

Jazz by toni morrison



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Jazz by Toni Morrison Symbolism is one of the defining features of the novel Jazz by Toni Morrison. Throughout the complex and fascinating plot, symbols recur with frequency leading us from one dramatic chapter to the next and creating an important consistency. Morrison is a master at developing these symbols Throughout the novel, the musical form of jazz itself is an important symbol. It stands in for the improvisational quality of African American experience during this period. Life, Morrison shows, is chaotic and does not always make immediate sense. Nor does jazz music which is often made up as it goes along. The steamy, melodrama of many of Morrison's scenes and the interplay of love, violence, and sadness are also represented in jazz music which is such a powerful unifier. We especially see the relationship between Dorcas and Joe played out in this improvisational manner. The time in which this story is set—1920s Harlem—is key to the symbolism of the jazz music. This was a period of great change not only in the history of New York and the United States, but in the lives of African Americans. They were beginning to come into their own in a cultural sense. Jazz was to be one of their first and most successful cultural products. It revolutionized the way people thought of music and it also showed that musical talent, however chaotic, was inherent. You didn't need to be from Vienna to be a good musician. So jazz was a symbol in the sense that it represented a cultural aspiration for African Americans, much as rap music may do so today for many young African American men. Overall, Jazz is a fascinating novel with a great deal of symbolism. Its main symbol is that of jazz music that appears throughout the story. It united the narrative and gives the book a timeless feel.