

Toni morrison`s beloved

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In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Denver is introduced to us as somewhat of a simple child, unnaturally reliant on her mother and unusually immature for a girl of eighteen years. Nevertheless, as the novel progresses, she undergoes a great amount of learning and personal growth. However, Denver's procurement of knowledge is not attained through her experiences with formal education at Lady Jones' school, rather, Denver learns through life's challenges. It is Denver's eventual entrance into the world of knowledge and maturity that saves Sethe's life and rids 124 of *Beloved*'s vengeful spirit.

Denver's initial experiences with the conventional education of Lady Jones' school are very positive. She finds herself intrigued by learning and looks forward to the two hours she spends every afternoon with Lady Jones. However, Denver extracts more from schooling than just book knowledge. She begins to realize that she can be independent from Sethe and looks forward to school because she does everything "on her own and [she] was pleased and surprised by the pleasure and surprise it created in her mother and her brothers" (102).

This newfound learning is something that Denver can cherish as her own, thus acting as the impetus of Denver's self-confidence. However, Denver's love for learning does not last long. Although in the beginning, "she was so happy she didn't even know she was being avoided by her classmates," (102) her oblivion does not last forever. Denver finds out the truth about Sethe's murderous past, and, as Morrison writes, "she never went back" (102). Her conventional education is swiftly and effectively squelched. Instead of trying to overcome this severe loss in her life, Denver reacts to it by drawing back from the world around her.

She is not mature enough to face her troubles and instead she walks "in a silence too solid for penetration" (103), thus extending her loss of an education to a loss of contact with the outside world. Denver's obvious failure to conquer her adversities in life show us that her conventional schooling has failed to educate her in the ways of the world. Even though it appears that Denver's education will never progress past the elementary level she reaches in Lady Jones' school, she eventually does experience a great amount of growth after the arrival of *Beloved*. When *Beloved* first enters 124, Denver is nothing short of obsessed with her.

She craves *Beloved*'s attention and companionship and childishly seeks out her approval. But as the novel progresses, "the job she started out with, protecting *Beloved* from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from *Beloved*" (243). Denver, with the newfound responsibility of acting as the caretaker of 124 and Sethe, rises to the occasion. "Denver knew it was on her. She would have to leave the yard; step off the edge of the world" (243). Morrison's use of the phrase "off the edge of the world" tells us that Denver's actions are monumental for her. She "served them both.

Washing, cooking, forcing, cajoling her mother to eat a little now and then, providing sweet things for *Beloved* as often as she could to calm her down" (250). Denver's acceptance of her responsibilities signifies an unprecedented amount of growth. She is educated through her experiences, rather than through traditional learning. It is Denver's search for her internal strength that leads to the eventual exorcism of *Beloved* and the restoration of Sethe's psyche. She is able to overcome the challenges life throws her way and

succeeds in saving her life as well as her mother's. Denver's education is unattainable from traditional learning.

She thrives in the face of adversity, showing us that she learns best from experience rather than study. Although it takes the actions of a malicious spirit to awaken Denver to her responsibilities in life, her pivotal growth signifies the great power in learning through experience. Denver's unconventional education proves to be much more worthy than her traditional education, especially for the life that she must lead. The stark difference between Denver's original self and the woman she becomes as she emerges in *Beloved* as the savior of both Sethe and 124 shows us just how truly and deeply one can be altered by learning.