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[Family](#), [Father](#)



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Paper #2 As my classmate, Ethan Salem, said in his historian's report, the book, "Sula" has a distinct secondary focus to the relationships between parents and their children. In the story "Sula", we witness a friendship between two friends fade away through the years as they grew. Betrayal serves as the main cause of the halt in the friendship between Nel Wright and Sula Peace. One of the side characters in the story, Eva, Sula's grandmother, plays a significant role in the story. Eva is unable to tell her daughter, Hannah, who is also Sula's Mother, that she loves her. While stunned by her mother's reaction to her question, Hannah accidentally sets herself on fire. Ironically, Sula hears Hannah admit that she does not like her in an earlier chapter. After discovering this chain of events, I intend to explain why the matriarchal figures in the Peace and Wright families were so rigid in relation to their feelings about their daughters. Also, I intend to explain the effects of this book lacking a father figure. Looking into the matriarchal relationship between Eva and Hannah Peace, it is important to note that a highly likely reason for the disconnect between Eva and her daughter is the fact that Eva departs from her children for 18 months, because she leaves in order to make enough money to provide for her family after she ends her relationship with BoyBoy, her previous husband. With all the struggles that Eva endures as a mother, she perseveres by making decisions for her family that she believes will benefit them. It is for this reason that Eva kills her son, Plum, who has a heroin addiction. This is the same reason that Eva did not tell Hannah that she loved her and her siblings. In this particular case, Eva does not necessarily have a dislike specifically for

Hannah, Eva feels that in order for her children to succeed and rise out the poverty that surrounds their neighborhood. It is for this reason that she pushes them to act the way that she does and is very unfeeling towards Hannah. The relationship between Hannah and her own daughter, Sula, is different than that of Eva and Hannah Peace. Sula is a girl that is tougher than she appears, instead of being too soft like Hannah. The reasoning behind this is the fact that Sula knows how she has to act in order to survive in to survive. Sula takes extreme measures to survive, just like her grandmother. As a child, Sula gets into an altercation with four other white boys and cuts off her own thumb in order to scare them away from her. " If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you? " (pgs. 54 & 55). Sula's actions are a sign of her claiming her own identity, moving past what is supposed to be expected of her, thereby becoming a little more like Eva, and less like Hannah, who never came into an identity for herself. After Sula meets Nel she goes back into her house for a moment and inadvertently hears her mother say that she loves Sula, but does not like her (pg. 57). The reason that Hannah does not like Sula is the fact that she relates to Eva, who was never able to say that she loved her children. The main difference between Hannah's and Sula's respective disappointments to how their mothers feel about them are the fact that while Hannah hears Eva respond harshly to her question face-to-face, Sula inadvertently hears Hannah say that she does not like Sula. Contrarily, the main factor that both disappointments share is that neither mother ever says that they do not love their children. When Hannah asks if she loves her, Eva retorts and says she would never be fed if she did not love her. In the case of Hannah and Sula,

Hannah clearly says that she does love her daughter. The Wright family also contains a mother/daughter relationship that also is not perfect. Helene Wright lived the life of a person that always tries to maintain a higher standard of living because she feels that she needs to disassociate herself from the life that her mother, Rochelle, lived. When she moves to the bottom, she tries to implement different standards of behavior, which turns many of her neighbors against her. She is never called " Helene" by her peers in the Bottom. Instead, she is known simply as Helen. Helene is a character that acts as if she is of higher breed than her peers, only to mask the shame of the mother's life that convinces her that she is below them all. She also tries to persuade Nel, her daughter, that she is imperfect and tells her that she needs to beautify herself by pulling out her nose. The problem with the relationship between Helene and Nel is similar to the problem between Hannah and Sula, there is an apparent lack of communication between Nel and her mother. Helene's actions are embarrassing her, but she tends not to speak on them. When Helene and Nel takes the trip to New Orleans to attend Cecile's funeral, during the train ride, they sit in the " white" car of the train and get insulted by the train's conductor. Helene smiles back at the conductor, which disgusts the blacks also riding the train. At this moment, Nel decides that she is going to resent her mother for her actions. The disconnection between Helene and Nel intensified once they reach New Orleans and visit Rochelle. Nel soon discovers that Helene is unable to speak the Creole language that Rochelle had been speaking for some time now. The disconnection between Helene and Nel grows to the point where Nel says, " I'm not Nel. I'm me. " (pg. 24). The relationships

between the mothers and daughters in "Sula" are worth noting, but there was a crucial relationship that seemed devoid in this book. There is a lack of a strong paternal presence in Sula. As I stated earlier, BoyBoy, Sula's grandfather, leaves Eva before Hannah and her siblings are old enough to remember him. Rekus was Sula's father. He had passed away before Sula turned three years old. Wiley Wright is Nel's father. As a seaman, he is often away from his wife, Helene, for long periods of time. According to Eva Bell, having a father be active in their daughter's life is important because they show affection, teach discipline, and communicate with their daughters. Perhaps if events had shaped out differently allowing Rekus to be alive to see his daughter, if Eva and BoyBoy had worked harder on keeping their relationship intact, and if Wiley did not have to be out at sea and with his family so often, the events that played out in Sula, resulting in the deaths of Hannah and Sula, as well as Nel not regretting shunning her friend, would never have happened. References Bell, Eva. "The Importance of Father-Daughter Relationships." Ezine Articles. N. p., 08 Nov. 2008. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. . Morrison, Toni. Sula. New York: Knopf; [distributed by Random House, 1974. Print. Salem, Ethan M. "Historian's Report 10. 25. 12." Google Docs. N. p., 25 Oct. 2012. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. .