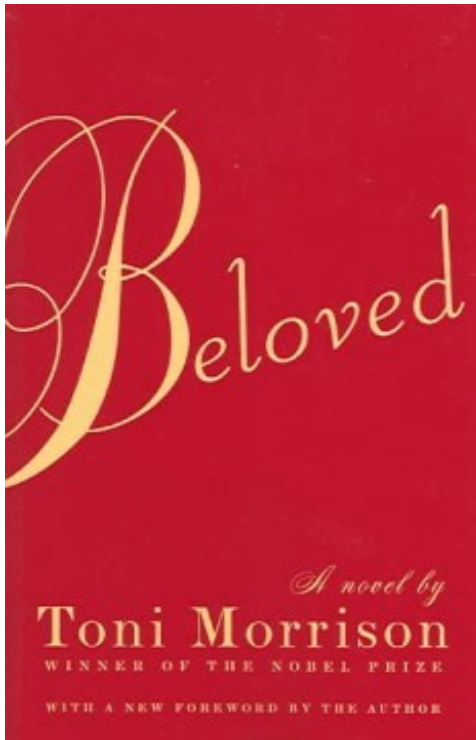


# BELOVED



## Book Summary:

A former slave woman recalls her life in slavery.

## Summary of concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; bestiality commentary; violence; racial commentary; profanity; and derogatory terms.

*Young Adult*

**By Toni Morrison**

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## CONTENT WARNING

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**3** / 5

**Minor Restricted**  
BookLooks Review Rating

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xvi	In the eighties, the debate was still roiling: equal pay, equal treatment, access to professions, schools... and choice without stigma. To marry or not. To have children or not. Inevitably these thoughts led me to the different history of black women in this country—a history in which marriage was discouraged, impossible, or illegal; in which birthing children was required, but “having” them, being responsible for them—being, in other words, their parent—was as out of the question as freedom.
xvii	<p>Assertions of parenthood under conditions peculiar to the logic of institutional enslavement were criminal.</p> <p>...A newspaper clipping in The Black Book summarized the story of Margaret Garner, a young mother who, having escaped slavery, was arrested for killing one of her children (and trying to kill the others) rather than let them be returned to the owner’s plantation.</p>
7	Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her—remembering the wonderful soughing trees rather than the boys.
11	<p>If a Negro got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody will figure out a way to tie them up.</p> <p>...The five Sweet Home men looked at the new girl and decided to let her be. They were young and so sick with the absence of women they had taken to calves.</p>
12	<p>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 solitary gift of life.</p> <p>...“Beg to differ, Garner. Ain’t no nigger men.”</p>
13	And so they were: Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, Paul A Garner, Halle Suggs and Sixo, the wild man. All in their twenties, minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape, thrashing on pallets, rubbing their thighs and waiting for the new girl—the one who took Baby Suggs’ place after Halle bought her with five years of Sundays.
19	<p>I told that to the women in the wagon. Told them to put sugar water in cloth to suck from so when I got there in a few days she wouldn’t have forgot me. The milk would be there and I would be there with it.” “Men don’t know nothing much,” said Paul D, tucking his pouch back into his vest pocket, “but they do know a suckling can’t be away from its mother for long.”</p> <p>“Then they know what it’s like to send your children off when your breasts are full.”</p> <p>...“After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That’s what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn’t speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open my back and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still.”</p> <p>...“They used cowhide on you?”</p> <p>...“And they took my milk.”</p> <p>...“They beat you and you was pregnant?”</p> <p>...“And they took my milk!”</p>
20	As she raised up from the heat she felt Paul D behind her and his hands under her breasts.

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	...Behind her, bending down, his body an arc of kindness, he held her breasts in the palms of his hands.
24	<p>Overwhelmed as much by the down-right luck of finding her house and her in it as by the certainty of giving her his sex, Paul D dropped twenty-five years from his recent memory. A stair step before him was Baby Suggs' replacement, the new girl they dreamed of at night and fucked cows for at dawn while waiting for her to choose.</p> <p>...It was over before they could get their clothes off. Half-dressed and short of breath, they lay side by side resentful of one another and the skylight above them.</p>
25	Sethe lay on her back, her head turned from him. Out of the corner of his eye, Paul D saw the float of her breasts and disliked it, the spread-away, flat roundness of them that he could definitely live without, never mind that downstairs he had held them as though they were the most expensive part of himself.
30	Nothing could be as good as the sex with her Paul D had been imagining off and on for twenty-five years.
31	<p>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 Mr. Garner kept because it was a crop animals could use as well as humans. Both Halle and Sethe were under the impression that they were hidden. Scrunched down among the stalks they couldn't see anything, including the corn tops waving over their heads and visible to everyone else.</p> <p>Sethe smiled at her and Halle's stupidity. Even the crows knew and came to look. Uncrossing her ankles, she managed not to laugh aloud.</p> <p>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.</p>
49	After Alfred he had shut down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat, sleep, sing. If he could do those things—with a little work and a little sex thrown in—he asked for no more, for more required him to dwell on Halle's face and Sixo laughing.
58	<p>Two pennies and an insult were well spent if it meant seeing the spectacle of whitefolks making a spectacle of themselves.</p> <p>...When Wild African Savage shook his bars and said wa wa, Paul D told everybody he knew him back in Roanoke.</p>
73	<p>"What happened to her?"</p> <p>"Hung. By the time they cut her down nobody could tell whether she had a circle and a cross or not, least of all me and I did look."</p>
81	<p>"The day I came in here. You said they stole your milk. I never knew what it was that messed him up. That was it, I guess. All I knew was that something broke him. Not a one of them years of Saturdays, Sundays and nighttime extra never touched him. But whatever he saw go on in that barn that day broke him like a twig."</p> <p>"He saw?" Sethe was gripping her elbows as though to keep them from flying</p>

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	<p>away.            "He saw. Must have."            "He saw them boys do that to me and let them keep on breathing air? He saw? He saw? He saw?"</p>
83	<p>I am full 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. I am still full of that, God damn it, I can't go back and add more. Add my husband to it, watching, above me in the loft—hiding close by—the one place he thought no one would look for him, looking down on what I couldn't look at at all. And not stopping them—looking and letting it happen. But my greedy brain says, Oh thanks, I'd love more—so I add more.</p>
90	<p>She said there ain't nothing to go by with whitepeople. You don't know how they'll jump. Say one thing, do another. But if you looked at the mouth sometimes you could tell by that.</p>
128	<p>Only when she was dead would they be safe. The successful ones—the ones who had been there enough years to have maimed, mutilated, maybe even buried her—kept watch over the others who were still in her cock-teasing hug, caring and looking forward, remembering and looking back. They were the ones whose eyes said, "Help me, 's bad" or "Look out," meaning this might be the day I bay or eat my own mess or run, and it was this last that had to be guarded against, for if one pitched and ran—all, all forty-six, would be yanked by the chain that bound them and no telling who or how many would be killed. A man could risk his own life, but not his brother's. So the eyes said, "Steady now," and "Hang by me."</p>
137	<p>"I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name."            Paul D never worried about his little tobacco tin anymore. It was rusted shut. So, while she hoisted her skirts and turned her head over her shoulder the way the turtles had, he just looked at the lard can, silvery in the moonlight, and spoke quietly.            "When good people take you in and treat you good, you ought to try to be good back. You don't...Sethe loves you. Much as her own daughter. You know that."            Beloved dropped her skirts as he spoke and looked at him with empty eyes. She took a step he could not hear and stood close behind him.            "She don't love me like I love her. I don't love nobody but her."            "Then what you come in here for?"            "I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name."            "Go on back in that house and get to bed."            "You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call me my name."            As long as his eyes were locked on the silver of the lard can he was safe. If he trembled like Lot's wife and felt some womanish need to see the nature of the sin behind him; feel a sympathy, perhaps, for the cursing curse, or want to hold it in his arms out of respect for the connection between them, he too would be lost.            "Call me my name."            "No."            "Please call it. I'll go if you call it."            "Beloved." He said it, but she did not go. She moved closer with a footfall he didn't hear and he didn't hear the whisper that the flakes of rust made either as</p>

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	they fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin. So when the lid gave he didn't know it. What he know was that when he reached the inside part he was saying, "" Red heart. Red heart,"" over and over again. Softly and then so loud it woke Denver, then Paul D. himself. "Red heart. Red heart. Red heart."
148	If schoolteacher was right it explained how he had come to be a rag doll—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. But it was more than appetite that humiliated him and made him wonder if schoolteacher was right. It was being moved, placed where she wanted him, and there was nothing he was able to do about it.
149	<p>"Well, ah, this is not the, a man can't, see, but aw listen here, it ain't that, it really ain't, Ole Garner, what I mean is, it ain't a weakness, the kind of weakness I can fight 'cause 'cause something is happening to me, that girl is doing it, I know you think I never liked her nohow, but she is doing it to me. Fixing me. Sethe, she's fixed me and I can't break it."</p> <p>What? A grown man fixed by a girl? But what if the girl was not a girl, but something in disguise? A lowdown something that looked like a sweet young girl and fucking her or not was not the point, it was not being able to stay or go where he wished in 124, and the danger was in losing Sethe because he was not man enough to break out, so he needed her, Sethe, to help him, to know about it, and it shamed him to have to ask the woman he wanted to protect to help him do it, God damn it to hell.</p>
154	White cotton sheets had never crossed his mind. He fell in with a groan and the woman helped him pretend he was making love to her and not her bed linen.
155	Tucked into the well of his arm, Sethe recalled Paul D's face in the street when he asked her to have a baby for him. Although she laughed and took his hand, it had frightened her. She thought quickly of how good the sex would be if that is what he wanted, but mostly she was frightened by the thought of having a baby once more.
212	Eighteen seventy-four and whitefolks were still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken.
239	My love was too thick. What he know about it? Who in the world is he willing to die for? Would he give his privates to a stranger in return for a carving?
240	Some of them drank liquor to keep from feeling what they felt.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	1
Bitch	6
Cock	1
Coon	1
Faggot	2
Fuck	4
Goddamn	3
Nigger	37
Shit	2