

# Good and bad in sula by toni morrison

Literature



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## **Introduction**

Toni Morrison writes the book *Sula* with the intention of questioning the idea of good versus bad. The novel talks about good vs bad and compares them between two main characters. The author uses the characters Sula and Nel; their values and qualities to prove her point. The actions taken by these characters gives examples of good vs bad.

## **Sula and Nel**

In this novel there are many characters; few characters are portrayed as good and few portrayed as bad. The author compares the theme good vs bad using the character Sula and Nel. The character Sula seen as evil. Throughout the chapters we read how she is evil, and it displayed quite obviously, Sula, s lack of action after accidentally killing chicken little and watching her mother, Hannah, burn in a fire, show how Sula is metaphorically portrayed as evil. Nel and the other characters are good compared to Sula's evil.

However, the character Nel is a small-town conservative and a quiet girl. She hides behind innocence, when her heart is evil. Sula is city girl that is completely independent and blunt. Though she does seemingly evil things, she is still honest and prideful which makes her heart good. The book *Sula* goes from the time periods of 1919-1940. During this time, we read about two girls, Sula and Nel as they grow up.

## **The Girls' Childhood**

The book takes place in 'The Bottom.' White landowners guaranteed liberated slaves a bit of paradise by giving them a chance to live in the

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medallion city, Ohio. The white landowners would take the richer version of the city leaving the liberated slaves with an unpleasant life. In the start of the novel at 1919, the two young girls Sula and Nel simply start to meet. They become best friends in their teenage years. In Nel's family, they are respected members of the society they traditional. Her house is steady and more conventional than Sula's. It represented as good because the family goes to church; they appear to be decent, and the house is perfect and clean. Sula's house is very different. She lives with her grandma and her mom Hannah, who later passes on; both are viewed as odd and nontraditional to the town because house is disordered; the ladies have sex with different men, and there is no male figure in the house. Regardless of their differences the young girls become closest companions and live together. One day an accident happened. Sula swings her friend Chicken Little into a nearby river and he drowned. Nel and Sula agreed to never tell anyone about the accident.

After that the two girls starts to grow apart. Later Nel reflects on this incident remembering " the good feeling she had when chicken little hands slipped" (Morrison, 170). While Sula had cried and cried when she came back from Shadrack's house but Nel had remained calm. This quote shows us who's heart is really evil, while Sula is showing remorse, Nel is excited to see the boy drop in the river.

## **The Later Life**

Later in the novel we read how Nel settles down and gets married and have children. However, Sula lives an independent life and she travels for ten years; then returns to bottom. When she returns it seems that bad things

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follow her, beginning with her shipping of Eva off to a home then she breaks up Nel's marriage by sleeping with Jude. Additionally, Sula even causes Mr. Finley to choke on a chicken bone and die. Many of these incidents are nothing but accidents it doesn't prove that she is evil. Sleeping with Nel's husband is an exception before we judge her actions that is not acceptable in the eye of society. I want to argue that we take a look at her family background its not hard to understand that growing up she didn't have anyone to teach her the right things.

As I mention earlier in the 4th paragraph she grew up in a chaotic environment; her mother freely loved men. Growing up she watched her mother and thought it was okay to be sexually free. This does not prove that she is evil Throughout the novel the theme, good versus evil is shown. Nel is known as good overall. She is innocent, while she is also conservative and shy. She is married with children which makes her follow the female patterns of the town. With those qualities, she is an all-American good woman. In society Sula is showed as evil and offensive. She decides to go off to college and does not come back for ten years. When Sula returns, she comes back with a plague of robins. The robins came with " to much heat, or too much cold, to little rain, rain to flooding" (Morrison 81). Sula was also assigned the role of evil because she was free with her sexuality and freely flaunted her sensuality and her independence

However, Nel sleeps with her husband Jude because she feels as if it's another job of hers. She is not free of her sexuality. She is confined to think her only goal during sex is to please her husband. During that time, it was normal for women to think that way. That was considered being a good wife.

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However, Sula did not want to fall into that category. Sula's sexual expression is not attached to anything outside herself. Therefore, she does not see it as being sinful or evil she sees it as being free of herself.

In the story, Sula gets blamed for several things. The towns people blamed her for the boy falling, the man choking on a chicken bone, the lady getting a sty on her eye by looking at Sula and for bringing the plague of birds. These things considered Sula evil. However, what the towns people did not realize is that Sula brought a presence that improves the community. Sula was different. She embodied what all the wives wanted freedom which was something weird so that all cast her as evil. A true evil person would just bring a dark cloud to the community with a heavy unpleasant emotion.

After the incident with Jude, Nel became like the towns people. She judged Sula because she did not live by rules of the society. She was simply free, and everyone was jealous of that. Soon Sula falls in love with Ajax. He is the only person to see Sula for what she really was and independent women. She reminded him of his mother. He loved the fact that she was not domestic and that they considered each other as equals. Sula soon falls under the pressure of being domestic which is everything she is against and soon she left him.

## **Conclusion**

Sula is a book about uncertainty. It questions good versus evil. Sula was blamed for being evil and bad, but she lived her life honestly. Nel lived her life private and as a lie. Honesty is a trait of someone with a good pure heart

where lie reflects someone with an evil heart. This book questions beliefs about what is good and what is evil.