incontinence, damper, kindling, devotion, zealot, reveries, indigo



Chapters 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7

Paul D noticed Beloved shining, he sensed her arousal. Beloved didn't pay attention to him or engage in conversation with him so he knew her desires weren't directed toward him. Paul D had no say in Beloved leaving because it was Sethe's house but he tried to understand her purpose for being there.

At dinner one night Paul D began to ask Beloved direct questions about her people, where she came from, where she was heading, and how she got there. Beloved said she had no family and she was looking for this house. Paul D questioned the clothes and shoes she had on when she arrived. She told him he had taken them from someone.

Sethe and Paul D spoke again about Sweet Home. Sethe told Paul D that Halle had left her. Paul D in defending Halle ended up sharing information about the night the boys took Sethe's milk. Paul D said Halle was in the loft and saw what had happened to her. Sethe couldn't understand why if Halle had been there and saw what those boys did to her that he did not help her. The shock had broken Halle that night; he would never be the same after seeing what had happened. Paul D told Sethe that the last time he saw Halle was at the butter churn. Halle had butter all over his face. Paul D couldn't talk to him because of the steel bit in his mouth.

Chapter 8

Denver sat on her bed watching Beloved dance, it was the first time she had seen Beloved happy. Denver started dancing with her; they broke down laughing leaving them breathless. Denver wanted to know why Beloved chose that name and what it was like where she came from.

Denver continued the story of when she was born in the boat. Denver recited the story she knew. Denver described Amy to Beloved as a girl with long arms, strong hands, and a lot of hair on her head who talked a lot. Denver told her how Amy knew Sethe had to move down off of the hill because anyone could be after her. When they reached the water, they found a boat; it was the boat where the baby would be born. Amy told Sethe not to forget she was the girl who took care of her and delivered her baby; Amy Denver from Boston. Sethe liked her name Denver; she thought it was a pretty name.

Analysis

Paul D couldn't understand Beloved's purpose for still being at 124. He was uncomfortable with what he sensed from her. He asked a lot of questions about how far



she walked, where she got the clothes and how she knew about the house. She never answered his questions leaving him even more puzzled. Sethe saw his questions as teasing and made him stop

Once again Paul D and Sethe shared memories of Sweet Home. Paul D told her what it was like to be a man in those times. It wasn't so much being shackled or having a bit in his mouth as it was being bothered by the roosters on the farm. Paul D resented the freedom of the roosters while he was in chains. The one rooster, Mister, was known as the mean one on the farm. Mister would always be able to be who he was and stay in his place while Paul D didn't have any freedom. Paul D felt as if Mister was mocking him or belittling him.

Beloved told Denver about the place she came from, how dark it was and how small she felt there. She showed Denver how she curled her body to fit. There were others but she didn't know anyone's name. She waited a long time and then got onto the bridge and she came back to see Sethe's face. Beloved's description stopped and she wanted Denver to tell more about her birth. Beloved questioned Denver about the details of the event. Denver felt closer to the experience as she told the story passed down from her mother; who was just a little older than Denver's current age.

Vocabulary

Bereft, way station, malevolent, regulators, posses, vex, gaiety, hollows, pateroller, monologue, ruckus, reverie



Chapters 9 -10

Summary

Chapter 9

It had been nine years since Baby Suggs died; Sethe wanted to go to the Clearing to be near her. The Clearing was a place in the woods where the coloreds came to be with Baby Suggs. They listened as she prayed and together they would dance, laugh and cry.

In the Clearing, Sethe sat on the rock where Baby Suggs used to preach. Sethe remembered how lively the place had once been. The people she met had taught her how to be a person out of slavery. Sitting there she began to feel fingers rubbing her neck; gently she relaxed thinking of Baby Suggs caring for her from another place.

The hands on her neck were getting tighter and gripping her under her chin; Sethe could no longer breathe. Denver ran to her and pulled the invisible hands from Sethe. Sethe knew those hands belonged to the ghost Paul D had sent away.

Paul D was bathing in the tub under the stairs, when she to him and he stood and embraced her. Sethe was aware she could handle how things had turned out between the two of them. Beloved ran out when she saw Paul D and Sethe together. Beloved wanted Sethe to herself.

Denver remembered what Nelson Lord had asked her at Lady Jones' house. Denver thought if it was true, then she understood why her brothers went away. She began to focus on the baby ghost which before she hadn't paid much attention to.

Chapter 10

The schoolteacher at the Garner farm had sold Paul D to Brandywine who Paul D tried to kill, which ended him in prison in Alfred, Georgia. Paul D was chained to 45 other prisoners and forced into a wooden box buried five-feet deep into a ditch. The five-foot wide box had locked bars on one side.

The first man on the chain was called the Hi Man, he led the way into the woods where each prisoner took a sledge hammer and went to work. In the prison, Paul D saw his life as dead until the rain started. They worked in the rain for nine days until it wasn't possible to do anything more in the mud. They chained the men together and locked them in the boxes. The water began rising into the box when Paul D felt the pull of the chain so hard that it pulled him down, he knew what it was. He pulled on the chain to the other side of him continuing the message. The ditch in front of the bars on the box was caving in, he felt the tug of the chain from the other direction, and each man knew what to do even though no one spoke a word. One man at a time dove into the mud and



under the bars of the box. Each man helped the other to safety; they knew if one man went down they all would go down. All 46 men were free.

Analysis

The house at 124 was at one time a place of coming and going. People would stop for rest and food and leave messages for those who might eventually come. Baby Suggs' heart survived all of the years as a slave; she opened it to others in her house and when she preached in the Clearing.

Sethe felt the urge to go to the Clearing in hopes to receive a message from Baby Suggs about how to put to rest those things of her past; to be less confused about Paul D. Sethe hoped she could feel comfort by going to the place where Baby Suggs had been so alive. It had been nine years from the time the preaching stopped. Baby Suggs had stopped following her heart and felt defeated by the white person.

Sethe was choked in the Clearing. Denver thought it was Beloved who had tried to hurt her. Denver recalled the questions from Nelson Lord that she couldn't endure hearing the answers to and ended up losing her hearing for two years. The first thing she heard in regaining her hearing was the baby crawling noisily up the stars. This marked the start of destruction from the baby's ghost, Buglar and Howard leaving and Baby Suggs' death.

Paul D and the freed prisoners walked all night and stayed hidden in the trees during the day. They came upon a Cherokee sick house where the chains were cut and they were fed. Once apart, they were free to go in any direction. Paul D stayed for a couple of weeks not knowing where to head. Finally he asked for direction; the Cherokee told him to follow the tree flowers. He said when there were no more flowers on the trees he would be in the North.

Vocabulary

Nape, chafed, chastised, pulpits, riven, yonder, flay, heed, leavings, venom, fugitives, clabber, tableau, resurrection, coffle, roiling, copse, dray



Chapters 11-12

Summary

Chapter 11

Paul D found himself not sleeping in bed with Sethe; he slept in the rocking chair until feeling unsettled he moved into Baby Suggs' bed. From there he went to the storage room and finally outside in the shed. Even though they were not sharing the same bed, Paul D and Sethe continued to have sex every day.

Paul D's sleeping arrangements were something he did automatically. He would feel uneasy and go in search of another place. One night in the shed as he tried to settle in, someone walked in and without seeing who it was he asked what the person wanted. The answer came from Beloved; she told him she wanted him to touch her inside and say her name. Paul D told Beloved how good Sethe had been to her and that she was loved like a daughter. Beloved told Paul D that Sethe was the only person she loved which made Paul ask why she was there with him. He told her to return to the house, but she insisted he touch her inside. She wanted him to call out her name.

Paul D kept his back to her; he wanted the sin to stay behind him. He finally said Beloved because she kept repeating the request. She walked closer, he wasn't aware of her movement; he also didn't realize that the rusted can in his chest could be a red heart. He continued to repeat the words, "red heart" louder and louder until Denver woke up.

Chapter 12

Sethe tried seeking answers from Beloved. Sethe thinks Beloved's life was so damaging that she can't remember anything. Denver is convinced Beloved was the dress she saw through the window holding Sethe as she prayed. Denver kept her eyes on Beloved, always watching everything about her.

Denver and Beloved went to the cold house for cider. It was bright outside but dark inside the shed. When Beloved didn't respond to Denver's calling, she pleaded with Beloved not to go back. Beloved appeared and told Denver she didn't want that place. Beloved pointed to a ray of sunshine coming through the ceiling of the shed, she told Denver to look at it but Denver didn't see anything. Beloved curled her body and rocked and moaned quietly and said, "Over there. Her face." Denver asked who she is talking about and she said, "Me. It's me."

Analysis

Beloved is becoming more involved with everyone at 124. Sethe seeks more information from her as Denver has come to know who she really is. Paul D has found



himself further from Sethe for a reason he is unable to understand. Beloved comes to him once he takes up his bed outside in the shed. She makes demands of him which he finds hard to resist.

Denver continues to keep Beloved's attention knowing she only has the days to be with her since Beloved only wants to be with Sethe in the evening and Paul D at night. Denver seeks Sethe's reassurance that she won't go back. Beloved said she only wants to be there. Inside the shed Beloved told Denver she saw herself in the ray of sun that came through the ceiling. The shed was the place where Beloved was killed.

Vocabulary

Rouse, wharf, bind, slur, pallet, croaker, theatrical, prima donna, footfall, remarkable, strategist, indolent, surreptitiously



Chapter 13-14

Summary

Chapter 13

Paul D met Sethe after work one day to tell her what he had been doing with Beloved for the past weeks. Beloved went into the cold house at night for sex. He felt the need to tell Sethe what had happened but instead, he told her he wanted her to get pregnant. Paul D wasn't sure where the idea came from but if it were to happen he thought it would help him break out of the spell he was caught in with Beloved.

Paul D and Sethe flirted as they walked home in the cold wind. When the snow started coming harder, Paul D lifted Sethe onto his back and ran. She slid down and told him he needed babies to play in the snow. They reached the point where Beloved meets Sethe every day. Beloved was there with no warm clothes. Sethe put the shawl on Beloved and held her to shelter her from the cold. Paul D walked behind them, holding his anger to himself.

Sethe thought about what it would mean for her if she were to get pregnant. She didn't think she could provide everything a new baby requires including being cared for. Sethe agreed she had all of the kids she wanted. Sethe recalled when she first saw the dress and shoes sitting on the stump in front of 124 and thought about how her bladder was immediately full and she "broke water" even before seeing the face of the person.

Chapter 14

Beloved and Denver were in the kitchen after Sethe and Paul D went upstairs to bed. Beloved told Denver to make him leave. Denver knew Sethe would be mad if he left. Beloved had her fingers in her mouth and pulled a tooth out from the back of her mouth. Beloved began to think her body was starting to fall apart. She had difficulty keeping her head on and her arms and legs together but with her tooth coming out, she feared she was going to fall apart.

Analysis

Paul D was the last of the real men of Sweet Home. The five men who worked with Mr. Garner were listened to and given what they needed. These men could restrain a tear while witnessing a brutal scene. Over time, one was sold, another dead and still another was better off dead. It was Paul D who made it out of Sweet Home to 124.

Paul D needed to let Sethe know about him and Beloved. He was there for Sethe and wanted to make sure Sethe wanted him in her life. He met her after work in hopes to confess but was unable to say what he wanted. Sethe's reaction to his play as they walked home together helped him understand how he stood with her. Paul D was



especially happy when Sethe told him that he was to sleep upstairs every night. By Sethe saying that in front of Beloved he was set free of her.

Beloved wanted Paul D to leave. She began to react to Paul D and Sethe's intimacy; she feared it was making her body fall apart.

Vocabulary

Merit, eddy, repulsion, disguise, melancholy, hoisted, resolve, malice, petticoat, probing



Chapters 15-16

Summary

Chapter 15

Stamp took two buckets to the river side and returned hours later with snagged clothes, scratches and two buckets full of blackberries for Baby Suggs to make pies. The plan was to make two pies but the berries were enough for many more. Neighbors were invited for pie and chicken and fish turning the evening into a banquet for all 90 people who came to eat.

Baby Suggs got a sense the next morning; people were upset that Baby Suggs was always the focus. They thought she always knew what was needed, had the answers, and helped the sick. Most of all; she loves. Baby Suggs smelled a worse odor bringing a bad feeling.

Baby Suggs thought about her arrival to Cincinnati as a free woman. She realized her hands were her own and felt her heartbeat inside her chest. She laughed at these new sensations. Baby Suggs was fascinated by Cincinnati. Mr. Garner introduced her to the Bodwins who allowed Baby Suggs to live in one of their homes in exchange for fixing shoes, doing laundry and sewing. The house they gave her was a big house outside of town.

Chapter 16

Four men arrived at the house on horses, the schoolteacher, his nephew, the sheriff and a slave catcher. These men were there to return a slave who had run away. The nephew motioned to the others that the people from the house were around the back. That is where they found an old colored man standing on the woodpile with an axe and Baby Suggs in the garden. Their look toward the shed signaled to the men to look in there.

When the shed door was open they found a colored woman sitting on the ground holding a young child covered in blood and swinging a baby by the feet trying to hit the baby's head on the wall of the shed. Two bleeding boys lay in a pile of sawdust. Stamp ran into the shed and grabbed the baby before it made contact with the wall.

The sheriff stared at Sethe who sat holding tight to her dead baby. One of the boys stirred on the ground and the sheriff directed her to go with him. Baby Suggs walked in the shed behind the sheriff and gathered up the boys who she saw were alive. Sethe would not let go of the dead baby in her arms even though Stamp had tried to take it from her. He still held on to Denver. The sheriff left to get a cart to haul Sethe away.

Inside the house Baby Suggs cared for the boys' injuries. She then took the dead baby into the keeping room and gave Denver to Sethe to nurse. Baby Suggs and Sethe



fought over the fact that Sethe did not clean the blood off of her breast before feeding the baby. Baby Suggs fell to the floor and Seth started feeding Denver from her bloody breast; the blood mixed in with the milk.

The sheriff returned to the house with the cart. Sethe came out with Denver clung to her chest. A crowd of colored people gathered as Stamp drove her away. Not a sound was heard. Baby Suggs tried to stop Sethe from taking the baby with her but by the time she got up and out the door they were gone. Her thoughts were interrupted by two white children who had brought a pair of shoes for her to repair.

Analysis

On the day after the feast at 124 people took issue with Baby Suggs and wondered how someone could take two buckets of berries and make ten pies and how the usual portions of food turned into enough to feed the population of the town. The neighbors put her down saying she never lived the real life of a slave, she didn't run for her freedom and she got that house from white people who were against slavery.

Baby Suggs sensed the anger in the air. She went to work in the garden and the smell of the anger was there. The day was like any other with the sights and sounds of the yard and the children playing but Baby Suggs smelt the displeasure. She stopped to think what was behind this sense she felt. She suddenly realized in her offering of food she had crossed the line and insulted them by giving too much.

Baby Suggs knew that Halle had made arrangements with Mr. Garner to buy his freedom. This was a difficult choice for her because she knew if she left Sweet Home as a free slave then she might never see him again. She also knew if she went against her son's will she would hurt him because he wanted her to be free. When she set foot on the free ground, Baby Suggs wondered how Halle knew it would feel so good since he had never experienced it.

Baby Suggs asked the pastor to write letters in hopes of learning information about her children but gave up after two years with poor response. Most of her children had been at the Whitlow farm where she was before the Garners, but the farm was now gone. Baby Suggs learned Halle had gotten married and his wife was expecting a baby. Baby Suggs had settled into doing her preaching and the jobs for the house. Things changed when her grandchildren got there and then Sethe arrived with another baby and without Halle.

In the garden Baby Suggs' sense of uneasiness was confirmed when she saw a pair of boots walking from the front yard. The white men found Sethe in the shed holding tight to her dead daughter while swinging the new baby into the wall trying to kill her. The boys were bloody and lying on the ground as if they were dead.

Stamp grabbed Denver from Sethe's hand saving her from another slam into the wall. From what the schoolteacher saw in the shed, there was nothing left for him to cash in on. The youngsters he planned to raise on the farm were lying lifeless and the woman



he saw as having several years of breeding had turned ill. He blamed his other nephew who had gone too far when he had beaten and molested her before she ran away from Sweet Home. The schoolteacher told him when something is beaten too far then there is a loss of trust and the threat of revenge. He decided what was left alive was not enough for him to claim. He left without the slaves he had come for.

There was a reason why no one had come to 124 to warn them about the white visitors that day. It was a common practice to warn each other, but instead the neighbors stood back and watched Sethe ride off to jail.

Vocabulary

Whoop, anointed, ravine, shrug, doting, bounty, hominy, rue, stud, melancholy, pact, pickaninnies, futility,



Chapters 17-18

Summary

Chapter 17

Stamp Paid and Paul D worked together at the slaughterhouse. Stamp showed Paul D the newspaper clipping with the picture of Sethe on it. Seeing it for the first time, Paul D refused to believe it was Sethe in the picture. He was sure the lips in the picture were not Sethe's lips. Stamp wanted Paul D to know the story behind the picture. He read the article with the picture and still refused to believe it was Sethe in the picture.

Stamp planned to tell Paul D about Baby Suggs' feeling that morning when she was in the garden. He knew she sensed something and they kept a watch on the road just in case. Stamp thought about how no one gave a warning, no one spoke up to defend one of their own. Stamp felt it had something to do with the people's perception of Baby Suggs. He thought maybe the people were somehow testing Baby Suggs' holiness, seeing if she had some type of power which no one else had.

Stamp also decided not to tell Paul D about how Sethe grabbed up her children and went into the shed. Stamp knew the shed was empty because they used all of the wood the night before. Paul D reminded Stamp he had known Sethe for a long time; since they were young. He could assure her the lips on the picture were not hers. Stamp didn't tell the rest of the story. The message he received from Paul D made him question his own knowledge of the event. But Stamp was certain of what took place eighteen years ago when a runaway from slavery tried to kill her children in hopes of saving them from having to grow up as she had.

Chapter 18

Sethe spoke about her kids. She mentioned how the little girl was already crawling when she arrived at the house. She thought about the week before the kids left, the girl was only rolling over and sitting on her own.

Sethe had wanted to know more about raising children but it was only herself and Mrs Garner and Mrs. Garner never had children. Sethe tried to use what she could remember from the women at the other farms. Sethe spoke of how difficult it was on her own. Halle helped when he could between his debt-work. She remembered a time when Sixo helped Howard when he had hurt his thumb. She was grateful for the help Sixo had offered her.

Paul D waited for Sethe to give him information about the picture from the newspaper he had shown her. He had thought that she would see it and start laughing and they would both get a good laugh out of it. As soon as Sethe saw the picture, Paul D knew from her reaction that it wasn't a joke. Seeing the love in his eyes, Sethe began to tell Paul D the story. She told him how she had gotten her kids and herself out of Kentucky.



She spoke of the love she had for them and how she was able to love them more once she arrived at Baby Suggs' house. Sethe continued to speak but the story didn't go directly to the answer Paul D waited to hear. Sethe was aware of her avoidance of giving a straight response. She knew all she had to admit was how she saw the schoolteacher's hat and knew he was there after her and her children. Sethe gathered up her kids and went into the shed. Her reaction to the moment was to do what was needed to keep her children from living the life she had as a slave; her way of protecting them was to kill them. Sethe told Paul D she wanted her babies to be safe.

Paul D walked out the door telling her he may be home too late to eat. Sethe knew he wanted to tell her goodbye but she thought he might not think she could handle those words.

Analysis

Paul D knew why a picture of a colored person would be in a newspaper; it was there as entertainment for the white people. When Paul D saw the picture Stamp had showed him, he didn't want to believe it could be Sethe. He kept repeating how those weren't her lips on the picture of the woman.

Stamp told Paul D about the party at Baby Suggs' the night before it happened; how it started with her baking pies and the next thing they knew there was a lot of food and a crowd of people there to eat. Stamp said they burnt up all of the wood and he was at Baby Suggs' the next morning to cut more wood.

Paul D showed Sethe the newspaper that Stamp had given him. He figured she would start laughing wondering how they could have thought it was her. Instead, Sethe began rambling on about how much she loved her children and what they meant to her. Paul D understood what Sethe was saying about loving things more. He recalled being in prison in Georgia and how everything in sight belonged to the men with the guns. It wasn't until he was away from it that he could love and actually choose what he wanted to love.

Paul D told Sethe her love was too thick. He insisted what she had done was wrong. Sethe did not understand what else she could have done; killing them was her only answer to avoid going back under the schoolteacher's power.

Paul D strongly reacted by telling her that she had two legs not four. This statement immediately shut her down. They became distant from that point. Paul D didn't know why he had said that. He could be projecting his shame from his actions with Beloved onto Sethe. He wanted her to feel ashamed. Or he thought it might have been he was referring back to what he and the boys at Sweet Home used to do with the calves to satisfy their sexual desires. Paul D might have thought she could have sacrificed herself instead of sacrificing her children.

Paul D didn't see the same Sethe he knew years ago. He thought Stamp Paid showed him the newspaper article for him to understand what Sethe had done. But that wasn't



necessarily the issue as much as how she truly felt it was the right and only thing to do. That is what disturbed him.

Vocabulary

Solemn, chute, offal, scorn, rife, righteous, deft, conviction, comfrey, rendering, vixen, cleave



Chapter 19-20

Summary

Chapter 19

Stamp Paid felt responsible for Paul D leaving 124. He walked past the house wanting to stop in; he wanted to find out if Sethe blamed him for telling Paul D about her past.

Sethe remembered her first days at 124; those were the best days in her life. She had women friends, her children and Baby Suggs. There were conversations and people who cared. There were sessions in the Clearing, singing, dancing and friendship. Then there was that day after the party when her entire life changed. Many years of misery and agony led her to the day when she felt alive again when Paul D entered but was easily wiped away when her past was revealed to him.

Sethe, Denver and Beloved went out to the frozen pond to ice skate with the three skates they found. They tried to stay up while on the ice but found themselves hitting the ice. They lay on their backs on the ground to take a break, Denver got up to try again on her one skate, before she got far she tripped falling forward making them all burst out in laughter again. Sethe picked herself up to her hands and knees and stayed that way laughing. Done laughing she began to cry. The three headed back to the house holding on to each other as they walked.

Inside Sethe warmed milk, and with blankets and the fire of the cook stove they were comfortable and warm. Sethe heard Beloved humming a song which Sethe had made up and only sang to her children. Sethe told Beloved about the secrecy of the song, but Beloved told her she knew the song. Sethe knew who Beloved was at that moment.

Sethe woke in the morning happy about what she discovered the night before. Sethe saw Beloved in a new way, glad that Beloved wasn't angry at her as she had thought. Sethe saw the possibility of her boys coming back in the same way the little girl did. On her walk to work that morning she went through her memories of being in the jail, going to the burial, and getting the stone engraved.

Stamp approached the door and knocked, he saw two inside but only knew one of them. No one visited 124. Stamp took his wonder to Ella and John in hopes to find out what was happening. Stamp told Ella about the other girl he saw with Denver, Ella knew about every colored that came to town but this is one she didn't know. Ella told Stamp where to find Paul D.

Sethe was late for work that morning and Sawyer started in on her. He threatened her to be on time or he would get rid of her. In a hurry to get back home, Sethe thought about Sweet Home, she wanted to tell the little girl about the events of their lives. Sethe was happy to have gotten her boys and the girl out of there.



Chapter 20

Sethe reflected on and rehearsed what she wanted to tell Beloved about her history. Sethe was happy Beloved had come back to her and she wanted to make sure she did the best for her. She would explain everything to Beloved, how she had to kill her so she wouldn't have to die from those who were going to take her.

Sethe would describe her love for her children and her justification in her actions. Sethe wanted to explain the situations she had to live through and did not want any of that to happen to her children. Sethe's happiness brought light and color to the things she saw. She could see things with a different point of view. Sethe started to plan what she wanted to teach Beloved; there was new hope for her life. Her daughter had come back to her.

Analysis

Stamp realized he did not consider Sethe's feelings when he showed Paul D the clipping of her past. He acted out of his feelings for Paul D, believing he needed to know.

Stamp's name used to be Joshua. He changed it after he gave his wife to his master's son so no one would be killed. His wife didn't want him to die and would meet up with him when she could. From that time on Stamp had no obligations to anyone; he decided he would give of himself to others releasing them of their debts. He began to ferry coloreds across the river letting them know they owed no one anything after having lived the life as a slave. Stamp was tired of witnessing the cruelty of the white man. This is what made Baby Suggs want to lie in bed and think about colors. Stamp finally understood; he too was angry at the white man.

Sethe felt she would have recognized Beloved sooner had Paul D not been a distraction. Sethe realized the different things that had let her know it was her daughter from beyond except with Paul D there her attention wasn't all on Beloved. Sethe would tell Beloved she had wanted to stay with her in the hole in the ground but she had to care for the other children. Sethe wanted Beloved to know that she could not rest since that day but now that they were together, she will find sleep.

Vocabulary

Dropsy, meddler, forewarning, conflagration, manumission, souging, hobnail, miraculous, marrow, carpetbag, shoat



Chapter 21-22

Summary

Chapter 21

It was the sound of Beloved going up the stairs that returned Denver's hearing after losing it when Sethe was going to answer the question about killing her sister. Beloved had always been with Denver in the house. Beloved was there with Denver to wait for her daddy to come home. Denver's brothers had left the house because they knew what their mother had done and wanted her dead. They taught Denver how to kill their mother if it came to it. They told her they were leaving to go to the war.

On the nights her mother would come to braid her hair, Denver was afraid and imagined that her head would get cut off and taken away to be braided. Denver felt the only safe room was with Grandma Baby. She knew her mother wouldn't get her in that room. It was those nights with Grandma Baby when Denver would dream of her daddy coming home. She and Grandma Baby believed he would come back, she told Denver all about him. Grandma Baby believed the ghost was looking for love but that it was going after her and Sethe because of how she had died. Denver had a lot of love for Beloved. Beloved was hers.

Chapter 22

Beloved lived among the dead; she was pulled back into the living world. In that world there were men without skin, a dead man's face on hers. She said they try to get out of their bodies; she described the dead bodies that were left by the ones able to die.

More are pushed through but Beloved is still there. Beloved came out of the water, no longer dead and goes to the house where she heard the woman whisper. Beloved notices it is Sethe's face, her smile that smiles at Beloved. They are together.

Analysis

Denver feared her mother and knew she had to protect Beloved from her. Denver thought about that day in the Clearing and wondered if Beloved would have killed her then. Denver was afraid the kiss from Beloved may mean she was allowing their mother too much into her life. Denver felt a need to warn Beloved of that.

Grandma Baby had told Denver she was a charmed girl. It was because Denver had drunk milk from Sethe's bloody breast after having killed the little girl. Grandma Baby told Denver the ghost will not hurt her because of their connection with the blood.

Beloved saw her mother from the place with the dead. Beloved described her as the woman with her face who has a circle around her neck. Beloved wanted to help her



mother but can't get to her. Beloved came out of the water and followed the whispers to the house.

Vocabulary

Scratching, cinder, rhythm, lynch, mob, stone cutter, grieving, rouse, charmed, crouched



Chapter 23-24

Summary

Chapter 23

Sethe and Beloved answer the questions they both long to know. Denver commits to protecting Beloved and warns her of the things to be careful of. A promise is made to not leave each other ever again. They are connected through the water, blood, and milk.

There are things Beloved wants to know about Sethe. She wants to know why Sethe went into the water and went near Beloved without smiling at her. Now that Beloved is at the house Sethe told her that she sees her smile. Beloved will hold on to Sethe this time.

Chapter 24

Paul D was sitting outside on the church porch keeping warm with a bottle of alcohol. He felt that his heart, which he refers to as his tin box, has been opened and was leaking, leaving him open to being targeted by others. His reflections of his torn apart family and other families who were kept together by the same slave owner made him wonder why he hadn't given up on living like Sixo did at Sweet Home.

Paul D went back over the plan which had taken him from Sweet Home to the porch of the church he sat on. The white men caught up with Sixo and Paul D with their guns straight on them. When they tied Paul D to a tree, schoolteacher yelled out to keep him alive. Sixo had fought with the white man eventually ending up knocked out. When Sixo woke up tied to a tree he laughed and sang loudly and the schoolteacher gave the directive to kill Sixo thinking he wasn't right in the head. Before Sixo finished his song, the men shot and killed him.

Sethe visited Paul D in his cabin. She had taken her children to the corn to leave with the others, she was looking for Halle. Paul D told her about Sixo being killed and that he didn't know where Paul A or Halle was. Sethe told him she was leaving which he didn't think she would make it far being as pregnant as she was. Paul D said good bye knowing that would be the last time he would see her.

Analysis

Paul D referred to those at Sweet Home as his family; even Mr. and Mrs. Garner. When the schoolteacher took over running the farm, the family was disrupted and life was different. Paul D thought a lot about the life he had had and the things that had happened to him during that life. The time he spent in the prison in Georgia, a place he never expected to be, and a place he thought would be the end of his life. Using the rain to escape and the Indian's advice on watching the trees led him to keep moving without



any family or interests to depend. He had only his freedom to take with him. Paul D now found himself at a place influenced by feelings of a woman leading him to go back to what had happened.

After Paul D and Sethe said goodbye at Sweet Home for the last time, she was caught by the pupils and beaten in the barn. Paul D wasn't surprised the schoolteacher had found her in Cincinnati; he figured Sethe was worth a lot of money as a slave. Paul D knew of his worth to a slave owner, he figured Sethe was worth even more because she could reproduce.

Vocabulary

Awe, plagued, aspen, tack room, congregate, alter, successive, tint, trespass, timber, suitable, cogitation, juba



Chapters 25-26

Summary

Chapter 25

Stamp Paid came to see Paul D at the church. Stamp wanted to make sure things were alright between the two of them. Stamp told Paul D his story about changing his name from Joshua and about his wife and the master's son. Stamp had something else to tell Paul D even though Paul D was growing angry with him. Stamp said he was there when Sethe killed her daughter. He said Sethe wanted to "out-hurt the hurter." Stamp confirmed Sethe's love for her children. Instead of fearing Sethe, Paul D said he feared the girl staying at 124. Stamp let Paul D know that he had seen her there and wanted to know who she was and Paul D did not know the answer.

Chapter 26

Sethe began to tend to Beloved's every need and command, being run ragged by whatever Beloved wanted. Denver watched all of this happen and instead of fearing Sethe and wanting to protect Beloved, she now saw the need to take care of Sethe. Sethe continued to be late for work and eventually lost her job. Their food supply was running out and Sethe began to show signs of illness because she gave up everything for Beloved.

Inside 124 it was hard on Denver as she had to take care of everything for Sethe and Beloved. Sethe was trying to make things up to Beloved for what she did to her and Beloved was making Sethe pay for doing it.

Denver went to find work at the Bodwin's. Janey Wagon worked for Mr. and Miss Bodwin and knew that Denver was related to Baby Suggs when she first met her at the door. She wanted to know what was wrong with Sethe and Denver thought that she should tell the whole story to better her chances of getting work.

After Janey learned of Denver's story, word got out all over the area of about Sethe's dead daughter being alive. The stories spread about Sethe being attacked by this daughter who was back from the dead.

Denver waited on the porch for Mr Bodwin to pick her up for her overnight job. She watched one way for him while coming from the other direction was a group of women, led by Ella, heading towards 124 to rescue Sethe. The women all pictured themselves when they were younger playing and eating during those days when the house was alive with companionship. The woman fell to their knees and began praying. Ella understood Sethe's passion for protection.

Sethe and Beloved heard the noise outside. Seeing the women gathered and singing reminded Sethe of being in the Clearing. They walk out on the porch, Beloved was



naked and Sethe held the ice pick she was using to chip the ice to keep Beloved cool inside. Mr. Bodwin pulled up to the house and Sethe saw his white face. She knew he was coming to take one of her children. Sethe ran off toward him, Denver chasing behind. Beloved stood on the porch smiling, she saw the man without skin looking at her.

Analysis

Denver knew she had to leave and get help for Sethe; they needed food to stay alive. She only knew of two people she could ask, Stamp and Lady Jones the woman who used to teach her. Denver went to Lady Jones and asked for work telling her she could learn to do anything she needed and told her it was for food because her ma'am wasn't well. Lady Jones showed her sympathy and gave Denver a bag of food to take home. After that visit, Denver found baskets of food from different people left on the stump in front of the house.

Denver began to get to know the neighbors when she took their baskets and dishes back to them but she felt a need to earn what she needed and not rely on everyone else. That is why she went to the Bodwin's to ask for work. Janey offered her night work to help Miss Bodwin. It was her first night of work that Mr. Bodwin came to pick Denver up at 124 to take her home to work her shift. Mr. Bodwin was coming from one side in his carriage and Ella and a group of women were coming from the other side to help Sethe.

Vocabulary

Rheumy, gloaming, snarl, listless, beribboned, tentative, rout, silt, rancor, stamens, disdain, hussy, lunatic, asylum, cajoling, sedition, circumvent, infanticide, rapt



Chapters 27-28

Summary

Chapter 27

Stamp and Paul D share what they heard about what had happened in front of 124. Stamp said she heard that MrBodwin plans to sell the house. Paul D asked if that is the guy Sethe tried to stab. Janey told Stamp Mr Bodwin was trying to figure out who the naked lady on the porch was and they didn't think he saw Sethe coming at him. Stamp said Ella and Denver jumped on Sethe before she could get to him and knocked her down. Ella punched Sethe in the mouth and Denver got the ice pick out of her hand. No one was sure what had happened to Beloved; someone said she exploded, some said she disintegrated and Ella feared she was still around.

Both men begin to laugh thinking about how crazy Sethe is. They wondered why she felt like she had to kill someone every time a white man came into the yard. They kept laughing and coming up with other scenarios of future encounters with whites in the neighborhood.

Paul D saw Denver one morning after she left work at the Bowdin's. They spoke about how things were going since Beloved was gone. Denver said Sethe was not good. He decided to go see Sethe.

Looking at her, Paul D remembered what Sixo had told him about his Thirty-mile woman. Sixo had said his woman gathered him up; she was a friend of his mind. This is how Paul D saw Sethe. He told her of the many tomorrows they had to live, and she was the only one who was her best.

Chapter 28

The final chapter presents the portrayal of a girl who, although anonymous to many, was most powerful to those within her closest reach. The memory of the events of Beloved will not remain with anyone, nor will her story ever be shared.

Analysis

Denver and Ella had caught up with Sethe in time to save her from stabbing MrBodwin. Sethe had reacted to the fact a white man was there after her daughter. No one knew for sure what happened to Beloved other than she wasn't there any longer.

Paul D wanted to make things right with Sethe and when he came in contact with Denver he asked if he could visit. Paul D found Sethe in the keeping room. He said he will take care of her at night when Denver was working. Sethe had always referred to



her children as her best; as she lay on the bed with little purpose, Paul D told her she was her best and he wanted to be with her.

Vocabulary

Seeping, repulsion, chastened, reckon, fiddled, devices, sneer, smelting, astonished, skiff



Characters

Sethe

Sethe was a slave girl at Sweet Home. Sethe was married to Halle and together they had four children, Howard, Buglar, the little girl and Denver. Sethe fled Sweet Home and went north to Ohio. When the slave owner came after her she attempted to kill all of her children and ended up killing the little girl as a way of protecting the children from a life of slavery.

Baby Suggs

Baby Suggs was Halle's mother. She was a slave at Sweet Home until Halle was able to pay for her freedom. Baby Suggs opened her home to anyone in need of a place to stay. She also served as preacher to the coloreds in the area.

Halle

Halle was one of the Sweet Home Men. He was hired out to other farms in order to earn his mother's, Baby Suggs' freedom. Halle was married to Sethe and father to Howard, Buglar, the little girl and Denver.

Paul D

Paul D was another one of the Sweet Home men. Paul D escaped prison and walked to the north. Paul D moved in with Sethe, Denver and Beloved until he learned of Sethe's history.

Sixo

Sixo was one of the Sweet Home men. Sixo would leave Sweet Home and walk 34 miles one way to see his girlfriend from another farm. Sixo was shot to death when schoolteacher and his pupils caught up with him on the night they tried to escape.

Thirty-mile woman

The Thirty-mile woman was Sixo's girlfriend. She was a slave from a farm 34 miles away from Sweet Home.



Mr. Garner

Mr. Garner owned Sweet Home; he was a slave master who treated his slaves with respect. Mr. Garner was interested in getting input from the Sweet Home Men and would listen to their requests.

Mrs. Garner

Mrs. Garner was the wife of Mr. Garner at Sweet Home. Mrs. Garner also had respect for the slaves; she worked side by side with first Baby Suggs and then Sethe.

Schoolteacher

The schoolteacher was the brother-in-law to Mrs. Garner. He taught a group of pupils at Sweet Home and took over running the farm after the death of Mr. Garner.

Amy Denver

Amy was the white girl who helped Sethe after she collapsed in the field. Amy helped Sethe give birth to Denver; named for Amy Denver.

Howard

Howard was one of Sethe and Halle's sons. Howard feared Sethe after she tried to kill him and his siblings. Howard and Buglar moved away from 124 before they were 13-years old.

Buglar

Buglar was one of Sethe and Halle's sons. Buglar and Howard moved away from 124 before they were 13-years old.

Denver

Denver was born in a small boat on Sethe's way to Ohio. Denver was named after the white girl who helped Sethe give birth. Baby Suggs said Denver was a charmed child.

Beloved

Beloved was the little girl that Sethe killed. Beloved was the ghost that caused chaos in 124 she then arrived at the house in human form to seek revenge on Sethe.



Stamp Paid

(previous name Joshua) - Stamp Paid delivered slaves over the river from Kentucky.

Ella

Ella worked with Stamp Paid to help the coloreds get from the river to Cincinnati. She brought clothes and food and delivered them to a place to stay.

Lady Jones

Lady Jones taught children in her house. Lady Jones gave Denver food after Sethe lost her job and they ran out of food to eat.

Mr. Bodwin

Mr. Bodwin gave Baby Suggs the house when she came to Cincinnati once freed. Mr. Bodwin helped coloreds coming from Kentucky to find housing and work.

Janey Wagon

Janey is the Bodwin's servant. She helped Baby Suggs get acquainted with living in freedom. Janey helped Denver get work from Miss Bodwin so she could support Sethe.



Objects/Places

Sweet Home

The Garner's farm where the slaves lived and worked. After Mr. Garner died, the schoolteacher took over. The schoolteacher controlled the slaves through beatings and shackling them.

House 124

The home Baby Suggs was given by Mr. and Miss Bodwin in exchange for fixing shoes, mending and doing laundry. It was a larger house outside of Cincinnati. It was the house the Bodwin's grew up in.

Cincinnati, Ohio

Baby Suggs arrived in Cincinnati as a free woman. Cincinnati was where the slaves settled after escaping or being freed from Kentucky.

Alfred, Georgia

The prison where Paul D was put for trying to kill his owner after being sold by the schoolteacher. Paul D escaped when the rain water became so deep they were able to dive under the steel bars that locked them in.

The Clearing

The opening in the woods where Baby Suggs led the neighbors in worship. Sethe returned there with Beloved and Denver in hopes to receive a message from Baby Suggs.

Mister the rooster

The mean rooster at Sweet Home that Paul D resented for being free.

The shed

The shed was the place where Sethe killed her daughter and tried to kill the baby and her sons. Paul D slept in the shed and was tempted by Beloved there.



The Berries

Stamp had gone to a place only he knew to retrieve two buckets of berries. Baby Suggs made several pies from the berries, and by adding chicken and fish, there turned out to be enough food for a feast for 90 people. The feast was the night before the schoolteacher arrived at 124.

Water

Beloved came from the water; she described her world as being under the water. When Sethe first saw Beloved she felt an urgent need to urinate, she broke water. Beloved drank a lot of water when she first arrived at 124.

Shackles and Chains

The slave men were many times shackled with chains to ensure they wouldn't escape. The prisoners in Alfred, Georgia, were always chained together.



Themes

Slavery

The memories of the characters illustrate what it meant to be owned as a slave. The colored women were victims of all men, black and white. They gave birth to both races, many times disposing of those born with whiter skin. A slave woman was warned never to become attached to anyone including her children because it was very likely any family member would be taken from her to be sold, killed or rent out. The women were valuable slaves because they reproduced and gave birth to more slaves.

The slave men were controlled by their owners. They were shackled, beat, humiliated for the benefit of the white man's need. A slave owned nothing and was treated as savages. Slaves were at the mercy of their owners.

Death

The concept of death is an overlying theme in the story. Not only was seeing someone die familiar, but it was expected that anyone near you would die; that is why the slaves were warned not to bond with anyone including their children.

Sethe saw her mother hanged; Paul D saw Sixo shot to death and in the prison men were shot dead on the spot. The men at Sweet Home were taught to be hard to death. By killing her daughter Sethe believed she was keeping the child safe. To Sethe, having freed her child through death was better than having that child live as a slave.

From the perspective of Sethe's other children, death was seen as something to be frightened of. They feared their mother after knowing what she was capable of. Howard taught Denver how to kill Sethe if she needed to.

In the description of what death was to Beloved the author provided images of men with no skin, faces, crouching together, being pulled through. Beloved was able to see her mother's smile, her reflection through the water but never able to reach it.

Ghosts

The ghost haunting 124 caused a great deal of havoc on those who lived there. Sethe and Baby Suggs knew it was the dead child. They heard her, felt her presence and experienced her rage from within the walls. Sethe had told Paul D that it wasn't evil that the ghost released but sadness. Paul D felt the sadness as he passed through the redness to enter the house.

The transformation of ghost to human allows the reader to know Beloved as a source of power, a dominant being within the family. She was powerful as an invisible force



causing destruction and harm. And as a human, she controlled the others manipulating their actions.

Freedom

Freedom was not familiar to a slave. After having been controlled all of their lives, being free was anything but normal. Baby Suggs was able to feel her heart beat for the first time as a free woman. Even though she did not physically wear chains, her mind had been chained all of her life. She had to learn how to be free.

The north signified a geographical freedom but for those who escaped to the north still felt the bondage and the fear of being caught. Sethe was free from the physical presence of the schoolteacher but lived with the terror of being taken away. Denver lived free from ever being a slave, but remained on alert of her mother's actions towards her. Paul D freed himself from prison but lived a prisoner of his memories. Each of the characters struggled with being emotionally free.

Style

Point of View

The book is written with a combination of first and third person perspective. The story switches from one character's viewpoint to the other providing a fuller picture of the events.

Setting

Sweet Home was the farm in Kentucky that was described in the memories of the characters. The Garners lived in the farm house where Baby Suggs and then Sethe worked with Mrs. Garner. The men worked in the barns and fields. The slaves' shacks were on the property. A big tree near the corn fields was called Brother, this tree provided shade to the men during their meal breaks.

House 124 was in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was the big house Baby Suggs was given when she arrived as a free woman. House 124 was outside of town in the colored neighborhood. A large feast was celebrated at 124 the night before Sethe killed her child in the shed behind the house.

Language and Meaning

Southern language was used much of the time as well as slang used by the men. The vocabulary words included some of the native words specific to the era as well as the names of trees and plants that were unique to the geographic area.

The author used an informal tone in telling the story. Her use of metaphors adds richness to the content of the story. She connects the themes by using images and phrases that reappear throughout the book.

Structure

The story switches from current time to the past through the memories of the characters. It is the memories which provide the content that explains the plot. The theme of slavery is weaved through the lives of the characters in the contrast between slave and freedom. Even though they had the freedom in the north, the influences that bound them as slaves made it difficult for the main characters to experience the freedom to its fullest. For example, Sethe's belief that she freed her daughter from slavery by killing her, limited her as a disgraced member of the community.

Quotes

Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief.

I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much. Now sit down and eat with us or leave us be.

A man ain't nothing but a man," said Baby Suggs. "But a son? Well now, that's somebody.

Every dawn she saw the dawn, but never acknowledged or remarked its color. There was something wrong with that. It was as though one day she saw red baby blood, another day the pink gravestone chips, and that was the last of it.

The last of the Sweet Home men...

That ain't her mouth.

Nobody saw them falling.

Beloved, she my daughter. She mine.

I am Beloved and she is mine.

It was not a story to pass on.



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Why were slave mothers cautious of loving their children? Explain how Sethe's love for her children affected her.

Topic 2

It is mentioned that Mr. Garner listened to his slaves. Discuss the benefits of managing the slaves in this manner compared to how the schoolteacher managed the slaves.

Topic 3

Describe how Baby Suggs felt when she held her document declaring her a free slave. What were some things she had to get used to as a freed person?

Topic 4

In Chapter 22 *Beloved* describes the underwater place. Discuss possible meanings to these statements: "it is hard to make yourself die forever you sleep short and then return"

Topic 5

Paul D moved out of 124 after learning about what Sethe had done to her child. Explain what made him react the way he did.

Topic 6

What did Paul D mean when he told Sethe "we need some kind of tomorrow"?