

# Structure used by toni morrison in her novel beloved



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Having grown up during the Great Depression of 1930s, Toni Morrison witnessed the struggles of her parents in bringing their four children up, and the dismal days of penury and strife left a deeper impact on Morrison's mind to compel her in creating a novel on oppression and slavery. Her novel *Beloved* won the Pulitzer Prize in the year 1992, and proved to be a masterpiece on the theme of slavery and retribution.

This novel, which has many symbols and metaphorical allusions woven intricately into the narration, speaks about pain and inner trauma with a simplicity that is puzzling and yet comes across as a stroke of genius, even for the discerning reader. The protagonists of *Beloved* are all damaged persons who are struggling with their painful pasts. Sethe, the central figure and the most significant protagonist of *Beloved* says, " I will never run from another thing on this earth".

She says this to prove her mettle, her courage under fire. Throughout the novel she is escaping from her past, denying and running away from the painful memories. When she says that she will never run away from another thing, she is subconsciously bringing all of it back by trying to dull her ache and guilt of what she did to her daughter many years ago. Sethe is a confused mother who had tried to prove her love by murdering her daughter. She does so to save her from slavery and exploitation.

Toni Morrison uses Sethe as her alibi, and builds a structure of guilt, pain, mental trauma, forgetfulness and a terrible secret around her. Sethe is the one who has ' rememory' of the past, which has painful associations of rape and murder. Sethe tries to beat her past by trying to deny its impact. The

advent of ' Beloved' is also the symbolism of a dreadful past catching up with Sethe sooner or later. The past comes back n the form of her dead child; the child whom she had murdered in her past, and it makes its demands on her present.

The unreasonable behaviour of ' Beloved' is also used by Morrison as a structure, to base her story on retribution and trauma of the protagonist, who is perpetually running away from her past and denying its appalling force on her conscience all the time. Very assiduously Morrison uses another structure to show retribution and poetic justice for the crime done by Sethe, by introducing the young woman Beloved as the lost and murdered daughter of Sethe. Beloved is almost cruel in her demands and in creating havoc in Sethe's life.

She seduces and sleeps with Paul D, who is Sethe's boyfriend, and demands all the time for her desires to be fulfilled. " Beloved ate up Sethe's life, took it, swelled up with it, and grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur. " This is quoted to prove Beloved as the symbolic devourer, ( as it says , " Swelled up with it" ) who had no scruples in keeping Sethe on her toes and destroying her gradually. " Without a murmur" is symbolic of a repenting mother who stops at nothing to make up for the past crime.

Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it. " Here the handsaw is used literally as Sethe had used a handsaw to kill Beloved, when she was a little girl. Her return is the allegorical guilt taking hold of a guilty heart. Reminds one of Lady Macbeth and her symbolic

hand washing, to rid herself of the metaphorical blood on her hands!

Morrison uses the word 'rememory' in the novel, to tell us that memories don't go away, past is ever much a part of our present and we have to sooner or later deal with it.