



Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Toni Morrison is a Nobel Prize-winning American author, editor and professor. Her novels are known for their epic themes, brilliant dialogues and richly detailed Afro-American characters. Among her best known novels are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Beloved* (Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988) and *Jazz* (1992). She also published a study on the significance of African-Americans in American literature, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992).

The novel *Beloved* is about some slaves escaped from Sweet Home, the farm where they worked. When they are caught by their slave-owner, Sethe decides to kill her daughter Beloved rather than see her return to captivity. Sethe will live the rest of her life pursued by the ghost of her dead daughter. In the passage below, Beloved's ghost speaks to her mother.



Your Face is Mine

Tell me the truth. Didn't you come from the other side?¹

Yes. I was on the other side.

You came back because of me?

Yes.

You rememory² me?

Yes. I remember you.

You never forgot me?

Your face is mine.

Do you forgive me?

Will you stay? You safe here now.

Where are the men without skin?³

Out there. Way off.⁴

Can they get in here?

No. They tried that once, but I stopped them.

They won't ever come back.

One of them was in the house I was in. He hurt me.

They can't hurt us no more.

Where are your earrings?

They took them from me.

The men without skin took them?

Yes.

I was going to help you but the clouds got in the way.

There're no clouds here.

If they put an iron circle⁵ around your neck I will bite it away.

Beloved.

I will make you a round basket.

You're back. You're back.

Will we smile at me?

Can't you see I'm smiling?

I love your face.

GLOSSARY

- 1 the world of the dead
- 2 remember
- 3 white men
- 4 far away
- 5 iron collar, symbol of slavery

ACTIVITIES

- 1 Fill in the passage with the missing words given below in scrambled order.

face – pardon – remembers – Sethe – side – slavery

The dialogue takes place between Beloved and her mother 1 She killed her daughter not to let her return to 2 Now Beloved has come back from the other 3 and wants to know if her mother still 4 her, if she has forgotten her. But Sethe cannot forget Beloved, they have the same 5 and besides she needs her 6 for killing her.

- 2 Working in pairs, find out in the text:

– the expressions that Sethe uses to reassure Beloved and to show her how much she loves her.

Reassurance:

Love:

– who will make a round basket and the meaning of such offer.

Who:

Meaning:

- 3 Complete the sentences choosing the correct alternative.

1 The place they are in now is *safe* / *dangerous*.

2 The men without skin are *white men* / *ghosts*.

3 They are *inside* / *far* from the place and *can* / *cannot* enter.

4 Mother stopped them *once* / *several* times and they would *soon* / *never* come back.

