

# BELOVED

A NOVEL

TONI  
MORRISON

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- Toni Morrison,  
American author
- Published in 1987
- Set chiefly in  
Cincinnati, Ohio,  
1873

The novel is **inspired by** the story of an African-American slave, Margaret Garner, who temporarily escaped slavery during 1856 in Kentucky by fleeing to Ohio, a free state.

A posse arrived to retrieve her and her children under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which gave slave owners the right to pursue slaves across state borders; Margaret killed her two-year-old daughter rather than allow her to be recaptured.

The novel won the **Pulitzer Prize** in 1988. During 2006 a New York Times survey of writers and literary critics ranked it as **the best work of American fiction of the past 25 years.**

The epigraph reads "Sixty Million and more," dedicated to the Africans and their descendants who died as a result of the Atlantic slave trade.

The novel opens with the following inscription:

"I will call them my people,  
Which were not my people;  
And her beloved,  
Which was not beloved."

Romans 9:25

This reference comes from the Epistle to the Romans, a book of the New Testament written by Paul. As he prepares to visit Rome, he sends a letter stating his beliefs.

He discusses the nature of God's relationship with humanity and focuses on the sovereignty of God. He also raises the problem of the justice of God, power mixed with mercy, even if it leads to problems.

This chapter, despite its examination of the evils on earth, ends on a note of reconciliation. The following verse reads as follows: "And it will be in the place where they were told, you are not My people, there they will be called sons of the living God" (Romans 9:26).

Things to track on your **theme log** and  
in your **journal** entries ...

- **ILLUMINATING EPISODE**

a specific episode or moment that illuminates the novel's meaning

- **PARENTAL CONFLICT**

a source of conflict between a parent (or parental figure) and a son/daughter

- **IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOR**

a character whose seemingly irrational behavior might be judged reasonable

- **CONFLICTING DIRECTIONS**

a character whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two influences

- **NECESSARY SECRECY**

a character who is required to keep a secret due to some necessity

- **SIGNIFICANCE OF HOME**

a character who leaves home while the idea of home still remains significant

- **TRAGIC FIGURE**

a character who functions as a tragic figure in the novel's tragic vision

- **DESIRE FOR POWER**

a character who struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others

- **PAST AFFECTS PRESENT**

a character who must deal with some aspect (personal or societal) of the past

- **SEARCH FOR JUSTICE**

a character who responds to injustice or searches for justice in some way

A few notable **symbols** include ...

- milk
- trees
- roses
- water
- tobacco tin
- rooster
- scars
- colors
- hummingbirds
- forest
- two/four feet
- a ribbon