

TEACHING BELOVED
STUDY QUESTIONS

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

1. Elie Wiesel has said that nothing compares to the Holocaust from World War II and has rejected any comparisons. In her dedication, Toni Morrison is drawing a clear parallel to the Holocaust. Is this a valid comparison? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - Beloved is comparable to Elie Wiesel's Holocaust because both slavery and the holocaust haunts its victims after it is over. Both event's victims lose their identity through dehumanization – holocaust = shaving of head, slavery = being sold as a product.
2. What is 124?
 - 124 is the house that Seth and Denver lives in. The baby ghost haunts it. The setting of the book.
3. Why are the sideboard moving, the house pitching, and the dog thrown across the room?
 - Beloved haunts the house.
4. Who dies on page 5?
 - Beloved.
5. Why does Sethe want "Dearly Beloved" engraved on the tombstone?
 - "With another ten could she have gotten 'Dearly' too? She had not thought to ask him and it bothered her still that it might have been possible – that for twenty minutes, half hour, say she could have had the whole thing, every word she heard the preacher say at the funeral (and all there was to say, surely) engraved on her baby's headstone: Dearly Beloved. But what she got settled for, was the one word that mattered."
 - She hears the preacher say "Dearly Beloved" at the funeral and thought that "Dearly Beloved" was her name. Sethe talks about prostitution in the quotation above. If she had stayed as prostitute with the engraver a little longer, she could've gotten Dearly in too. This creates a sense of guilt in Sethe.
6. Why does she have only "Beloved" engraved?
 - That is all Sethe paid for.
7. What do you understand from "The picture of the men coming to nurse her?"
 - We understand that this was a flashback to the moment that Sethe was being raped at Sweet Home.
8. Do the nephews rape Sethe in addition to taking her milk?
 - Yes, but Sethe emphasizes on the part when they stole her milk.
9. Who is Paul D, and what kind of person is he?
 - Paul D is a former male slave that lived on Sweet Home with Sethe.
10. Why do the male slaves on Sweet Home let Sethe decide which man she wants?
 - Because they were Sweet Home men.
11. Why does Mr. Garner say, "Neither would I." (p. 13)

- Mr. Garner wants to pick a fight with his fellow plantation owners. He says it to prove his point. He says it to distinguish himself from his fellow farmers.
12. Why does Sethe choose Halle?
 - “Maybe that was why she chose him. A twenty-year-old man so in love with his mother he gave up five years of Sabbaths just to see her sit down for a change was a serious recommendation.”
 - Sethe chose Halle because he gave up his Sabbaths so his mother can be freed from slavery.
 13. Why are so many of the slaves named “Paul?”
 - The Pauls are a brand name. When being sold in an auction, the Pauls will be recognized as a type of product from a specific producer, Mr. Garner.
 14. What details are you given about Sweet Home?
 - “Suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes...Boys hanging from the most sycamores in the world”
 15. On page 17, Denver says the baby is “rebuked.” What is the connotation of this word?
 - Rebuke: to criticize sharply
 - The connotation is bitterness, sour, and full of hate.
 16. Why is there a tree on Sethe’s back?
 - The schoolteacher whipped her after she told Mrs. Garner that the nephews stole her milk and raped her.
 17. What is the significance of its being a chokecherry tree?
 - The scar could’ve been called any type of tree but it was referred to as a “choke”cherry tree -- negative connotation which gives the idea that Sethe is choked.
 18. What is a tobacco tin?
 - Symbolic way of saying that Paul D sealed many of his past and painful memories away. The tobacco tin is the heart that died from slavery.
 19. What does Paul D do to the ghost?
 - Paul D beats the baby ghost out of the house.
 20. What is Denver’s attitude toward the ghost?
 - Denver likes the ghost because it was her only company.
 21. Why does Beloved’s spirit stay on earth? Why doesn’t it go to Heaven or to Hell?
 - Sethe wouldn’t let Beloved go since she has yet to explain to her daughter why she was terminated.

CHAPTER 2

1. What motivates Sixo?
 - Patsy the Thirty-Mile Woman
 - Pg. 29 – “Twenty-five years and blip! The kind of thing Sixo would do- like the time he arranged a meeting with Patsy the Thirty-Mile Woman. It took three months and two thirty-four-mile round trips to do it. To persuade her to walk one-third of the way toward him, to a place he knew.”
2. What happens to Baby Suggs other children?
 - “What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children.

Halle she was able to keep the longest. Twenty years. A lifetime. Given to her, no doubt, to make up for *hearing* that her two girls, neither of whom had their adult teeth, were sold and gone and she had not been able to wave goodbye. To make up for the 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." Pg. 28

3. How do Sethe and Paul D feel after they make love?
 - Pg.25 "Not a tree, as she said. Maybe shaped like one, but nothing like a any tree he knew because trees were inviting things you could trust and be near; talk to if you wanted to as he frequently did since way back when he took the midday meal in the fields of Sweet Home"

CHAPTER 3

1. Why does Denver like the bower behind 124?
 - "In that bower, closed off from the hurt of the hurt world, Denver's imagination produced its own hunger and its own food, which she badly needed because the loneliness wore her out. *Wore her out.*"
2. Who is in the white dress kneeling down next to Sethe with its sleeve around her waist?
 - Beloved.
3. What is the significance of the antelope metaphor on page 37?
 - "And oh but when they danced and sometimes they danced the antelope....Some unchained, demanding other whose feet knew her pulse better than she did. Just like this one in her stomach."
 - The antelope refers to the African American roots. Back in African, their ancestry is free, unchained. Since Denver is said to be an antelope, she is also free.
4. Why does Denver love the part about Amy the best?
 - "And now the part Denver loved the best:
Her name was Amy and she needed beef and pot liquor like nobody in this world. Arms like cane stalks and enough hair for four or five heads. Slow-moving eyes. She didn't look at anything quick...."
 - Denver loves the part about Amy because she is the one that was named after. By learning who Amy Denver was, Denver learns about herself.
5. Why does Sethe lie about her name to Amy?
 - "However far she was from Sweet Home, there was no point in giving out her real name to the first person she saw."
6. Why does Amy massage Sethe's feet?
 - Amy massages Sethe's feet to bring it back to life. If Amy had not massaged Sethe's feet, then Sethe would've ended up losing her feet because they were so lifeless.
7. What is the significance of the colors described on page 47?
 - "Every dawn she saw the dawn, but never acknowledged or remarked its color. There was something wrong with that. It was as though one day she saw red baby blood, another day the pink gravestone chips, and that was the last of it."

CHAPTER 4

1. What is the effect on the reader of having the three shadows holding hands?
 - “Sethe looked to her left and all three of them were gliding over the dust holding hands. Maybe he was right. A life.” The three shadows holding hands showed the hopes of a fresh new start for Sethe, Denver, and Paul D. At this point of the book, everything was good and could’ve resulted in a happy ending.
2. What is the importance of the dying roses?
 - “The closer the roses got to death, the louder their scent....” The dying roses represent Beloved. The closer the community (Paul D) got to ridding Beloved, the stronger Beloved becomes. So strong that the ghosts materializes into a person.

CHAPTER 6

1. Who appears in front of 124?
 - Beloved.
2. Why is she wearing new shoes?
 - She has never walked for extended distance. Her feet are not like other slave’s feet. New shoes = new beginning – beginning a second journey through life.
3. Why is her skin soft and smooth?
 - Beloved died when she was two years old.
4. How does Denver react to Beloved’s arrival?
 - Denver feels a familiarity with Beloved. Unlike Paul D, Beloved was someone that Denver knew, even though she herself is not quite sure about the connection between the baby ghost and the new girl in the house.
5. Why does Beloved like sugar so much?
 - She is still like a baby.
6. Why does Denver contradict what Paul says at the end of the chapter?
 - Denver wants to protect Beloved, so she can keep taking care of her. Denver wants to hold on to Beloved to keep her company.

CHAPTER 6

1. Why does Mrs. Garner give Sethe the earrings?
 - Mrs. Garner gives Sethe the earrings as a wedding present so she could wear them on her big day as something valuable. However, we see it as she doesn’t wear them till she’s free because they represent her dreams, treasures and hopes. Mrs. Garner also gives them to her because she felt pity towards Sethe since she had “no ceremony, no preacher. Nothing.”
2. What are Sethe’s memories of her own mother?

- Sethe's memories of her own mother are the "circle and cross burnt right in the skin" on her rib. This "mark" represents dehumanization and slavery as they branded her like a cow or horse. She knew her mom by that mark. Sethe was in awe at that time and asked if she could be marked too. Her mother "slapped" her. Sethe now understands why she slapped her because she "has a mark of her own."
3. Why does her mother have a brand under her breast?
 - Her mother has a brand under her breast so if she ever ran away, they could track her down. It's also a loss of identity as if she was a cow and that mark is like the tag on their ears. It's a sign of ownership towards the slave owner too.
 4. What is the meaning of a circle with a cross in it?
 - The meaning of a circle with a cross in it is Sethe's mom has been branded as if she were a cow or horse so she has lost her identity. The whitemen have stolen it and raped her of it. The fact that they mess up the face so bad you have to have a sign on the body is so brutal. However, when Sethe looks for her mother's corpse, Nan pulls her away.
 5. Why does Sethe's mother throw away all the other babies she had?
 - Sethe's mother throws away all the other babies she had because the rest of her kids were conceived by a white man. Sethe was the only one she gave birth to while having sex with a "black man" therefore, she gave her "the name of the black man." Sethe's name really reflects herself because she's strong and independent and holds herself like a man. She's like the man of the house even when Paul D comes into the picture. She knows how to take care of everything.