

**Beloved** ~ As I understand it, this book, which is written at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, (why such a low-level for an AP class?) contains oral sex, incest, rape, pedophilia, graphic sex, extreme violence, sexual abuse, infanticide, and an extensive amount of profanity. The first two chapters contain five references to sex with cows in addition to other types of sex.

This book describes Toni Morrison's view of the post-Civil War period in the South with flashbacks to the era of slavery before the war. The plot in the story is a simple one. A young black slave woman, Sethe, is sexually abused by white men before the war, and in her haste to run and be free from the oppression of slavery, attempts to kill her young children, two young boys, a toddler girl, and a just-born female baby. She succeeds in killing the toddler, Beloved, but leaves the others bloodied but living. Beloved comes back to haunt the dingy, run-down house in which Sethe lives with her surviving daughter, Denver. The surviving sons ran away from home at the age of 13, as soon as they were able, having been traumatized by their near-death experience at the hands of their mother and unable to cope with the strange happenings in the house haunted by the vengeful Beloved.

Language includes nigger, fuck, fucking, fucking cows, fucking calves.

EXCERPTS:

Chapter 1 -- **Infanticide, ghosts, sex, and bestiality**

- "We lucky this ghost is a baby."
- "Not only did she have to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut, but ... her knees wide open as the grave, we longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil."
- "Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side."
- "They were young and so sick with the absence of women they had taken to calves. It took her a year to choose-- a long, tough year of thrashing on pallets eaten up with dreams of her. A year of yearning, when rape seemed the only solitary gift of life."
- "All in their twenties, minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape, thrashing on pallets, rubbing their thighs and waiting for the new girl."
- "...my niggers is men every one of em."
- "Ain't no nigger men. Not if you scared, they ain't. But if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too. I wouldn't have no nigger men round my wife."
- "She waited a year. And the Sweet Home men abused cows while they waited with her."
- "They beat you and you was pregnant? And they took my milk!"
- "As she raised up from the heat she felt Paul D behind her and his hands on her breasts...desire in them had suddenly become enormous, greedy, more savage than when they were fifteen...Behind her, bending down, his body an arc of kindness, he held her breasts in the palms of

his hands... What she knew was that the responsibility for her breasts, at last, was in somebody else's hands."

- "...they made up die-witch! stories with proven ways of killing her dead."

#### Chapter 2 -- **More sex, including bestiality**

- "...the new girl they dreamed of at night and fucked cows for at dawn while waiting for her to choose."

- "It was over before they could get their clothes off."

- "Paul D saw the float of her breasts and disliked it, the spread-out, flat roundness of them ..."

- "she had begun undressing before she saw him on the porch...considering how quickly they had started getting naked..."

- "To make up for coupling with a straw boss for four months in exchange for keeping her third child, a boy, with her -- only to have him traded for lumber in the spring of the next year and to find herself pregnant by the man who promised not to and did. "

- "Nothing could be as good as the sex with her Paul D had been imagining ..."

- "And there on top of a mattress on top of the dirt floor of the cabin they coupled for the third time, the first two having been in the tiny cornfield ..."

- "Even the cows knew and came to look."

- "The jump, thought Paul D, from a calf to a girl wasn't all that mighty. Not the leap Halle believed it would be. And taking her in the corn rather than her quarters, a yard away from the cabins of the others who had lost out, was a gesture of tenderness. Halle wanted privacy for her and got public display...they watched the confusion in the tassels in the field below. It had been hard, hard, hard sitting there erect as dogs, watching the corn stalks dance at noon."

#### Chapter 3 -- **Living with ghosts, more memories of killing a baby**

- " ...a girl who had lived all her life in a house peopled by the living activity of the dead..."

- "Below her bloody knees...made her think that maybe she wasn't, after all, just a crawling graveyard for a six-month's baby's last hours."

- "I know a woman who had her feet cut off they was so swole. And she made sawing gestures with the blade of her hand across Seth's ankles."

- "I was just fishing there and a nigger floated right by me."

- "Anything dead coming back to life hurts."

- "None could appreciate the safety of ghost company."

Chapter 6 -- **More sex with Paul D**

- "Back there she opened up her dress front and lifted her breast..."

Chapter 7 -- **More sex, more memories of torture**

- "Certainly women could tell, as men could, when one of their number was aroused."

- "They took my milk"

- "God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up."

Chapter 8 -- **Giving birth in a canoe**

- "Denver saw the top of the thing she always saw in its entirety when Beloved undressed to sleep."

- "It was stuck. Face up and drowning in its mother's blood. Amy stopped begging Jesus and began to curse His daddy."

- "Seth arched suddenly and the afterbirths hot out."

Chapter 9 -- **A sermon, more blood, and a homosexual scene between mother and daughter, Sethe starts torturing Beloved, a sex scene with turtles**

- "She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it."

- "Roses of blood blossomed in the blanket covering Seth's shoulders."

- "From the pure clear stream of spit that the little girl dribbled into her face to her oily blood was twenty-eight days."

- "...she leaned over and kissed the tenderness under Sethe's chin. They stayed that way for a while because neither Denver nor Sethe knew how not to: how to stop and not love the look or feel of the lips that kept on kissing....the girls' breath was exactly like new milk"

- "You made her choke. I didn't do it. You told me you loved her. I fixed it, didn't I? Didn't I fix her neck? After. After you choked her neck."

- "Behind her (a turtle) in the grass the other one moving quickly, quickly to mount her. The impregnable strength of him--earthing his feet near her shoulders. The embracing necks--hers stretching up toward his, bending down. No height was beyond her yearning neck, stretched like a finger toward his, risking everything outside the bowl just to touch his face. The gravity of their shields clashing, countered and mocked the floating heads touching."

Chapter 10 -- **Torture by forcing men to perform oral sex**

- "Kneeling in the mist they waited for the whim of a guard, or two, or three. Or maybe all of them wanted it. Wanted it from one prisoner in particular or none--or all. Breakfast? Want some breakfast, nigger? Yes sir. Hungry nigger? Yes, sir. Here you go. Occasionally a kneeling man chose gunshot in his head as the price, maybe of taking a bit of foreskin with him to Jesus....Convinced he was next, Paul D retched...the engaged one decided to skip the new man for the time being lest his pants and shoes got soiled by nigger puke."

#### Chapter 11 -- **Paul D. has sex with Sethe and her ghost daughter Beloved**

- "He was accustomed to sex with Sethe just about every day...made it his business to take her back upstairs in the morning, or to lie down with her after supper. ... In any case, since there was no reduction in his before-breakfast or after-supper appetites, he never heard her complain."

- "I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name."

- "I want you to touch me on the inside part."

- "Beloved dropped her skirts as he spoke"

- "You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call me my name."

- "when he reached the inside part..."

#### Chapter 12 -- **More memories of sexual torture**

- "...locked up by some whiteman for his own purposes, and never let out the door. ...For more than a year, they kept her locked in a room for themselves."

#### Chapter 13 -- **More sex with Beloved, the ghost**

- "...picked up and put back down anywhere any time by a girl young enough to be his daughter. Fucking her when he was convinced he didn't want to. Whenever she turned her behind up, the calves of his youth (was that it?) cracked his resolve"

- "She thought quickly of how good the sex would be if that is what he wanted.."

- "...who had eaten raw meat barely dead, who under plum trees... crunched through a dove's breasts before its heart stopped beating.... watch another man, whom he loved better than his brothers, roast without a tear just so the roasters would know what a man was like."

- "A lowdown something that looked like a sweet young girl and fucking her..."

- "God damn it to hell"

- "...fell in with a groan and the woman helped him pretend he was making love to her and not the bed linen."

## Chapter 15 -- **Memories of "Sweet Home"**

- "And he didn't stud his boys. Never brought them to her cabin with directions to 'lay down with her', like they did in Carolina, or rented their sex out on other farms."

## Chapter 16 -- **Another memory of killing Beloved as an infant**

- "Unlike a snake or a bear, a dead nigger could not be skinned for profit and was not worth his own dead weight in coin."

- "Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in the other. She did not look at them; she simply swung the baby toward the wall planks, missed and tried to connect a second time."

- "The nephew, the one who had nursed her while his brother held her down, didn't know he was shaking."

- "Enough nigger eyes for now. Little nigger-boy eyes open in sawdust; little nigger-girl eyes staring between the wet fingers that held her face so her head wouldn't fall off; little nigger-baby eyes crinkling up to cry in the arms of the old nigger whos own eyes were nothing but slivers looking down at his feet. But the worst ones were those of the nigger woman who looked like she didn't have any."

- "...leaving the sheriff behind among the damndest bunch of coons they'd ever seen. All testimony to the results of a little so-called freedom imposed on people who needed every care and guidance in the world to keep them from the cannibal life they preferred."

- "So Denver took her mother's milk right along with the blood of her sister."

## Chapter 18 -- **More memories about ghosts and sex with calves**

- "The ghost in her house didn't bother her for the very same reason a room-and-board witch with new shoes was welcome."

- "Later he would wonder what made him say it. The calves of his youth?"

## Part 2

## Chapter 19 -- **Scalping and torture**

- "...he caught sight of something red on its bottom. ... He tugged and what came loose in his hand was a red ribbon knotted around a curl of wet woolly hair, clinging still to its bit of scalp. "

- "You know as well as I do that people who die bad don't stay in the ground."

- "Drain her mother's milk, they had already done...They buttered Halle's face; gave Paul D iron to eat; crisped Sixo; hanged her own mother."

- "Keep Billy away from Red Cora. Mr. Garner never let her calve every other year."

#### Chapter 20 -- **Another memory of Sethe killing Beloved**

- "How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her."

- "...they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby."

- "Would he give his privates to a stranger in return for a carving?"

#### Chapter 21 -- **More about witches, incest**

- "They told me to die-witch!"

- "She cut my head off every night."

- "Unless Daddy wanted her himself, but I don't think he would now, since she let Paul D in her bed. Grandma Baby said people look down on her because she had eight children with different men."

- "And that I shouldn't be afraid of the ghost. It wouldn't harm me because I tasted its blood when Ma'am nursed me. She said the ghost was after Ma'am and her to for not doing anything to stop it."

#### Chapter 24 -- **more memories of Sweet Home**

- "And you think he mated them niggers to get him some more? Hell no!"

- "And maybe with the breeding one, her three pickaninnies and whatever the foal might be, he and his nephews would have seven niggers and Sweet Home would be worth the trouble it was causing him."

#### Chapter 25 -- **more memories**

- "She had a real small neck. I decided to break it. You know, like a twig--just snap it. "

- "Was a girl locked up in a house with a whiteman over by Deer Creek. Found him dead last summer and the girl gone. Maybe that's her. Folks say he had her in there since she was a pup. Well, now she's a bitch."

#### Part 3

#### Chapter 26 -- **more ghosts, more torture by ghosts**

- "Ghosts without skin stuck their fingers in her and said beloved in the dark and bitch in the light."

- "...and clawed her throat until rubies of blood opened there, made brighter by her midnight skin..."

- "...to feel the baby blood pump like oil in her hands; to hold her face so her head would stay on; to squeeze her so she could absorb, still, the death spasms that shot through..."

- "No undreamable dreams about whether the headless, feetless torso hanging in the tree...whether the bubbling-hot girls in the colored-school fire set by patriots included her daughter; whether a gang of whites invaded her daughter's private parts, soiled her daughter's thighs and threw her daughter out in the wagon."

- "Sethe's dead daughter, the one whose throat she cut, had come back to fix her."

- "It's sitting there. Sleeps, eats, and raises hell. Whipping Sethe every day. I'll be. A baby? No. Grown. The age it would have been had it lived. You talking about flesh? I'm talking about flesh. Whipping her? Like she wa batter."

- "Her puberty was spent in a house where she was shared by father and son, whom she called 'the lowest yet' who gave her disgust for sex and against whom she measured all atrocities. A killing, a kidnap, a rape - whatever, she listened and nodded."

- "As long as the ghost showed out from its ghostly place --shaking stuff, crying, smashing, and such --Ella respected it. But if it took flesh and came in her world, well, the show was on the other foot. She didn't mind a little communication between the two worlds, but this was an invasion."

- "She had delivered, but would not nurse, a hairy white thing..."

- "The devil-child was clever...It had taken he shape of a pregnant woman, naked and smiling in the heat of the afternoon sun. Thunderblack and glistening, she stood on long straight legs, her belly big and tight. Vines of hair twisted all over her head. Jesus."

- "The ice pick is not in her hand; it is her hand."

Chapter 27 -- **more memories of sex between Beloved and Paul D.**

- "Touch me. Touch me. On the inside part and call me my name."

- "Coupling with her wasn't even fun. It was more like a brainless urge to stay alive. Each time she came, she pulled up her skirts, a life hunger overwhelmed him and he had no more control over it than over his lungs. And afterward, beached and gobbling air, in the midst of repulsion and personal shame, he was thankful..."

- "Baby ghost came back evil...When they got Sethe down on the ground and the ice pick out of her hands..."