

The Bluest Eye

By Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison

- Born Chloe Anthony Wofford, in 1931
- Grew up in Lorain, Ohio, a racially mixed steel town
- BA, Howard University
- MA in English Literature, Cornell
- Died 2019



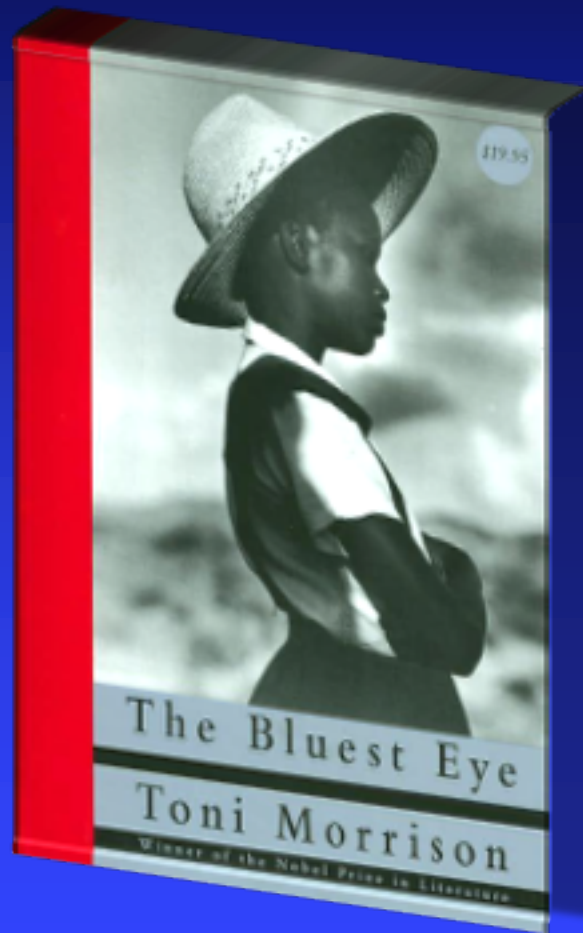
- Married, two children, taught at Howard University until her divorce in 1964
- Moved to New York and took a job as textbook editor for Random House (stayed until 1983)
- While at Random House, she worked on her own fiction at night, after her sons were asleep, and early in the morning, starting at 4am, before they woke up for school

Why She Wrote

- She often said it was the "powerlessness" she felt during her years as a wife and mother of two small children that led her to begin writing
- She wanted to write the story she wished had been written when she was a little girl
- She wanted to see herself and others like her represented in literature

- *The Bluest Eye* (1970) was her first novel
- *Song of Solomon* (1977)
 - ◆ National Book Critics Circle Award
- *Beloved* (1987)
 - ◆ Pulitzer Prize
- Taught at Princeton (1989-2006)
- Nobel Prize (1993)
 - ◆ First African American to win
- *God Help the Child* (2015) was her final novel

The Bluest Eye



“Tells the story of black, eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove. Pecola prays for her eyes to turn blue so that she will be as beautiful and beloved as all the blond, blue-eyed children in America. In the autumn of 1941, the year the marigolds in the Breedloves’ garden do not bloom, Pecola’s life does change—in painful, devastating ways.”

Morrison's Style

■ Rhythmic Dialogue

- ◆ Captures the ethnic, regional, and historical cadence, speech patterns, and slang

■ Characters of Depth

- ◆ Creates characters of tremendous depth, shaped by their dreams but held by their circumstances, each with his or her own history
- ◆ Her books *always* revolve around women
- ◆ Men live primarily at the fringes of the narrative

Morrison's Style

■ Cyclical Storytelling

- ◆ Intertwining plots and layered time sequences that fall back on one another, creating a tapestry of narrative that plays on our notions of memory and time and add even greater richness to the characters

Morrison's Style

■ Big Symbolism and Big Themes

- ◆ Incorporates imaginative—almost mythic—symbols to represent broad and important ideas
 - ◆ *Racism, Civil Rights, Slavery, and Patriarchy*

■ Lyrical Prose

- ◆ More than many American authors, Morrison's use of simile, metaphor, and imagery create stories not only full of big symbolism but cast with an almost fable-like quality