**M/W/F 3-Week Beloved Lesson Plan for the GEL Classroom**

**What is this?** The following is a comprehensive guide to teaching “Beloved” in Interpretation of Literature at the University of Iowa. Included in the guide are secondary material recommendations, quizzes, discussion & analysis guide, and an essay assignment.

**Why this format?** Much of this material is straight-forward—the quizzes, essay, etc. I’ve also included a page-by-page tracking of my textual notes, organized into thematic groups around key ideas. The purpose of this, as well as key sections I encourage you to read and analyze in class, is to show some of the constitutive threads which organize and drive the text.

**A Note on Adaptation:** Remember there is room here to replace, supplement, or ignore. If any portion of this doesn’t fit with your class—feel free to use what works and ignore what does not.

**Helpful tips:**

**-Secondary Readings** can be a great way to break up class time and also to break up a single longer text. The guide included some great short stories which pair well with certain portions of the book and the discussion points they raise. But feel free to test out one or two and see how you do on time.

**-Play to your strengths** and consider what you can reasonably do. If the guide suggests discussing the slippery concepts of “space and place” but these terms feel murky, uninteresting, or too obviously from mid 00s English graduate programs, feel free to ditch them.

**-Don’t be daunted** by the length of this. While the first and last pages are just resources for you, the reading schedule is *mostly* my notes that I used to track ideas in the text. I’m not sure how helpful but decided to leave them in. They can be easily ignored if they don’t fit your reading or are unhelpful.

**-Consider the tone** of the classroom with this heavy of a text. It can be tempting to “lighten things up” or to treat the topics with the reverence they deserve and create a confusing or stifling atmosphere. It is possible to treat with the gravity of the material and still, say, celebrate the beauty and achievement of Morrison’s work to lift some of the weight. Secondary sources, but also craft discussion, and history can regulate this. Consider discussing some of the texts’ exploration of tenderness, hope, even sensuality.

**-This is overstuffed!** So, don’t feel required to do it all. Instead, choose what you like. There’s more here than necessary so that you can have things to choose from and get ideas for your own direction.

**-For the essay** decide when you want them to turn in the paper and whether you want any additional requirements, such as more length, a secondary source, a particular critical position, etc.

**-Some extra resources** since so many teach the novel and there’s some great stuff out there:

-[Feminist Teacher](https://feministteacher.com/2010/04/05/teaching-toni-morrisons-beloved-memory-imagination-and-the-narratives-of-slavery/)

-[Massive PBS Teaching Guide](https://iowa.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/dpla-tg-010/teaching-guide-exploring-beloved/)

-[Yale Teaching Guide](https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/guides/1999/1/99.01.03.x.html)

**Secondary Materials**

Southern Gothic:

* “A Rose for Emily” [(8pg)](http://www.cje.ids.czest.pl/biblioteka/7117936-A-Rose-for-Emily.pdf) *William Faulkner story embodying Southern Gothic and examining the grotesque, the past, and America’s south.*
* “A Good Man is Hard to Find” [(12pg)](https://repositorio.ufsc.br/bitstream/handle/123456789/160332/A%20good%20man%20is%20hard%20to%20find%20-%20Flannery%20O'Connor.pdf) *Southern Gothic story by Flannery O’Conner examining religion, violence, and a false nostalgia for an imagined antebellum paradise.*

Magical Realism

* “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” [(5pg)](http://jaimebell.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/51426730/A%20very%20old%20man%20with%20enormous%20wings.pdf) *Magical Realist story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez embodying the style and even discussing “slavery.” I discuss allegory aside this* [*image*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melencolia_I#/media/File:Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer_-_Melencolia_I_-_Google_Art_Project_(_AGDdr3EHmNGyA).jpg)which features an angel, sadness, and a yard!
* “Magical Realism” (3pg) *Brief excerpt defining and giving a history of the movement.*

African American Lit

* “A Dream Deferred” [(1pg)](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem) *Harlem Renaissance poem by Langston Hughes on racial injustice.*
* “On Being Brought from Africa to America” [(1pg)](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45465/on-being-brought-from-africa-to-america) *Earliest publish African American poet, Phillis Wheatley, on slavery and racism.*

Interviews:

* [Morrison on “Beloved”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP6umkgMRq4) (3:17) *Discusses appropriation of stories, Garner, shaping history into fiction.*
* [Morrison on white supremacy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S7zGgL6Suw) (2:47) *Discusses racism as a neurosis and the constructedness of whiteness as a race.*

Historical Sources:

* [Letter from a runaway slave](file:///Users/jcosner/Library/Containers/com.microsoft.Word/Data/Desktop/-%09http:/www.lettersofnote.com/2012/01/to-my-old-master.html) to his former master.
* [Painting of Margaret Garner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Garner#/media/File:Margaret_Garner.jpg) as “Modern Medea”
* Newspaper Accounts from [New York Times](https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1856/02/02/76452571.pdf), [New York Herald](http://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/590193?imagelist=1), and [Cincinnati Gazette](http://library.cincymuseum.org/aag/bio/garner.html)

Feminism:

* Margaret Garner and activist [Lucy Stone](file:///Users/jcosner/Library/Containers/com.microsoft.Word/Data/Desktop/-%09http:/www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/blog/2013/09/lucy-stone-and-the-margaret-garner-tragedy)
* Alfre Woodard’s [“Ain’t I a Woman?”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vr_vKsk_h8) *Actress delivering Soujorner Truth’s speech at Women’s Rights Convention of 1851.*

Race:

* “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” [(8pg)](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69395/the-negro-artist-and-the-racial-mountain) *Hughes essay on race & art.*
* “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” [(7pg)](https://www.scarsdaleschools.k12.ny.us/cms/lib/NY01001205/Centricity/Domain/908/AT%20Ethics%20of%20Jim%20Crow.pdf) *Essay by Richard Wright.*

Literature and Criticism:

* “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” [(3pg)](http://s18.middlebury.edu/AMST0325A/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf) *Audre Lorde on whether tools (including language) of oppressors can ever be used against oppressors.*
* “Playing, Not Joking, With Language” [(2pg)](https://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/14/books/playing-not-joking-with-language.html) *Excerpt of John Wideman’s review of Henry Luis Gates Jr. book, glossing racial aspects of tricksters, language and postmodern play. Short and strange source but very compelling—with Lorde’s, my favorite.*

Adaptations:

* Check out the 1998 adaptation (with Oprah!) or look up clips from key moments on Youtube to show in class.
* 2016 BBC Radio 10-part adaptation for its treatment of similarly important moments.

**Quizzes**

I would recommend not telling students when the quizzes will be. Often students plan to read before known quizzes but then fall too far behind and all their good intentions cannot overcome 100 pages of modernist prose in one night. I find it better to tell them there *will* be multiple quizzes and then just give them as I want. Though students groan, I find that they objectively and as a group enjoy much more a class that they’ve been forced to read for even by way of quizzes.

Not to get too philosophical but in my experience outcomes for classes are always better when students feel obliged to read and thus don’t sit for 1-1.5 hours with no idea what’s going on. Even good students will often neglect reading in the difficult environment of undergrad but feel poorer for it.

For this reason, I tell them there’ll be quizzes and give multiple of them on very obvious key points. Tell the students these are neither “trick” questions, nor tiny details, but instead crucial points that they should 100% get in a cursory read but not necessarily from a summary.

Below are some quizzes that you can use and/or adapt as fits your class, since they have a mixed method.

**Week 1 Quiz**

1. Where does Paul D take the family for a reprieve?
2. What happens to Sethe when Beloved appears on the stump?
3. Who is the man who replaced Mr. Garner as the master?
4. What was stolen from Sethe before she left?
5. What does Paul D keep remembering having in his mouth?

**Week 2 Quiz**

1. What does Paul describe “locking away” memories in his chest?
2. Why doesn’t Baby Suggs want to change her name after fleeing? (2pt)
3. What is meant by the line: “We don’t hold with slavery, even Garner’s kind”? (2pt)

**Week 3 Quiz**

1. Why did Stamp Paid take that name? (2.5pt)
2. What might be the purpose of the grammar/syntax changes in Beloved’s sections? (2pt)

**Reading Schedule with Textual “Notes” and Discussion Points**

**Day 1 Opening-Page 51**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Form and/into Content:** genres (Southern Gothic, ghost story, history), style (experimental, modernist)

**History and Memory:** the weight, burden of memory both personal and communal/national

**Identity and Self**: names and signifying, how they do or don’t represent (grandma as baby, etc),

How identity is created and maintained and by whom

**Bodies and Absences:** much about bodies and the toll on them but also their absence (ghosts)

**Belonging and Place:** how we long for belonging but cannot let go of even traumatic past

**Looking and Image:** key theme of looking, avoiding look, witnessing, being a spectacle, etc

**Storytelling and (later) song:** the way stories bear our burdens and help share them in communities

**Textual Notes**

3 Home existed before the state, liminal space, arbitrariness of nation-state

4 More about liminal spaces but here the nastiness of life and meanness of death

6 Tomb/womb dichotomy of her terrible payment. “Between her legs” likened to open grave.

7 Description of “sweet home” as beautiful and terrible—how to reconcile traumatic past

11 Needing movement for safety, cannot be secure and fixed. (Fixed important term later)

14 She “never looked away”. Introduces the politics of looking, including duty of witness

13 Sweet home as belonging

16 Past “comes back whether we want it or not”. Compare to Southern Gothic and Faulkner

quote, **“The past is never dead. It isn’t even past.”**

18 Tree on her back… why this symbol?

20 Why is stealing her milk what persists in her memory, more than the beating?

21 Body as a historical record. Taking responsibility (witnessing?) by touching all of scar.

23 Chapter ends with importance of stories

25 Struggle for love “too long and too long ago;” “deprivation” showing weight of past.

27 Baby Suggs on men and sons. Internalized sense of the value of black lives

30-31 Dream of the unattainable haunted him. How Paul’s imagination reflects broader hurts?

32-33 “shucking corn” symbolism and pain of release. Close-Read to discuss word choice

34-35 Denver’s play: “the place became the point”. Sees house “as a person rather than structure”

40-41 Unpack Amy, also born into a debt, and her desire for velvet, as “a new and clean world”

42 Biblical symbolism of tending to feet… coming back to life

**43-4 KEY:** rememory. The livingness of past. Nothing dies

45 Longing for plans and control. The lack of agency.

47 There was “no room” until Paul “broke up the place, making room”

50 Schoolteacher coming with “law and a shotgun”—the law as weapon against blacks.

51 No real sense of future but past is very real.

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Introducing text** should take up most of the first day but feel free to shift gears if you need.

**Day 2 Page 52-Page 75**

**Secondary Reading “A Rose for Emily”**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Water and Life**: as a symbol in the text

**Writing as/vs storytelling:** comparison between literacy and orality

**Identity:** staying “one’s self,” compare to branding

**Textual Notes**

54 Loving too much is dangerous for slaves. What is the meaning of this? Consider title.

57-8 Whites and/as the spectacle. Consider politics of looks and looking. Why important?

61 Sethe “breaking water” again. Water and birth entwined. Also “thirsty”?

62 Memorizing letters as opposed to spelling, signification. Memory and orality.

69 Importance of story-telling and memories, their pain and power

72 Again, the eternal present. Today is always here. Discuss “Dream Deferred” perhaps.

73 The concept of the brand. Why Sethe needs it but hates the idea for her daughter

**73-74 READ:** Long passage (starting at “I never found out”) on memory, meaning, and feeling.

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Discuss “A Rose for Emily”:** and use small groups to discuss Southern Gothic as a genre. Provide [this](https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-304#:~:text=Southern%20Gothic%20is%20a%20mode,angst%2Dridden%20sense%20of%20alienation.) definition on the screen and ask students how they see Faulkner, and in turn Morrison, embodying this.

“*Southern Gothic is a mode or genre prevalent in literature from the early 19th century to this day.*

*Characteristics of Southern Gothic include the presence of irrational, horrific, and transgressive thoughts, desires, and impulses; grotesque characters; dark humor, and an overall angst-ridden sense of alienation. While related to both the English and American Gothic tradition, Southern Gothic is uniquely rooted in the South’s tensions and aberrations. During the 20th century, Charles Crow has noted, the South became “the principal region of American Gothic” in literature. The Southern Gothic brings to light the extent to which the idyllic vision of the pastoral, agrarian South rests on massive repressions of the region’s historical realities: slavery, racism, and patriarchy. Southern Gothic texts also mark a Freudian return of the repressed: the region’s historical realities take concrete forms in the shape of ghosts that highlight all that has been unsaid in the official version of southern history.”* (Oxford Research Encyclopedia)

**Watching this** [**interview**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S7zGgL6Suw)**:** And ask if we can see these ideas carrying over in the text.

**Day 3 Page 76-Page 100**

**Secondary Reading “A Good Man is Hard to Find”**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Writing as/vs storytelling:** comparison between literacy and orality

**Memory and rememory:** Denver loving story, Paul singing what he can’t “say”

**Gender:** Paul’s concerns about masculinity, Sethe’s regarding femininity/motherhood

**Identity:** staying “one’s self”

**Image of “choking” and bit:** compare these images

**Textual Notes**

79 Choking on the raisin. Raisin reference to Hughes? Also, choking as important later.

81 Paul and masculinity, struggle of being treated as a tool. Unpack “Hey! Hey!” passage.

83 Sethe describes rape and her mind’s return to it, the insistence of memory.

84 Paul talks of the “bit,” his tongue held down. The “wild” that came where none before.

**85 KEY:** Paul and Sethe talk about the difficulty of telling AND hearing. Paul suggests sometimes songs

let us “say” what we can’t. Reveals importance of songs in the book.

86 Jealous of Mister: why slavery is, in part, so demeaning, is that one cannot stay oneself

91 Denver loved the story about herself but hated feeling of…. what? Indebtedness? Why?

92-93 Does Amy story reflect differently in magnitude of hardship?

93 “Whip you for looking at him straight”🡪 Discuss politics of looking.

99 How do we read the birthing scene?

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Morrison** [**interview**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP6umkgMRq4)**:** What sorts of concerns are there in Morrison’s adaptation of the story?

**Small Groups** Can talk about O’Connor’s text in terms of the Southern Gothic definition from Wednesday. But

also her depiction of the grandmother’s memory of the ancestral homes as a reverse to Sethe’s and Baby Suggs’.

**Day 4 Page 100-Page 138**

**Secondary Reading: “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” and “Magical Realism” excerpt**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Survival vs Peace:** text often discusses necessity of letting guard down, even as we learn how

much survival requires guardedness. What is meant by this?

**Religion:** Tricky conversation, if you want: how does religion, like memory of Sweet Home,

suggest the fraught nature of Christianity for slaves in the US?

**Choke vs Caress:** how does this dichotomy help articulate the character’s struggles?

**Singing and Speaking the Unspeakable:**

**Memory and Rememory:** Paul’s tin, Sethe rememory and disremembering

**Textual Notes**

101 Laying down defenses. The complexity of their journey to peace, needing to be on guard.

102 Baby Suggs’s holiness… what is it described as? Where positive, where suspect?

103 How do we read this religion? “Flesh” discussion butts agains Judeo-Christian binary of spirit/flesh. Very frank about bodies. Is this significant? What about bodies in American thought is challenged?

108 Listening for the unspoken. Those left behind.

**111 READ:** “Sethe had had twenty-eight days…” passage. How is freedom articulated?

113 Why the collapse in difference between massage and strangling? Stifling love?

114 Imagining them as “a sight,” an image to be seen.

118 Sethe’s feeding as a giving of her body, her milk.

119 Again, choking versus caressing.

120 How are money and education figured?

128 Songs again as the language of hurts that cannot be spoken straight.

Life and hope as the cruelest promises

129 Enslaved by loyalty to friends—chain holding them together. Why it’s dangerous to love

133 Locking memories, the “tobacco tin” inside his chest. Compare to Sethe’s rememory (43)

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Discuss secondary text:** why does magical realism seem such a fitting genre for challenging Western

hegemony, protesting oppression?

**Day 5 Page 134-Page 173**

**Secondary Reading “The Master’s Tools will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” “A Dream Deferred,” and “On Being Brought from Africa to America”**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Memory and Rememory:** Paul’s tin, Sethe rememory and disremembering, Denver only in the

present

**Body and Self:** ways the self is tied to embodiedenss or not. Paul losing control of body,

Beloved’s dream of disembodiedness

**Abolitionists and Feminism:** How does Morrison explore allyship across racial boundaries in

the text? Allyship in terms of gender and feminism?

134-5 Paul feeling pushed out of place.

139 Difference in looking vs seeing

139-0 Rememory and disremember.

141 Denver’s questions have “nothing to do with the past” the “present alone interested” her

144 Denver and, again registers difference b/w “looking seeing” and loss of sense of body. How are these related? Next page she is “crying because she has no self” (145)

**147 Read** chapter opening? What does this say about identity? Masculinity?

148 Appetites and nature; internalizing fear, wondering if Schoolteacher is right.

149 Paul losing control of body and losing Sethe.

157 Beloved dreams of body coming apart, exploding and being swallowed. How does this figure?

161 Again the theme of feeding all and “loaves and fishes”

167 Names and social v personal identity. What others know us as? How we know ourselves?

171 What is meant by “Garner’s kind” of slavery

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Show video reading of** [**“Ain’t I a Woman”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vr_vKsk_h8)

**Secondary Readings** and in particular the poems can be a good way to talk about “intertexts” the sorts of

works that exist in the mind of the reader and writer and cast inflections on it. The Lorde essay provides a lot of material students often like to talk through.

**Assign Essay** and go over the expectations with the class.

**Day 6 Page 174-Page 195**

**Secondary Reading: Jourdan Anderson’s Letter “To My Old Master”**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Religion & Nourishment:** Explore Sethe’s spirituality? Compared to whites? Baby Suggs?

**Abolitionists and Feminism:** How does Morrison explore allyship across racial boundaries in

the text? Allyship in terms of gender and feminism?

**Role of Media:** it’s a brief moment on 183 but worth connecting to discussion of how racism

effects what stories are told in media now about race

**Looks, Looking:** more on this complex exploration

**175-6 READ** how Schoolteacher viewed this situation.

179 Echoes of Scarlet Letter—why might this occur?

183 Media and race: “no way in hell a black face could appear” unless it was bad.

185 The “righteous Look every negro learned to recognize”. Again, images, spectacles and

politics of looking and being looked at.

192-3 Sethe’s desire to protect. “Collected every bit of life she’d made” What is safe? Why?

194 Slavery worse than death

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Discuss history:**

Discuss the role of [**Lucy Stone**](http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/blog/2013/09/lucy-stone-and-the-margaret-garner-tragedy/)

Show Noble’s[**Modern Medea painting**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Satterwhite_Noble#/media/File:Thomas_Satterwhite_Noble_Margaret_Garner.jpg)

[**letter**](http://www.lettersofnote.com/2012/01/to-my-old-master.html)from a runaway slave.What do students find surprising about it?

**Week 7 199-247**

**Secondary Readings “Playing, Not Joking, With Language”**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Bodies:** Paul “gave her back her body”

**Names and identity:** Stamp’s name and its origin

**Language and style:** “definitions belong to definer” compare to Beloved’s sections

199 Stamp paid and secrets/sneaking. Why does he feel guilty?

201 Whites’ “invented” rules as a means to keep and control, to keep them guessing

203/9 Putting down shield and sword and faith. Sethe can’t have faith.

215 Sethe’s pain of having had hope from Paul D.

218 Complexity of names. Owners often named them. Stamp “misnamed” himself, to show he’d “paid”

**222 READ** “Once, long ago…” paragraph. “Buried recollections” and Paul “gave her back

her body”. Key concepts of memory and body, here intwined.

225 Language of the oppressors. “definitions belong to the definers”. **Discuss Masters Tools**

228 Discuss significance of sprawling paragraph. “Human and animal characteristics”

234 The concept of the jungle “planted in them” like the wildness of the bit (84)

236 Again, discuss long paragraph, unending—what is the paragraph doing? How does its

size effect the content? How does it reflect Sethe’s current mental space?

239 Sethe worries that she loves too thick. (243) “Don’t love too much…”

245 Knowledge as a bulwark against oppression—irony with schoolteacher?

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Discuss essay:** and encourage students to develop some practice theses. Here are two websites I’ve used. For

information on thesis statement and several good examples:

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/thesis-statements/> . For general questions about university

level writing and MLA formatting: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

**Small Groups:** can come up with an argument and multiple pieces of evidence. What idea intrigues them in the

text? And what argument does the text make about this idea? Use the assignment description to scaffold expectations and come together to discuss, workshop, and improve on the theses.

**Consider developing:** a minilecture on some form of traditionally African American music or poetry. Jazz, hip-

hop, rap, blues, and gospel all have overlapping concerns for the way music is treated in the text. Consider talking about the history and formal qualities of one or more of these and drawing connections.

**Day 8 Page 248-Page 277**

**Secondary Readings “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Poetry and Song:** multiple instances of these as alternative forms of expression and memory

247-8 Paragraph transition marks Sethe claiming Beloved and then Beloved claiming herself.

Is there a possible slippage here? Not identity of Beloved but the adjectival form?

248 Purpose of punctuation dropping away?

**252 READ** last paragraph. Discuss Beloved’s ambiguous poetic language

254 Poetry as another form of rememory… whiteness as without skin?

259 Slave’s vulnerability. Not whether Gardner is good or bad, but that they have no control.

**260 READ** “For years Paul D…” Garner versus schoolteacher—types of dehumanization.

266 Sixo’s singing. Considering history of blues/jazz/rap, let alone gospel, what does text

suggest about song?

272/6 Crazy as a label for those hurting. Is this gendered?

277 How do we read this last passage?

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Secondary Reading**

**Small Groups:** find a key passage and practice close reading, analyzing the passage for how its construction

makes a particular argument about what is being described. Demonstrate a close reading of a passage you find interesting and how it makes an argument and then encourage them to do it in groups. This can be a great skill to reinforce before the essay is due.

**Day 9 Page 278-End**

**Secondary Readings: “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” and ask them to research newspaper accounts of Garner. Some exist from New York Times, New York Herald, and Cincinnati Gazette which you can distribute.**

**Major themes of this section:**

**Storytelling and History:** discuss newspaper stories and the book’s ending, focusing on the act of storytelling

**Minstrelsy:** If you’re comfortable and familiar, this can be a compelling historical component to connect

**Freedom and America:** discuss the promise and failed promises of the country

**Gender:** the treatment of Sethe, the community of women shown

286 Denver realizes her mother will be fully consumed by Beloved

**287 READ** dialogue: how even goodness cannot exist in unjust system

291 Colorism and the politics of black hair.

294 Sethe and Beloved, traumatized and trauma, exist in direct proportion

**295 READ:** bottom of the page, what power looks like. Discuss recent stories of white’s calling police on

black people. Taking their lives in their hands.

300 Discuss minstrelsy. Black face.

301 Distinction between what is fair and what is right.

303 A community of women, combining traditional and Christian beliefs going to Sethe. How do we read

this image?

306 Like Paul D burying in the tobacco tin, here he buries to protect.

**307-8 READ** “When the women…” Sethe breaking ice. Discuss symbols of baptism and thaw.

315 How we see ourselves through how others force their vision on us.

316 No escape in a country such as this. Why? Perhaps discuss **Hughes’ “Let America Be America Again”**

321 Why is Beloved so special? Represents possibility? Memory?

322-3 Ends with stories and tales. How does the act of writing frame this book?

**[[BREAK UP THE CLASS WITH]]**

**Secondary Reading**

**Discussing Newspapers:** can be a great way to break up the class and discuss media portrayal. How do the

papers describe the incident? What do they suggest their readers care about? What does Morrison’s text suggest is important that such stories ignore?

**Assignment Description: *Beloved* Essay**

**[[Please replace as needed or delete all highlighted material before distributing to your classes]]**

**Length: 1500 words**

**Points: 100**

**Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on ICON Dropbox by \_\_\_\_\_\_**

This essay is a self-contained and sophisticated argument which interprets *Beloved* by Toni Morrison for its treatment of a meaningful idea. The essay assumes a familiarity with the novel which means that little summary is necessary. Instead of describing *events* in the book, students should introduce an important and interesting *idea* from the texts and develop an argument as to what the text suggests about that idea.

Remember that a thesis statement must be specific, arguable (thus not inherently true), not immediately obvious, and should connect with themes which we have talked about during class: identity, otherness, power, gender, sexuality, repression, art, race, history, belonging, truth, communication, language etc. If you are not sure whether your thesis addresses a sufficiently complex topic, please come see me. The introduction should telegraph the organization of your essay and the body paragraphs should include **direct quotes** from the text. Decide whether your thesis is best proved through looking at different characters, scenes, themes, whatever, and reflect this organization in your structure.

Please remember that this is not a book report or summary—you are not proving to me that you read the book, that is already assumed. Rather, you are arguing for an interpretation of the work that gives us a sense of its value beyond being entertaining or artistic. Knowing that this is an exercise in **finding strong evidence, writing convincingly, and displaying well-reasoned arguments** should help you along. Remember to keep an academic tone (that means avoiding colloquial language, clichés, and subjective “I” statements) and to cite the quotes you use.

**Your primary concerns should be:**

-to shore up the original thesis into a substantial, meaningful, interpretive and specific claim

-to gather compelling and original evidence toward establishing your interpretation of the text

-to introduce and to follow-up quotations with close-reading analysis which demonstrates its relevance

-to reach satisfying conclusions with regard to a text's theme and its broader implications

-to clarify and sign-post the organization of paragraphs, reflecting a logical/organic progression

-to do each of these with polish, rigor, and clarity

**Resources:**

To [schedule a meeting/virtual tutoring](https://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/) with the University of Iowa Writing center

For [information on thesis statement](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/thesis-statements/) and several good examples

For general questions about [university level writing and MLA formatting](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/)

*Beloved* Essay Rubric

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Notes | Score |
| Introduction |  | **/5** |
| Thesis |  | **/20** |
| Organization |  | **/15** |
| Evidence |  | **/20** |
| Analysis |  | **/20** |
| Style |  | **/5** |
| Originality |  | **/5** |
| Polish |  | **/10** |

**Total Points \_\_\_\_\_/100**