

## SETHE CHARACTERIZATION AND IMPORTANT QUOTES EXPLAINED

### Chapter 1

- *“And Sethe would oblige her with anything from fabric to her own tongue.”*

This is the first commentary about Sethe’s character. From this, we can deduce that Sethe is extremely giving to those she deems as her family because Baby Suggs feels that Sethe would do anything for her even give “her own tongue.” This is a recurring theme in the book.

- *“Grandma Baby must be stopping it,” said Denver. She was ten and still mad at Baby Suggs for dying. Sethe opened her eyes. “I doubt that,” she said.  
“Then why don't it come?”  
“You forgetting how little it is,” said her mother. “She wasn't even two years old when she died. Too little to understand. Too little to talk much even.”  
“Maybe she don't want to understand,” said Denver.  
“Maybe. But if she'd only come, I could make it clear to her.”*

This conversation is between Denver and Sethe about Beloved’s ghost and shows Sethe’s stubborn love towards her daughters because although Beloved is raising Hell, she still defends her against Denver’s criticism. The last line in the conversation shows that Sethe still truly regrets the fact that she had to kill Beloved and only wishes that she could explain her actions to her deceased daughter and prove to her that it was out of love.

- *“For a baby she throws a powerful spell,” said Denver.  
“No more powerful than the way I loved her,” Sethe answered and there it was again.*

This dialogue confirms our suspicions that Sethe unconditionally loves Beloved even though she wreaking havoc on their lives.

- *Ten minutes for seven letters. 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, a 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 thought it would be enough, rutting among the headstones with the engraver, his young son looking on, the anger in his face so old; the appetite in it quite new. That should certainly be enough. Enough to answer one more preacher, one more abolitionist and a town full of disgust.*

This passage is done in Sethe’s point of view, and in this she is remembering how she slept with the engraver so that she could have “Beloved” engraved on her deceased baby’s tombstone. The fact that she had to do this shows that she was not a wealthy woman and how corrupt the society was because of the immoral act she had to perform to get the task done. This action can also be seen as dehumanizing because of the way Sethe describes it, she describes it as “rutting” which is a verb used mostly when describing pigs. This is also a shameful point in Sethe’s life because the immoral act was viewed by the engraver’s son. “the anger in his face so old; the appetite in it quite new.” This commentary by Sethe reinforces the idea that both the whites and the blacks were dehumanized because the anger is described as old and having an appetite which personifies the anger, and since anger is one of humans’ most primal instincts, it regresses them back to an animal state of mind.

- *Counting on the stillness of her own soul, she had forgotten the other one: the soul of her baby girl. Who would have thought that a little old baby could harbor so much rage? Rutting among the stones under the eyes of the engraver's son was not enough. 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 those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil.*

This paragraph is commentary that reinforces Sethe’s shame because “Rutting among the stones under the eyes of the engraver’s son was not enough.” Even though she had done all she could in order to get the best she could for Beloved, the fact that the baby’s fury returns to the house proves that it will never be enough. The “dawn-colored

stone” has archetypal importance because although Beloved was laid to rest, the dawn-colored stone signifies that it is just the beginning of the baby’s reign of terror over their lives because dawn represents the beginning. The fact that Sethe mentions that “the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil” proves that Sethe couldn’t forget the fact that she killed her baby because oil is hard to wash off.

- *"That's all you let yourself remember," Sethe had told her, but she was down to one herself--one alive, that is--... As for the rest, she worked hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe. Unfortunately her brain was devious. She might be hurrying across a field, running practically, to get to the pump quickly and rinse the chamomile sap from her legs. Nothing else would be in her mind. The picture of the men coming to nurse her was as lifeless as the nerves in her back where the skin buckled like a washboard. Nor was there the faintest scent of ink or the cherry gum and oak bark from which it was made. Nothing. Just the breeze cooling her face as she rushed toward water. And then sopping the chamomile away with pump water and rags, her mind fixed on getting every last bit of sap off--on her carelessness in taking a shortcut across the field just to save a half mile, and not noticing how high the weeds had grown until the itching was all the way to her knees. Then something. The splash of water, the sight of her shoes and stockings awry on the path where she had flung them; or Here Boy lapping in the puddle near her feet, and suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes, and although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was a pretty place too. Fire and brimstone all right, but hidden in lacy groves. Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her--remembering the wonderful soughing trees rather than the boys. Try as she might to make it otherwise, the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that.*

Sethe’s line, *"That's all you let yourself remember,"* This paragraph shows how much Sethe’s present day life is intertwined with her past because she cannot go a single moment without remembering it as shown by how she is just walking in a field and then she suddenly flashes back to the past and remembers the horrible moment when the men came for her child. She says that the moment was “*was as lifeless as the nerves in her back where the skin buckled like a washboard*” showing that when this event occurred and the scars on her back tore her up so much inside that a part of her died that day as well. When Sethe is in the field, the memories of her former slave life are being numbed because she is too focused on the present life she lives such as how the breeze is caressing her skin, rather than focusing on the turmoil that she associates with schoolteacher as shown by her mentioning “ink.” Sethe also shows contradictory feelings towards Sweet Home when she remembers it because although she states that “*there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream*” she agrees that it has a “*shameless beauty.*” Morrison uses this comparison to show that although Sethe hated Sweet Home, it was also a place that she once loved to imply that something happened. Also, in the next couple of lines Sethe describes hell as “*fire and brimstone all right, but hidden in lacy gloves.*” Due to the fact that Sethe mentions hell with the association to fire, we can assume archetypally that Morrison meant to imply, “blood, sacrifice; violent passion, disorder” and how peculiar it is that Sethe would wonder if hell was a pretty place with all of the dark associations it implies. Also the fact that Sethe remembers the trees on Sweet Home more than she remembers her sons could signify how much greater of an impact that Sweet Home had on her life, rather than her children and the fact that trees, archetypally, represent life could prove that Sethe would rather enjoy life than yearn for people that might not be alive.

- *As if to punish her further for her terrible memory, sitting on the porch not forty feet away was Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men. And although she she said, "Is that you?"*  
*"What's left." He stood up and smiled. "How you been, girl, besides barefoot?"*  
*When she laughed it came out loose and young. "Messed up my legs back onder. Chamomile."*

The diction in this section is notable because the word “punish” gives a negative connotation to Sethe’s thought process because while she could use a neutral word such as remind, she uses a word more likely to be associated with violence such as “punish.” Morrison most likely did this to remind the readers that they are reading a novel

dedicated to constantly remind the readers about slavery. It is also notable to mention the section where Sethe is describing how she ran into “*Chamomile*” because; archetypally chamomile is associated with youth and femininity and that can be shown because earlier in the line it stated, “*When she laughed it came out loose and young.*”

- *"Eighteen years," she said softly..... "Was it hard? I hope she didn't die hard."*  
*Sethe shook her head. "Soft as cream. Being alive was the hard part. Sorry you missed her though. Is that what you came by for?"*  
*"That's some of what I came for. The rest is you. But if all the truth be known, I go anywhere these days. Anywhere they let me sit down."*  
*"You looking good."*

In this conversation, Sethe describes how death was easier for Baby Suggs than living was which could show how Sethe views death. She views it as an escape from the horrors of life due to the constant reminders of slavery, this is one of the reasons that she killed Beloved. Also the fact that she views being alive as being hard could show how her viewpoint on life, rather than Baby Sugg's view.

- *"Devil's confusion. He lets me look good long as I feel bad." He looked at her and the word "bad" took on another meaning. Sethe smiled. This is the way they were--had been. All of the Sweet Home men, before and after Halle, treated her to a mild brotherly flirtation, so subtle you had to scratch for it.*

This statement by Paul D and Sethe's commentary shows how she views the males in her life and how she was comfortable around them. It also could show that she views the Sweet Home men differently than she views the other men around them and that she feels as though they treat her better than other men.

- *"I wouldn't have to ask about him, would I? You'd tell me if there was anything to tell, wouldn't you?"*  
*Sethe looked down at her feet and saw again the sycamores.*  
*"I'd tell you. Sure I'd tell you. I don't know any more now than I did then." Except for the churn, he thought, and you don't need to know that. "You must think he's still alive."*  
*"No. I think he's dead. It's not being sure that keeps him alive."*  
*"What did Baby Suggs think?"*  
*"Same, but to listen to her, all her children is dead. Claimed she felt each one go the very day and hour."*  
*"When she say Halle went?"*  
*"Eighteen fifty-five. The day my baby was born."*  
*"You had that baby, did you? Never thought you'd make it."*  
*He chuckled. "Running off pregnant."*  
*"Had to. Couldn't be no waiting." She lowered her head and thought, as he did, how unlikely it was that she had made it. And if it hadn't been for that girl looking for velvet, she never would have.*  
*"All by yourself too." He was proud of her and annoyed by her. Proud she had done it; annoyed that she had not needed Halle or him in the doing.*  
*"Almost by myself. Not all by myself. A whitegirl helped me."*

This conversation is extremely important because it shows that although Sethe knows in her heart that Halle is dead and isn't coming back, the fact that she cannot confirm his death causes it to constantly haunt her because she can never be sure of the fact that he won't find her and see what she has become. The line, “*It's not being sure that keeps him alive*” is important because it reveals how Sethe thinks. It shows that she needs concrete proof of something or else she will constantly be haunted of a different outcome. The later part of the passage shows how truly grateful she is to Amy and that she understands how lucky she was that she was there to help her.

- *"Then she helped herself too, God bless her."*  
*"You could stay the night, Paul D."*  
*"You don't sound too steady in the offer."*  
*Sethe glanced beyond his shoulder toward the closed door. "Oh it's truly meant. I just hope you'll pardon my house. Come on in. Talk to Denver while I cook you something."*

*Paul D tied his shoes together, hung them over his shoulder and followed her through the door straight into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood.*

*"You got company?" he whispered, frowning.*

*"Off and on," said Sethe.*

*"Good God." He backed out the door onto the porch. "What kind of evil you got in here?"*

This passage shows how tentative Sethe is in showing her house to those she views as important to her because although she is not ashamed of Beloved, she fears that the knowledge of what she did will drive Paul D away from her and force him to view her differently because although she views her choice as right in her heart, she acknowledges that others would not feel the same way.

- *"It's not evil, just sad. Come on. Just step through."*

This quotation is one of Sethe's most important quotations because it shows that she doesn't believe Beloved to be a vengeful spirit, instead she thinks that she was without her mother for too long and terrorizes them because she misses them, not because she hates Sethe for murdering her. However, if thought of from a different perspective, we can also infer that Sethe was merely trying to hide her shame from Paul D. She didn't want him to know that her dead daughter was angry at the family and instead tried to stay calm and tell him a lie in order to make sure that he thought of her the same.

- *He looked at her then, closely. Closer than he had when she first rounded the house on wet and shining legs, holding her shoes and stockings up in one hand, her skirts in the other. Halle's girl--the one with iron eyes and backbone to match. He had never seen her hair in Kentucky. And though her face was eighteen years older than when last he saw her, it was softer now. Because of the hair. A face too still for comfort; irises the same color as her skin, which, in that still face, used to make him think of a mask with mercifully punched out eyes. Halle's woman. Pregnant every year including the year she sat by the fire telling him she was going to run. Her three children she had already packed into a wagonload of others in a caravan of Negroes crossing the river. They were to be left with Halle's mother near Cincinnati. Even in that Tiny shack, leaning so close to the fire you could smell the heat in her dress, her eyes did not pick up a flicker of light. They were like two wells into which he had trouble gazing. Even punched out they needed to be covered, lidded, marked with some sign to warn folks of what that emptiness held. So he looked instead at the fire while she told him, because her husband was not there for the telling. Mr. Garner was dead and his wife had a lump in her neck the size of a sweet potato and unable to speak to anyone. She leaned as close to the fire as her pregnant belly allowed and told him, Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men.*

This passage is Paul D's point of view about Sethe, he viewed her as having "iron eyes" or rather cold, lifeless eyes which we can infer based on the connotation of "iron." He also states that he thought that she wore a "mask with mercifully punched out eyes" which meant that Sethe did not show her true feelings to the world instead she tried to cover up her emotions and keep a strong front up which is a recurring theme because Sethe also tries to never appear weak in front of her neighbors or anybody else. Also Paul D mentions her eyes against as "mercifully punched out" which isn't meant to be taken literally but is meant to portray that they are empty and lifeless. He also describes her eyes as "two wells" which shows that they were deep and endless to look into and it could entrap someone to stare at them for so long but it also help an "emptiness" that was discerning. The main point of this passage was to show how Paul D viewed Sethe as empty and lonely and trying to be strong for the world but instead showed how young and vulnerable she was by not letting anyone in.

- *There had been six of them who belonged to the farm, Sethe the only female. Mrs. Garner, crying like a baby, had sold his brother to pay off the debts that surfaced the minute she was widowed. Then schoolteacher arrived to put things in order. But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight.*

This passage is also incredibly important because it shows how schoolteacher's influence affected Sethe. While she managed to have "glittering iron" when she was at Sweet Home which signifies her liveliness and also signifies that although it might not have been the most proper enthusiasm due to the "iron" still shown in her

eyes, schoolteacher even managed to steal that away from her with her, while also managing to break all the other inhabitants of Sweet Home as well.

- *Now the iron was back but the face, softened by hair, made him trust her enough to step inside her door smack into a pool of pulsing red light. She was right. It was sad. Walking through it, a wave of grief soaked him so thoroughly he wanted to cry. It seemed a long way to the normal light surrounding the table, but he made it--dry-eyed and lucky.*

This paragraph is from Paul D's point of view and shows that he sees the "iron" back in her face which signifies that she is back to her cold façade in order to try and keep herself safe from the world. However, despite the fact that she is back to trying to how she was before the initial comfort of Sweet Home, Paul D remembers her for how she was and trusts her enough to take a step into a house emitting danger.

- *"You said she died soft. Soft as cream," he reminded her.  
"That's not Baby Suggs," she said.  
"Who then?"  
"My daughter. The one I sent ahead with the boys."  
"She didn't live?"  
"No. The one I was carrying when I run away is all I got left.  
Boys gone too. Both of em walked off just before Baby Suggs died."  
Paul D looked at the spot where the grief had soaked him. The red was gone but a kind of weeping clung to the air where it had been.*

This conversation reveals the elusive fact that one of Sethe's daughters is dead and her grief was strong enough to leave a lasting mark on 124 and introduces the idea of the house being haunted because although the initial influx of grief was gone there was still a lasting impact of pain.

- *"No man? You here by yourself?"  
"Me and Denver," she said.  
"That all right by you?"  
"That's all right by me."  
She saw his skepticism and went on. "I cook at a restaurant in town. And I sew a little on the sly."*

This conversation reveals Sethe's stubborn nature because even though she is a single mother in 1873 which is extremely uncommon and it is only her and her daughter living alone in a house where no one is willing to enter, she still stays strong in front of Paul D and gives of the impression that she can handle herself which is one of Sethe's recurring characteristics.

- *Paul D smiled then, remembering the bedding dress. Sethe was thirteen when she came to Sweet Home and already iron-eyed. She was a timely present for Mrs. Garner who had lost Baby Suggs to her husband's high principles. 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. Yet they let the iron-eyed girl be, so she could choose in spite of the fact that each one would have beaten the others to mush to have her. 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. The restraint they had exercised possible only because they were Sweet Home men--the ones Mr. Garner bragged about while other farmers shook their heads in warning at the phrase.*

This paragraph describes Sethe's introduction into Sweet Home and is told from the point of view of those at Sweet Home or a rather omniscient narrator because it shows multiple people's thoughts on her arrival and shows how kind Mr. and Mrs. Garner were and how they and the other Sweet Home men never forced her into any copulation and let her choose her husband rather than just use her as a baby maker. This is also the first introduction of a kind white person. It also describes how much all of the Sweet Home men wanted her but dealt with the pain of not having her because of their high morals.

- *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. She waited a year.*

*And the Sweet Home men abused cows while they waited with her. She chose Halle and for their first bedding she sewed herself a dress on the sly.*

This introduces Halle and gives an explanation as to why Sethe chose him and how high his morals were and how much she respected him for them. The fact that she tried to show a dress for herself secretly also shows that she still held an identity for herself because she wanted something for herself rather than just thinking in terms of what will keep her alive or not. This shows that when under the Garner's control she was treated much better than a normal slave and that something must've drastically changed for her to become the way she is currently.

- *"Glad to get a look at you. Last time I saw your mama, you were pushing out the front of her dress." "Still is," Sethe smiled, "provided she can get in it."*

This commentary by Sethe shows her maternal instinct and is the first time we really see her interact with her child and it shows that she takes delight in teasing her child and loves her. This also introduces the theme of a mother and her daughter.

- *Someone her mother wanted to talk to and would even consider talking to while barefoot. Looking, in fact acting, like a girl instead of the quiet, queenly woman Denver had known all her life. The one who never looked away, who when a man got stomped to death by a mare right in front of Sawyer's restaurant did not look away; and when a sow began eating her own litter did not look away then either. And when the baby's spirit picked up Here Boy and slammed him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and dislocate his eye, so hard he went into convulsions and chewed up his tongue, still her mother had not looked away. She had taken a hammer, knocked the dog unconscious, wiped away the blood and saliva, pushed his eye back in his head and set his leg bones. He recovered, mute and off-balance, more because of his untrustworthy eye than his bent legs, and winter, summer, drizzle or dry, nothing could persuade him to enter the house again.*

This paragraph gives commentary on Sethe through Denver's point of view and shows that Denver has seen Sethe as a "quiet, queenly woman" all of her life rather than the joyful girl she is with Paul D or the high strung psychopath the rest of the town views her as. This shows that Denver respects her mother immensely and is awed by her tolerance. She doesn't flinch in the face of death and simply chooses the best way for things to survive and views nature taking its course through cold eyes as seen when she sees the sow eat her own litter. This shows that something has mutated her from the original glittering iron eyed girl that Paul D knew because in the time that Paul D was gone she has become more cold hearted but it could also be seen as she is choosing what she believes is right for surviving which would prove how slavery changed her and forced her to become less humane.

- *Now here was this woman with the presence of mind to repair a dog gone savage with pain rocking her crossed ankles and looking away from her own daughter's body. As though the size of it was more than vision could bear. And neither she nor he had on shoes.*

This statement by Denver was meant to show that although she believes that she knows Sethe best, she cannot believe the transformation that has come over Sethe just by Paul D coming over because she is no longer the woman that she views as capable of fixing a savage dog but rather just another woman. This shows that Sethe acts differently around Paul D than she does around Denver.

- *We have a ghost in here," she said, and it worked. They were not a twosome anymore. Her mother left off swinging her feet and being girlish. Memory of Sweet Home dropped away from the eyes of the man she was being girlish for.*

Denver's quote shows just how much of a hold Beloved has over her because just the mere mention of Beloved is enough to stop her from enjoying the first real company's she's had in years. It stops her from reconnecting with Paul D and immediately brings her back to her unfortunate reality, the same reality she had been avoiding by talking with Paul D about Sweet Home.

- *Sethe took two swift steps to the stove, but before she could yank Denver's collar, the girl leaned forward and began to cry. "What is the matter with you? I never knew you to behave this way." "Leave her be," said Paul D. "I'm a stranger to her."*

*"That's just it. She got no cause to act up with a stranger. Oh baby, what is it? Did something happen?"*

*....."I can't live here. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I can't live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by. Boys don't like me. Girls don't either."*

*"Honey, honey."*

*"What's she talking 'bout nobody speaks to you?" asked Paul D.*

*"It's the house. People don't--"*

*"It's not! It's not the house. It's us! And it's you!"*

*"Denver!"*

*"Leave off, Sethe. It's hard for a young girl living in a haunted house. That can't be easy."*

*"It's easier than some other things."*

*....."No moving. No leaving. It's all right the way it is."*

*"You going to tell me it's all right with this child half out of her mind?"*

*Something in the house braced, and in the listening quiet that followed Sethe spoke.*

This passage reveals more of Sethe's stubborn nature and her general fear of change because although she knows that it would be best for her daughter to move, she is too hung up on the past and not losing to it that she refuses to acknowledge anyone else's opinion on the matter. While the beginning of the passage shows more of her maternal instinct, that comes second to her hatred of change and throwing away the past. She is also fearful of Denver's mentioning of the town's hatred towards her because she immediately chastised her when she stated that it was her that forced everyone away which in a sense is true but something that Sethe does not want to acknowledge for her superiority complex will not allow her to.

- *"I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running--from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much. Now sit down and eat with us or leave us be."*

This section describes Sethe's perspective on how much she lost when she left Sweet Home and how the only thing she gained, her scar, will haunt for her entire life. It is because of this experience that she is so vehement about never running away again, because it cost her everything: her pride, her humanity, and possibly even her sanity. Sethe uses a metaphor to describe the journey because she describes it as a sort of train ride with her diction using the words ticket and cost which parallel a journey. However, through the usage of this metaphor we are able to understand Sethe's pain more vividly because this line dictates that she lost something which we are able to understand through her usage of the word cost.

- *While Sethe led Denver into the keeping room that opened off the large room he was sitting in. He had no smoking papers, so he fiddled with the pouch and listened through the open door to Sethe quieting her daughter. When she came back she avoided his look and went straight to a small table next to the stove. Her back was to him and he could see all the hair he wanted without the distraction of her face.*

*"What tree on your back?"*

*"Huh." Sethe put a bowl on the table and reached under it for flour.*

*"What tree on your back? Is something growing on your back? I don't see nothing growing on your back."*

*"It's there all the same."*

*"Who told you that?"*

*"Whitegirl. That's what she called it. I've never seen it and never will.*

*But that's what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Could have cherries too now for all I know."*

This section introduces Sethe's scar and how much it torments her because although, archetypally, a tree signifies life, in this instance, it is ironic because this tree gained life through Sethe's pain, suffering, and blood. Also the

scar is meant to represent slavery because she gained it through trying to escape slavery, and it could also show that this tree gained life through Sethe and will live on her permanently.

- *"I had milk," she said. "I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl. I hadn't stopped nursing her when I sent her on ahead with Howard and Buglar." Now she rolled the dough out with a wooden pin. "Anybody could smell me long before he saw me. And when he saw me he'd see the drops of it on the front of my dress. Nothing I could do about that. All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn't know it. Nobody knew that she couldn't pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder, only if she was lying on my knees. Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her milk but me. 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."*

This section is meant to show how adamant Sethe is about giving her children what they deserve and truly reveals her maternal instincts because the only thing she cares about is getting milk to her baby. She is also showing how attached she is to her children because in these statements she reveals that she believes nobody else knows her child as well as she does.

- *"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 up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still."  
"They used cowhide on you?"  
"And they took my milk."  
"They beat you and you was pregnant?"  
"And they took my milk!"*

This section is used to show the rising hysteria that Sethe succumbs to when she remembers the night that she was raped by the nephews and shows that although it happened long ago, it is something that she cannot forget because it is so deeply ingrained in her mind. It also shows what Sethe values because even though Paul D is outraged that they beat her when she was pregnant with Denver, all she worries about is that she cannot get her milk to her child showing her overly excessive maternal instinct once again.

- *Nor, fifteen minutes later, after telling him about her stolen milk, her mother wept as well. Behind her, bending down, his body an arc of kindness, he held her breasts in the palms of his hands. He rubbed his cheek on her back and learned that way her sorrow, the roots of it; its wide trunk and intricate branches. Raising his fingers to the hooks of her dress, he knew without seeing them or hearing any sigh that the tears were coming fast. And when the top of her dress was around her hips and he saw the sculpture her back had become, like the decorative work of an ironsmith too passionate for display, he could think but not say, "Aw, Lord, girl." And he would tolerate no peace until he had touched every ridge and leaf of it with his mouth, none of which Sethe could feel because her back skin had been dead for years. What she knew was that the responsibility for her breasts, at last, was in somebody else's hands.*

This is the first time that Sethe reveals any weakness in front of another person in the novel and it is extremely significant because it shows that although Sethe wants to be free and independent from all others, she just needs someone to be there for her at times. The fact that Morrison uses the word "responsibility" to describe the weight of her breasts is important because it shows that she doesn't view her breasts as an extension of her body, but rather sees them as a burden that she is endowed with.

- *...relieved of the weight of her breasts, smelling the stolen milk again and the pleasure of baking bread? Maybe this one time she could stop dead still in the middle of a cooking meal--not even leave the stove--and feel the hurt her back ought to. Trust things and remember things because the last of the Sweet Home men was there to catch her if she sank?*



The diction in this section is extremely significant because Sethe's breasts are described with the word "weight" which in this situation has a double meaning because although it can literally refer to the physical weight of her breasts, it can also refer to the responsibility that she associates with her breasts such as them providing the milk that her children need to survive. Also, this section shows Sethe finally opening up and trying to grasp if she can allocate enough space in her heart for Paul D and wonders if he would be there for her if times got rough.

- *The house itself was pitching. Sethe slid to the floor and struggled to get back into her dress. While down on all fours, as though she were holding her house down on the ground, Denver burst from the keeping room, terror in her eyes, and a vague smile on her lips.*

This section describes the theme of dehumanization because in order to try and keep her home where she wants it to be, Sethe gives up a human's natural stance and chooses to go on all fours like an animal would. Also the cause of her regression is because of the ghost of Beloved which is meant to represent slavery as a whole which reinforces Morrison's overall idea of slavery dehumanizing everyone it touches.

## Chapter 2

- *She led him to the top of the stairs, where light came straight from the sky because the second-story windows of that house had been placed in the pitched ceiling and not the walls. There were two rooms and she took him into one of them, hoping he wouldn't mind the fact that she was not prepared; that though she could remember desire, she had forgotten how it worked; the clutch and helplessness that resided in the hands; how blindness was altered so that what leapt to the eye were places to lie down, and all else--door knobs, straps, hooks, the sadness that crouched in corners, and the passing of time--was interference.*

This section is meant to show Sethe's doubt about her ability to satisfy any human aside from her children because she doesn't know if she'll be good enough for them, while instinctively, she feels as though only she could know her children best. This also shows her view on relationships and how she feels vulnerable when having sex and it could also show her fear of having sex after being raped by the nephews because of the diction such as "helplessness" "blindness" and "sadness."

- *She needed to get up from there, go downstairs and piece it all back together. This house he told her to leave as though a house was a little thing--a shirtwaist or a sewing basket you could walk off from or give away any old time. She who had never had one but this one; she who left a dirt floor to come to this one; she who had to bring a fistful of salsify into Mrs. Garner's kitchen every day just to be able to work in it, feel like some part of it was hers, because she wanted to love the work she did, to take the ugly out of it, and the only way she could feel at home on Sweet Home was if she picked some pretty growing thing and took it with her. The day she forgot was the day butter wouldn't come or the brine in the barrel blistered her arms.*

This section reveals Sethe's thought process on what Paul D told her about wanting her to leave the house and move on, but Sethe cannot do this or even fathom how he can say it so casually because she views the house as being a permanent fixture in her life. The house to her is more than just a residence as it represents her entrapment because no matter how much she wants to leave it she is trapped there emotionally because that is where her third child died and where she had memories of her family are alive. She can never leave because just as she can never escape the entrapment of slavery because it makes up to much of her life.

- *At least it seemed so. A few yellow flowers on the table, some myrtle tied around the handle of the flatiron holding the door open for a breeze calmed her, and when Mrs. Garner and she sat down to sort bristle, or make ink, she felt fine. Fine. Not scared of the men beyond. The five who slept in quarters near her, but never came in the night. Just touched their raggedy hats when they saw her and stared. And if she brought food to them in the fields, bacon and bread wrapped in a piece of clean sheeting, they never took it from her hands. They stood back and waited for her to put it on the ground (at the foot of a tree) and leave. Either they did not want to take anything from her, or did not want her to see them eat. Twice or three times she lingered. Hidden behind honeysuckle she watched them. How different they were without*

*her, how they laughed and played and urinated and sang. All but Sixo, who laughed once-- at the very end. Halle, of course, was the nicest. Baby Suggs' eighth and last child, who rented himself out all over the county to buy her away from there. But he too, as it turned out, was nothing but a man.*

This section has the archetype of yellow flowers which represent happiness and a start for a new beginning and the fact that it calms her shows that she wishes for the new beginning. This is also to show how earlier in her life she trusted men because although the men surrounding her were stronger and unknown to her, she still didn't fear them because she could still trust people back then. It could also show her loneliness because she had no one to talk to because the men didn't truly acknowledge her.

- *Sethe had the amazing luck of six whole years of marriage to that "somebody" son who had fathered every one of her children. A blessing she was reckless enough to take for granted, lean on, as though Sweet Home really was one. As though a handful of myrtle stuck in the handle of a pressing iron propped against the door in a whitewoman's kitchen could make it hers. As though mint sprig in the mouth changed the breath as well as its odor. A bigger fool never lived.*

This paragraph shows Sethe's perspective on her marriage to Halle and how she believes that she took for granted the kindness that the Garner's gave her when they allowed her to pick the husband she felt she would love the most. This also shows that when Sethe was younger she believed that Sweet Home could actually be a home for her and not a prison because she derides the myrtle and mint spring that she once believed made it home and instead calls herself a fool for believing that Sweet Home could ever truly be hers.

- *Although her eyes were closed, Sethe knew his gaze was on her face, and a paper picture of just how bad she must look raised itself up before her mind's eye. Still, there was no mockery coming from his gaze. Soft. It felt soft in a waiting kind of way. He was not judging her--or rather he was judging but not comparing her. Not since Halle had a man looked at her that way: not loving or passionate, but interested, as though he were examining an ear of corn for quality.*

This section shows how shocked Sethe is that a man is capable of showing such tenderness to her because her past experiences with sex have been horrible and although Paul D might not have enjoyed the sex as much as he thought he would, the fact that he still manages to show some sort of affection for Sethe shows how different he is from the rest of the men that Sethe has been with. She also describes him as looking at her with affection whereas Halle looked at her as more of a produce than a human being showing the theme of dehumanization once again because he didn't see her as a human but rather as a specimen for good reproduction.

- *Halle was more like a brother than a husband. His care suggested a family relationship rather than a man's laying claim. For years they saw each other in full daylight only on Sundays. The rest of the time they spoke or touched or ate in darkness. Predawn darkness and the afterglow of sunset. So looking at each other intently was a Sunday morning pleasure and Halle examined her as though storing up what he saw in sunlight for the shadow he saw the rest of the week. And he had so little time. After his Sweet Home work and on Sunday afternoons was the debt work he owed for his mother. When he asked her to be his wife, Sethe happily agreed and then was stuck not knowing the next step. There should be a ceremony, shouldn't there? A preacher, some dancing, a party, a something.*

The fact that Halle and Sethe could only see each other in the daylight on Sunday is significant because light signifies hope and renewal archetypally and the fact that they only saw each other on Sunday or the Lord's Day shows that they were only able to fully enjoy each other's company once every seven days and the rest of the days they were in the darkness or in the unknown or full of ignorance which is what it signifies archetypally. Referring to their relationship it could be that most of the times they were with one another they never really understood what they were doing together as shown by the darkness and shows that they didn't really know each other's true selves. The latter part of the section shows Sethe's naïve nature and how she wants more than slave life can offer her.

- *"Is there a wedding?" Mrs. Garner put down her cooking spoon. Laughing a little, she touched Sethe on the head, saying, "You are one sweet child." And then no more.*

This section is meant to emphasize on Sethe's naiveté about her status as a slave because she believes that her marriage to Halle is an important event that should be memorialized like most girls her age, but to her slave owners simply view her marriage with Halle as copulation and see it as natural because the only reason that they bought a female slave was so that she would get pregnant. This is the first instance that shows the Garners in a racist light because although Mrs. Garner meant no offense to Sethe when she patted Sethe on the head and called her a sweet child, it was actually truly demeaning to Sethe because she believed that she deserved a wedding just like every other person in the world and realized that she and her fellow slaves were viewed as lesser to the white people due to this instance.

- *Sethe made a dress on the sly and Halle hung his hitching rope from a nail on the wall of her cabin. 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. 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. 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. Who could miss a ripple in a cornfield on a quiet cloudless day? He, Sixo and both of the Pauls sat under Brother pouring water from a gourd over their heads, and through eyes streaming with well water, they watched the confusion of tassels in the field below. It had been hard, hard, hard sitting there erect as dogs, watching corn stalks dance at noon. The water running over their heads made it worse.*

This section is meant to show another dehumanizing aspect of slave life because although sex is one of the most intimate and personal things that two people can do together, Morrison implied that Mr. Garner kept the corn field for the purpose of animals having sex in semi-privacy but shows the racist nature of slavery when she states from the omniscient narrator's point of view that he thought that humans could use the cornfield for the same purpose as well. This also represents how slavery twisted Sethe and Halle's perception of privacy because although they believed that they were hidden, the fact that they made love outside gives them more of an animalistic quality and the fact that they made a spectacle of themselves is meant to give a racist perspective on the whole scene. The fact that Sethe laughs at this event shows that she doesn't realize the implications associated with her actions and how they could be looked down upon. It also gives the male slaves an animalistic quality as well because it gives the impression that all they could think with was their male genitals rather than their brains.

- *Sethe took the opportunity afforded by his movement to shift as well. Looking at Paul D's back, she remembered that some of the corn stalks broke, folded down over Halle's back, and among the things her fingers clutched were husk and corn silk hair. How loose the silk. How jailed down the juice...The pulling down of the tight sheath, the ripping sound always convinced her it hurt.... No matter what all your teeth and wet fingers anticipated, there was no accounting for the way that simple joy could shake you.*

Sethe shifts back to the present with Paul D and the aftermath of their silk but looking at his back, she remembers her first time with Halle and her diction gives off a sexual vibe because in her ecstasy she clutched husk and corn silk hair and describes the juices flowing out of the corn. The tight sheath is also meant to represent the female organ while the ripping sounds have a double meaning.

### Chapter 3

- *...see her mother making her way up into the hills where no houses were likely to be. How Sethe was walking on two feet meant for standing still. How they were so swollen she could not see her arch or feel her ankles. Her leg shaft ended in a loaf of flesh scalloped by five toenails. But she could not, would not, stop, for when she did the little antelope rammed her with horns and pawed the ground of her womb with*

*impatient hooves. While she was walking, it seemed to graze, quietly--so she walked, on two feet meant, in this sixth month of pregnancy, for standing still. Still, near a kettle; still, at the churn; still, at the tub and ironing board. Milk, sticky and sour on her dress, attracted every small flying thing from gnats to grasshoppers. By the time she reached the hill skirt she had long ago stopped waving them off.*

This section is meant to show the overwhelming love that Sethe feels toward her unborn child because although she has walked so far that her feet have swollen to a point that they are no longer recognizable, she still continues to walk because the moment she stops her child starts moving in impatience. Also, this section brings up the idea of dehumanization because of the constant mentioning of being on two feet because this is meant to show the humane side of Sethe because she is on two feet rather than on all fours. Dehumanization is also brought up because Sethe doesn't call her child her unborn baby but rather she calls it an antelope, an animal. This is also supposed to represent her devotion to her baby because although she should be resting in her sixth month, she is walking alone towards freedom so her baby can be born free. The milk is once again mentioned to show motherhood and femininity but milk in this instance has a negative connotation because it attracts bugs and pests to her rather than being used to sustain the life of her child.

- *The clanging in her head, begun as a church bell heard from a distance, was by then a tight cap of pealing bells around her ears. She sank and had to look down to see whether she was in a hole or kneeling. Nothing was alive but her nipples and the little antelope. Finally, she was horizontal—or must have been because blades of wild onion were scratching her temple and her cheek. Concerned as she was for the life of her children's mother, Sethe told Denver, she remembered thinking: "Well, at least I don't have to take another step." A dying thought if ever there was one, and she waited for the little antelope to protest, and why she thought of an antelope Sethe could not imagine since she had never seen one. She guessed it must have been an invention held on to from before Sweet Home, when she was very young. Of that place where she was born (Carolina maybe? or was it Louisiana?) she remembered only song and dance. Not even her own mother, who was pointed out to her by the eight-year old child who watched over the young ones--pointed out as the one among many backs turned away from her, stooping in a watery field. Patiently Sethe waited for this particular back to gain the row's end and stand. What she saw was a cloth hat as opposed to a straw one, singularity enough in that world of cooing women each of whom was called Ma'am.*

This section is meant to show how Sethe is on the verge of death but she wants to pursue living only for her unborn child or her "antelope" and describes the only two parts of her being alive as being her nipples, something that could be used to sustain her child, and the little antelope or her child. The use of the word "horizontal" is meant to show that she is lying on the ground in agony Sethe, in her agony, also contemplates why she thinks of her child as an antelope when she hasn't even seen an antelope which could show how worried she is that the schoolteacher was right and she really is an animal and is concerned that her child might turn out as one as well. The passage then shifts to Sethe's point of view when she was a child looking toward her mother's back and realizing that she never got to know her mother and her mother never took care of her which could be one of the reasons that Sethe is so adamant about providing for her child especially in regards to milk.

- *"Sethe--thuh."*  
*"Ma'am."*  
*"Hold on to the baby."*  
*"Yes, Ma'am."*  
*"Sethe--thuh."*  
*"Ma'am."*  
*"Get some kindlin in here."*  
*"Yes, Ma'am."*

This conversation between Sethe and her mother is meant to show how distant her relationship with her mother was and how one sided it was because her mother only gave her commands to do, she never talked to her or hugged her like one would expect from a mother. She is the antithesis of a maternal figure and can be seen as a

foil to Sethe.

- *Oh but when they sang. And oh but when they danced and sometimes they danced the antelope. The men as well as the ma'ams, one of whom was certainly her own. They shifted shapes and became something other. Some unchained, demanding other whose feet knew her pulse better than she did. Just like this one in her stomach.*

This paragraph is meant to show Sethe's fixation on the grace and beauty her people had when they danced and how they made things that were condemned as "animalistic" into works of beauty. It could also show that beauty is viewed differently between black and white cultures because such dances would be viewed as voodoo or witchcraft by whites but is sacred to the blacks. She also describes Denver as being similar to these people showing that she viewed them with respect.

- *"I believe this baby's ma'am is gonna die in wild onions on the bloody side of the Ohio River." That's what was on her mind and what she told Denver. Her exact words. And it didn't seem such a bad idea, all in all, in view of the step she would not have to take, but the thought of herself stretched out dead while the little antelope lived on--an hour? a day? a day and a night?--in her lifeless body grieved her so she made the groan that made the person walking on a path not ten yards away halt and stand right still. Sethe had not heard the walking, but suddenly she heard the standing still and then she smelled the hair. The voice, saying, "Who's in there?" was all she needed to know that she was about to be discovered by a white boy. That he too had mossy teeth, an appetite. That on a ridge of pine near the Ohio River, trying to get to her three children, one of whom was starving for the food she carried; that after her husband had disappeared; that after her milk had been stolen, her back pulped, her children orphaned, she was not to have an easeful death. No. She told Denver that a something came up out of the earth into her—like a freezing, but moving too, like jaws inside. "Look like I was just cold jaws grinding," she said. Suddenly she was eager for his eyes, to bite into them; to gnaw his cheek. "I was hungry," she told Denver, "just as hungry as I could be for his eyes. I couldn't wait."*

Sethe is determined to continue on her journey to Ohio, not for herself, but for her daughter as shown in the text where she is seen willing to give up and die among the wild onions but fears her unborn child living in her stomach only to die because of her weakness. In this section, Sethe is given animalistic tendencies because she "smells" the hair of the person coming towards her and this is animalistic because she is using her senses rather than her voice to find the person coming for her. Also, she makes a reference to white men with "mossy teeth" which is a reference to anyone with bad intentions because Sethe fears white men because of how the nephews subjected her to rape and how they used her breasts which were meant to sustain her child and instead turned her into an animal that was not yet milked. Her fear for the white men that she is anticipating causes a change over her which can best be described as dehumanization because she loses her human reasoning and instead seems to only focus on killing the person that poses a threat to her and her children.

- *So she raised up on her elbow and dragged herself, one pull, two, three, four, toward the young white voice talking about "Who that back in there?" " 'Come see,' I was thinking. 'Be the last thing you behold,' and sure enough here come the feet so I thought well that's where I'll have to start God do what He would, I'm gonna eat his feet off. I'm laughing now, but it's true. I wasn't just set to do it. I was hungry to do it. Like a snake. All jaws and hungry. "It wasn't no whiteboy at all. Was a girl. The raggediest-looking trash you ever saw saying, 'Look there. A nigger. If that don't beat all.' "*

This passage shows dehumanization because Sethe comparing herself to a snake and becoming more and more feral because she describes what she'd do if the person that came out of the forest were a white man. Like how she'd eat him and laugh after doing and how she wanted to do this showing the hysteria that plagued Sethe's mind after she left Sweet Home and how she cannot trust white men. It also describes how Sethe only thinks based on her appetite at this point, similar to an animal. Also this shows how Sethe viewed Amy before she was given any kindness from her and how she could be just as judgmental as white folk.

- *Down in the grass, like the snake she believed she was, Sethe opened her mouth, and instead of fangs and a split tongue, out shot the truth. "Running," Sethe told her. It was the first word she had spoken all day*

*and it came out thick because of her tender tongue. "Them the feet you running on? My Jesus my." She squatted down and stared at Sethe's feet. "You got anything on you, gal, pass for food?" "No." Sethe tried to shift to a sitting position but couldn't.*

This is meant to show Sethe's perspective when she is cornered and how submissive she is in the face of a white person even though in her earlier dialogue she called her trash. Sethe has kept her animalistic tendencies such as being down in the grass and believing that she had fangs, the diction such as "fangs" emphasizes on the animal characteristics. Later, Sethe realizes that she was just dehydrated and did not, in fact, have fangs and that she was extremely fatigued because she couldn't even sit up straight.

- *Sethe nodded and shifted her elbow. "Your ma'am know you on the lookout for velvet?"*

This quote is meant to emphasize Sethe's motherly concern because although she views Amy as trash, she knows the pain of having your child leave you and shows her empathy for those in a similar situation to hers.

- *"What they call you?" she asked.*

*However far she was from Sweet Home, there was no point in giving out her real name to the first person she saw. "Lu," said Sethe.*

This statement from Sethe is supposed to represent how cautious she is because even though she knows that Amy is harmless, she cannot forget the pain that white people have caused her so she cannot fully trust Amy. This also shows how paranoid and cautious that the former slaves were in revealing their identities because even the smallest slip of their tongue could cause them to be recaptured.

- *"Make a difference, does it? You stay the night here snake get you."*

*"Well he may as well come on. I can't stand up let alone walk and God help me, miss, I can't crawl."*

This section is ironic because Sethe originally thought that she was a snake in her mind but now Amy is stating that she could possibly get killed by a snake at night bringing back the idea of Sethe's humanity and the irony that it is a white person that is reminding her of her humanity. Also, archetypally snakes represent evil and corruption and the fact that Amy brought Sethe out of her snake façade shows that she saved her. We can also tell that Sethe has grown as a person because she was on the verge of giving up but Amy allowed her to gain the strength to move on towards freedom.

- *It was the voice full of velvet and Boston and good things to eat that urged her along and made her think that maybe she wasn't, after all, just a crawling graveyard for a six-month baby's last hours*

This line is supposed to represent how Amy's voice led Sethe to her feet and allowed her to continue to her journey for both her and her baby. It also gives her hope that she isn't meant to die and that she still has a reason for moving on. Amy is also a foil for Sethe because she changes her and has a different mindset than Sethe because she is white and Sethe is black causing a race issue but ultimately she causes the greatest change in her.

- *"I used to be a good size. Nice arms and everything. Wouldn't think it, would you? That was before they put me in the root cellar.*

This statement from Sethe to Amy shows that she felt that she was once full of life but slavery drained her of that life because her nice arms are now fatigued and her sweet are swollen until they are described as "loafs." However, once they put her in the rootcellar where she was raped and humiliated and dehumanized, she was broken and lost her trust in all white people and felt that she was dirtied which can be shown by the use of the word "root cellar" because a cellar usually shown as a dark, dingy place that is rarely ever used.

- *"What were you praying for, Ma'am?"*

*"Not for anything. I don't pray anymore. I just talk."*

*"What were you talking about?"*

*"You won't understand, baby."*

This conversation between Sethe and Amy in the first two lines of the passage is meant to show that Sethe has lost all faith in any sort of divine protection because when she most needed God to help her, he didn't and that also helped to cause her to break because she realized that no one was there to save her. Despite this she still talks to God but will never pray to him. The latter part of the section is meant to show how Sethe dismisses Denver and slightly belittles her because although her daughter is fully grown she still treats her as a child which is a constant

theme in the book because she never treats her children as equals.

- *"I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place--the picture of it--stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened."*  
*"Can other people see it?" asked Denver. "Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm--every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there--you who never was there--if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over--over and done with--it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what." ...*  
*Denver picked at her fingernails. "If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies."*  
*Sethe looked right in Denver's face. "Nothing ever does," she said.*

In this section, it is implied that Sethe is talking about Sweet Home. She explains to Denver that even if a certain place doesn't exist anymore, its presence is permanent. This section shows that time doesn't pass by Sethe normally, and that she believes that everything leaves its mark on the world. The choppy, incomplete thoughts provide a syntax that suggests that when Sethe is saying this, her mind is in another place and completely focused on what she's talking about. Even though Sweet Home no longer exists, Sethe tells Denver to never go there because she believes that the presence of slavery is always there and that if Denver returns there, she would be captured by slavery. This shows that Sethe still fears the past because she ensures that her family and herself stay away from what used to be Sweet Home. Rememory is a memory you forget in your consciousness but will always remain in your unconscious thoughts. The fact that Sethe states that Sweet Home is a part of her rememory shows that she can never forget Sweet Home and the slavery that occurred there. In a sense, Sweet Home will always be engraved within her.

- *"Well, I think the baby got plans," said Denver.*  
*"What plans?"*  
*"I don't know, but the dress holding on to you got to mean something."*  
*"Maybe," said Sethe. "Maybe it does have plans." the haunting was done by an evil ... Even Sethe didn't love it. She just took it for granted... Her mother had secrets—things she wouldn't tell; things she halfway told.*

This statement by Sethe is the first time that she admitted that the dead baby ghost, Beloved, might have insidious intentions because she generally defended her dead baby from criticism but this is the first time that she allows any negative thoughts of her baby to enter her mind. This is also the first time that Morrison gives the impression that Sethe did not only have positive feelings in regards to her children because before these statements she was seen as the prime example of a mother but this shows that even she can have dark thoughts in regards to her children. This also shows that Denver did not fully trust her mother because she knew what her mother was capable of and this causes a rift in their relationship.

- *Sethe had given little thought to the white dress until Paul D came, and then she remembered Denver's interpretation: plans. The morning after the first night with Paul D, Sethe smiled just thinking about what the word could mean. It was a luxury she had not had in eighteen years and only that once. Before and since, all her effort was directed not on avoiding pain but on getting through it as quickly as possible. The one set of plans she had made—getting away from Sweet Home--went awry so completely she never dared life by making more.*

This passage reveals that Sethe no longer tries to avoid pain but goes through it because she feels hopeless and helpless at the fact that she couldn't avoid the earlier pains of slavery and that this has impacted her mindset greatly because she cannot forget the pain that occurred due to her trying to best white folk. This also affects her life adversely because she can't make plans for the future anymore and feels insecure when she does try to go through with them because she remembers the worst case scenario of her rape at the hands the nephews and her harsh beating that gave her the chokecherry tree.

- *She thought about what Denver had seen kneeling next to her, and thought also of the temptation to trust and remember that gripped her as she stood before the cooking stove in his arms. Would it be all right? Would it be all right to go ahead and feel? Go ahead and count on something?*

This shows a change in Sethe from her earlier adamant behavior to be self-sufficient and never accept any help from the community because she believes that all she needs in her life are her children and no one else. But now that Paul D has come back into her life and showed her that she is capable of feeling emotions for someone else and could possibly let them in shows that her mind is slowly gaining the hope that she thought she lost on the day her milk was stolen.

- *Sethe looked at her hands, her bottle-green sleeves, and thought how little color there was in the house and how strange that she had not missed it the way Baby did. Deliberate, she thought, it must be deliberate, because the last color she remembered was the pink chips in the headstone of her baby girl. After that she became as color conscious as a hen. Every dawn she worked at pies, potato dishes and vegetables while the cook did the soup, meat and all the rest. And she could not remember remembering a molly apple or a yellow squash. 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.*

This section describes Sethe's bottle green sleeves to archetypally represent renewal and fertility but bottle green is a darker variation of green which could show that her renewal is dampened by the overhanging concern with Beloved and until she gets closure with Beloved she cannot fully accept her new future. Also, in this section it is revealed that Sethe stopped seeing color once Beloved dies and only begins to realize how lonely 124 is once Paul D comes back showing how much of an impact he had on her life and the way she perceives things after she killed Beloved was dampened which is why she saw no color in life. The pink chips in the headstone for Beloved has a negative connotation since archetypally pink is a mixture of white and red and white represents emptiness while red shows sin and passion which is meant to represent Beloved in her reincarnated form. The dawn represents new beginnings showing that she kept up with life but always felt something was missing because she didn't acknowledge the liveliness around her. Now she is acknowledging that her former behavior was wrong and that she was missing something before.

- *124 was so full of strong feeling perhaps she was oblivious to the loss of anything at all. There was a time when she scanned the fields every morning and every evening for her boys. When she stood at the open window, unmindful of flies, her head cocked to her left shoulder, her eyes searching to the right for them. Cloud shadow on the road, an old woman, a wandering goat untethered and gnawing bramble--each one looked at first like Howard--no, Buglar. Little by little she stopped and their thirteen-year-old faces faded completely into their baby ones, which came to her only in sleep. When her dreams roamed outside 124, anywhere they wished, she saw them sometimes in beautiful trees, their little legs barely visible in the leaves.*

This passage represents how Sethe waited for her children to come back with ardor but as the days turned into years she gradually gave up and their faces soon faded from her memory. This is meant to show that although Sethe loved them dearly and was a strong maternal figure to them, even time could fade that bond showing how significant her bond was with Beloved because it didn't break after all those years and she still was haunted by it.

- *When she woke the house crowded in on her: there was the door where the soda crackers were lined up in a row; the white stairs her baby girl loved to climb; the corner where Baby Suggs mended shoes, a pile of which were still in the cold room; the exact place on the stove where Denver burned her fingers. And*



*of course the spite of the house itself. There was no room for any other thing or body until Paul D arrived and broke up the place, making room, shifting it, moving it over to someplace else, then standing in the place he had made. So, kneeling in the keeping room the morning after Paul D came, she was distracted by the two orange squares that signaled how barren 124 really was.*

The fact that Morrison uses the word “crowded” to describe the house shows that she is personifying it and treating it as though it were a living entity, which gives proof to the fact that the house is supposed to represent the feelings of those that were laid to rest unhappily. This section describes the life of the house before Paul D arrived and before Baby Suggs died, there was a sense of company in the house which juxtaposes the state of the house currently because now they are fully disconnected from the community. After Baby died and Paul D arrived, the house would forever be changed because Paul D managed to break the spell binding the women to the house and forcefully made room for himself. After he arrives, Sethe begins to recognize color showing the huge impact Paul D has on her. Orange archetypally represents change and adventure and is supposed to show the transformation that Sethe undergoes after the arrival of Paul D such as how she goes out for the first time in years to the carnival.

- *"Your girl, Denver. Seems to me she's of a different mind."  
"Why you say that?"  
"She's got a waiting way about her. Something she's expecting and it ain't me."  
"I don't know what it could be."  
"Well, whatever it is, she believes I'm interrupting it."  
"Don't worry about her. She's a charmed child. From the beginning."  
"Is that right?"  
"Uh huh. Nothing bad can happen to her. Look at it. Everybody I knew dead or gone or dead and gone. Not her. Not my Denver.*

In this section, Sethe defends Denver from Paul D’s criticism and shows motherly affection for her daughter which is significant because this affection for Denver decreases once Beloved enters the picture.

- *And when the schoolteacher found us and came busting in here with the law and a shotgun--"  
"Schoolteacher found you?"  
"Took a while, but he did. Finally."  
"And he didn't take you back?"  
"Oh, no. I wasn't going back there. I don't care who found who. Any life but not that one. I went to jail instead. Denver was just a baby so she went right along with me. Rats bit everything in there but her."*

This section reveals that Sethe does not want to tell Paul D the full story of how she killed her daughter, so instead she sugarcoats the story briefly by saying that she went to jail instead. This also represents Sethe’s determination to keep her children close to her because even though prison is no place for a baby to be, she still felt that Denver was better off being with her, where rats could potentially bite her, than without her mother.

#### Chapter 4

- *PLEASANTLY TROUBLED, Sethe avoided the keeping room and Denver's sidelong looks. As she expected, since life was like that--it didn't do any good.*

This statement represents the fact that Sethe treated Denver like a child and neglected to tell her important information about whether Paul D would be staying with them indefinitely. This backfired because in response, Denver asked Paul D herself how long he’ll be staying with them.

- *"Denver! What's got into you?" Sethe looked at her daughter, feeling more embarrassed than angry. Paul D scratched the hair on his chin. "Maybe I should make tracks."  
"No!" Sethe was surprised by how loud she said it.*

This conversation is significant because it reveals how Sethe isn’t as much concerned with the fact that her daughter is being rude, but rather she is more concerned with how she will be perceived due to her daughter’s

rudeness contradicting her usual motherly concerns. This is a result due to Paul D's arrival because Sethe was even surprised with herself by how much she wanted Paul D to be around. This shows Sethe's deprivation of company because once Paul D came, she didn't want to let him go.

- *"He know what he needs," said Denver.  
"Well, you don't," Sethe told her, "and you must not know what you need either. I don't want to hear another word out of you."  
"I just asked if--"  
"Hush! You make tracks. Go somewhere and sit down."*

This scene shows Sethe chastising Denver for her rudeness. The significance of this conversation is that the use of the statement "make tracks," which is said to Denver, is representative of the replacement of Denver with Paul D in Sethe's heart. When Paul D earlier offered to "make tracks," Sethe refused loudly, but now, she tells her own daughter to "make tracks" in a rude manner. The statement "make tracks" is generally associated with animals and it is surprising that Sethe is telling her own daughter to do so because she was the one who was so hurt by schoolteacher's constant prodding and dehumanization.

- *"Excuse me, but I can't hear a word against her. I'll chastise her. You leave her alone."...  
"I don't care what she is. Grown don't mean nothing to a mother. A child is a child. They get bigger, older, but grown? What's that supposed to mean? In my heart it don't mean a thing."...  
"Nothing! I'll protect her while I'm live and I'll protect her when I ain't."...  
"That's the way it is, Paul D. I can't explain it to you no better than that, but that's the way it is. If I have to choose--well, it's not even a choice."*

This section reveals Sethe's motherly defenses being raised because although she chastises Denver earlier for her rude behavior, she will not accept any of Paul D's criticism toward her daughter, and this shows that the bond of a mother to her daughter is more significant to Sethe than the bond shared by lovers. It also gives the impression of Sethe being willing to die to protect Denver which is ironic considering the context of the book.

- *"Maybe I should leave things the way they are," she said.  
"How are they?"  
"We get along."  
"What about inside?"  
"I don't go inside."*

This shows that Sethe isn't willing to delve in deeper to what is causing her to retreat from the community and seclude herself in her home for a large amount of time.

- *"You willing to leave it to me?"...  
"No" is what she said. At least what she started out saying (what would her boss say if she took a day off?), but even when she said it she was thinking how much her eyes enjoyed looking in his face.*

This section represents Sethe's affection for Paul D because she is tempted to accept his offer of just leaving everything to him although she is adamant on self-sustaining her and her family.

- *Sethe was badly dressed for the heat, but this being her first social outing in eighteen years, she felt obliged to wear her one good dress, heavy as it was, and a hat. Certainly a hat. She didn't want to meet Lady Jones or Ella with her head wrapped like she was going to work.*

This is supposed to represent that Sethe doesn't really know how to prepare herself for a social event since she's been deprived of social events or outings in years. It could also show that Sethe is more concerned with how she appears to the community than she should be. She is extremely self-conscious on how she wants to present herself on her first outing in over a decade.

- *Sethe looked to her left and all three of them were gliding over the dust holding hands. Maybe he was right. A life. Watching their hand holding shadows, she was embarrassed at being dressed for church. The others, ahead and behind them, would think she was putting on airs, letting them know that she was different because she lived in a house with two stories; tougher, because she could do and survive things they believed she should neither do nor survive. She was glad Denver had resisted her urgings to dress*

*up--rebraid her hair at least.*

This section is where Sethe realizes that she doesn't need to put on a façade for the community and all she needs to do instead is to enjoy the simple moments with the people she cares about. While she believes that the community shuns her because she has more material objects than they do, she is setting herself up for failure because she tries too hard and isn't familiar with proper social conduct.

- *Sethe returned the smiles she got. Denver was swaying with delight. And on the way home, although leading them now, the shadows of three people still held hands.*

This shows the change that Paul D has on Sethe because she is no longer acting like the queenly woman that Denver and the rest of the town perceived her as. Instead she is letting the community in a little and when she looks at the shadows, she sees a brighter future for the three of them.

## Chapter 5

- *And, for some reason she could not immediately account for, the moment she got close enough to see the face, Sethe's bladder filled to capacity... Not since she was a baby girl, being cared for by the eight year-old girl who pointed out her mother to her, had she had an emergency that unmanageable...the water she voided was endless. Like a horse, she thought, but as it went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born. So much water Amy said, "Hold on, Lu. You going to sink us you keep that up." But there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now.*

This section shows how Sethe reacted at the initial appearance of Beloved. Sethe's need to urinate at this moment represents her water breaking. The reason it happened at this moment was because Beloved, a form of her deceased baby, appeared and was introduced back to life. The quote "Not since she was a baby girl...had she had an emergency that unmanageable" shows that Sethe never had a bladder issue like this before, and this issue only happened because of the first appearance of Beloved.

- *Sethe was deeply touched by her sweet name; the remembrance of glittering headstone made her feel especially kindly toward her.*

This quote emphasizes Sethe's love for Beloved. Here, Morrison uses heartfelt diction with the words, "sweet" or "kindly" to introduce a theme of maternal love and to give a sense of the sympathy and care that Sethe felt for what appeared to be a stranger who happened to have the same name as her deceased daughter.

- *"Did she take a spoonful of anything today?" Sethe inquired.*

*"She shouldn't eat with cholera."*

*"You sure that's it? Was just a hunch of Paul D's."...*

*"Well she shouldn't starve to death either, Denver."*

*"Leave us alone, Ma'am. I'm taking care of her."*

*"She say anything?"*

*"I'd let you know if she did."*

*Sethe looked at her daughter and thought, Yes, she has been lonesome. Very lonesome.*

*"Wonder where Here Boy got off to?" Sethe thought a change of subject was needed.*

Sethe motherly character is shown through this conversation. She has to ask Denver what is the matter and she seems very concerned. In this conversation between Sethe and Denver, Sethe's concern about Beloved's health. She seems concerned about properly providing for them, asking Denver if she has eaten anything yet. She continually asks questions as Denver is trying to stop them, not noticing until Denver announces "Leave us alone." Sethe's motherly nature is also seen when she is able to see Denver as who she truly is: lonesome, "Very lonesome." She also senses when a change of subject is needed, as seen in the last line where she does so, asking "where Here Boy got off to".

- *[Beloved] gnawed a cane stick to flax and kept the strings in her mouth long after the syrup had been sucked away. Denver laughed, Sethe smiled and Paul D said it made him sick to his stomach. Sethe believed it was a recovering body's need---after an illness---for quick strength.*

When Beloved gnaws on a cane stick, it can represent a baby's need to suck or gnaw on an object such as a pacifier. Since Sethe believes that this is important for Beloved, it can show that Sethe has a maternal instinct for Beloved in which she feels that certain things are essential for Beloved.

- *"You just gonna feed her? From now on?" Paul D, feeling ungenerous, and surprised by it, heard the irritability in his voice.  
"Denver likes her. She's no real trouble. I thought we'd wait till her breath was better. She still sounds a little lumbar to me."  
"Something funny 'bout that gal," Paul D said, mostly to himself.  
"Funny how?"  
"Acts sick, sounds sick, but she don't look sick. Good skin, bright eyes and strong as a bull."  
"She's not strong. She can hardly walk without holding on to something."*

This conversation between Sethe and Paul D shows that Sethe has a motherly concern for Beloved. Though Paul D points out that Beloved is strange, Sethe still chooses to care for her. She denies that Beloved is strong by saying "She can hardly walk without holding on to something" because as a mother, she sees Beloved as more vulnerable and therefore not strong or tough.

## **Chapter 6**

- *Sethe was flattered by Beloved's open, quiet devotion. The same adoration from her daughter (had it been forthcoming) would have annoyed her; made her chill at the thought of having raised a ridiculously dependent child. But the company of this sweet, if peculiar, guest pleased her the way a zealot pleases his teacher.*

This section shows that Sethe isn't her normal self around Beloved because with Beloved, she's more affectionate and willing to open up rather than with Denver. This shows that Beloved has affected Sethe in an abnormal way because she is no longer her "queenly self" as Denver earlier called her and is now more warm and open.

- *Diamonds? What would I be doing with diamonds?"  
"On your ears."  
"Wish I did. I had some crystal once. A present from a lady I worked for."*

This conversation between Sethe and Beloved is meant to show how deprived Sethe is because she sates how she couldn't possibly have diamonds and instead comments about how she once had crystals which are the cheaper alternative of diamonds because they look similar. However, the crystals do not have the same monetary value that diamonds due showing that even when Sethe is shown kindness, she is still not given the best of things.

- *It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe (as much as it pleased Beloved) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable; to Denver's inquiries Sethe gave short replies or rambling incomplete reveries. Even with Paul D, who had shared some of it and to whom she could talk with at least a measure of calm, the hurt was always there--like a tender place in the corner of her mouth that the bit left.... But, as she began telling about the earrings, she found herself wanting to, liking it. Perhaps it was Beloved's distance from the events itself, or her thirst for hearing it--in any case it was an unexpected pleasure.*

This commentary by Sethe about her past brings out the main theme of the book because Morrison wants to show that although slavery is something that everybody wants to forget and avoid, it needs to be spoken so that it will never occur again. In this section, Sethe wants only to avoid her past and she and Baby Suggs agreed earlier that talking about their pasts should be unspeakable but the reappearance of Beloved opens that floodgate and causes Sethe to reevaluate her past experiences. Even in this small section, Morrison uses the word "bit" to portray how Sethe knows the pain of an iron bit gagging her and tearing off her flesh where it was torn off her face.

- *"That lady I worked for in Kentucky gave them to me when I got married. What they called married hack there and back then. I guess she saw how bad I felt when I found out there wasn't going to be no*

*ceremony, no preacher. Nothing. I thought there should be something--something to say it was right and true. I didn't want it to be just me moving over a bit of pallet full of corn husks. Or just me bringing my night bucket into his cabin. I thought there should be some ceremony. Dancing maybe. A little sweet william in my hair." Sethe smiled. "I never saw a wedding, but I saw Mrs. Garner's wedding gown in the press, and heard her go on about what it was like. Two pounds of currants in the cake, she said, and four whole sheep. The people were still eating the next day. That's what I wanted... But it wasn't going to be nothing. They said it was all right for us to be husband and wife and that was it. All of it.*

This section is supposed to represent Sethe's feelings of disappointment because she realizes that as a slave she will never be able to receive the same pleasures as the white folk that she serves. She doesn't have access to ideal yet simple luxuries showing how atrocious slavery was. This is also supposed to represent how Sethe feels grateful to her white owner, but in reality it is slightly ironic that she feels this way because it is the white owners that are preventing her from achieving these goals.

- *"My woman? You mean my mother? If she did, I don't remember. I didn't see her but a few times out in the fields and once when she was working indigo. By the time I woke up in the morning, she was in line. If the moon was bright they worked by its light. Sunday she slept like a stick. She must of nursed me two or three weeks--that's the way the others did. Then she went back in rice and I sucked from another woman whose job it was. So to answer you, no. I reckon not. She never fixed my hair nor nothing. She didn't even sleep in the same cabin most nights I remember. Too far from the line-up, I guess. One thing she did do. She picked me up and carried me behind the smokehouse. Back there she opened up her dress front and lifted her breast and pointed under it. Right on her rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin. She said, 'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed. 'I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark.' Scared me so.*

This section juxtaposes Sethe's ideals with her mother's because while Sethe cannot wait to nurse her children and view it as essential for their survival, her mother simply nursed her for the minimum of two weeks so that she wouldn't die and left her to go back to work in the fields, proving that Sethe might care so much about nursing her children because she was deprived of it as a child. It also shows Sethe's deprivation of a maternal figure in her life because her mother couldn't be around for her and before she was even able to fully get to know her mother; her mother was marked for death which fully identified her to Sethe and she used that mark to scare Sethe into not making the same mistakes that she did that caused her to be hung.

- *"She slapped my face."  
"What for?"  
"I didn't understand it then. Not till I had a mark of my own."  
"What happened to her?"  
"Hung."*

Sethe's mother slaps her after she states that she wants to have a mark similar to her mother because her mother knows that this is a mark that represents death for its host. It also shows Sethe's naivety on the subject and her mother's one true gesture of maternal love because she punishes Sethe for her ignorance which Sethe only realizes when she is older and is facing a similar circumstance.

- *Neither was completely dry but the folding felt too fine to stop. She had to do something with her hands because she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind right behind the slap on her face and the circled cross..... Words Sethe understood then but could neither recall nor repeat now. She believed that must be why she remembered so little before Sweet Home except singing and dancing and how crowded it was. What Nan told her she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. The same language her ma'am spoke, and which would never come back. But the message--that was and had been there all along.*

This section brings back the idea of rememory and shows that although Sethe tries her hardest to forget her awful slave time memories. (Refer to the rememory section)

- *"She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man. She put her arms around him. The others she did not put her arms around. Never. Never. Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe." As small girl Sethe, she was unimpressed. As grown-up woman Sethe she was angry, but not certain at what. A mighty wish for Baby Suggs broke over her like surf. In the quiet following its splash, Sethe looked at the two girls sitting by the stove: her sickly, shallow-minded boarder, her irritable, lonely daughter. They seemed little and far away.*

This section is supposed to represent Sethe's mother's love for her because although she had many children before, Sethe was the only child that she kept and named because the other children occurred due to her being raped by whites. Sethe is the only one that she had out of her free will and she acknowledges that by giving birth to her and in turn showing her the ultimate maternal affection. While Sethe is remembering this, she also longs for the only maternal figure that she can remember: Baby Suggs.

- *As small girl Sethe, she was unimpressed. As grown-up woman Sethe she was angry, but not certain at what. A mighty wish for Baby Suggs broke over her like surf. In the quiet following its splash, Sethe looked at the two girls sitting by the stove: her sickly, shallow-minded boarder, her irritable, lonely daughter. They seemed little and far away.*

Sethe compares herself with Denver in this section because she remembers how in her youth she hated her mother and felt that she was punished by her mother for her negligence but as she grows older and has a child of her own, Denver, she understands how her mother felt but is still worried for her daughter as shown by how she worries that her daughter seems to be drifting further and further away from her.

## Chapter 7

- *"Well, feel this, why don't you? Feel how it feels to have a bed to sleep in and somebody there not worrying you to death about what you got to do each day to deserve it. Feel how that feels. And if that don't get it, feel how it feels to be a coloredwoman roaming the roads with anything God made liable to jump on you. Feel that."*

This section reveals how Sethe feels about her past and how she felt that the community around her did not care for her and provided no protection for her and she wants to make up for this absence in her life by providing a home for Beloved and showing her the kindness that was not given to her. The later section, "*feel how it feels to be a coloredwoman roaming the roads with anything God made liable to jump on you*" shows that although Sethe feels comfortable in Cincinnati, she was once scared to look over every corner because of how she was raped before and shows how she views men as unable to control their impulses.

- *"He saw?" Sethe was gripping her elbows as though to keep them from flying away. Things get to him. Things he can't chop down because they're inside." Sethe was pacing up and down, up and down in the lamplight. "The underground agent said, By Sunday. They took my milk and he saw it and didn't come down? Sunday came and he didn't. Monday came and no Halle. I thought he was dead, that's why; then I thought they caught him, that's why.*

This quote by Sethe is meant to portray Sethe's shock that Halle saw her get raped because she never knew why he did not arrive to leave with her and now that she does know she is in a state of shock through the use of "keep them from flying away" which signifies that she is trying to keep herself anchored to the present and is trying to stop herself from going into shock.

- *"If he is alive, and saw that, he won't step foot in my door. Not Halle."*

This statement by Sethe is meant to show her uncontrollable anger at the fact that Halle did not try to stop the nephews from raping her and instead watched them dirty her and use her body in the most gruesome way possible for a young woman. This ties in with the allusion, "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" because Sethe is now unable to forgive Halle for leaving her to rut with the nephews and refuses to forgive him, even now, because he left her to be humiliated. Sethe didn't even try to stop and consider how Halle reacted to the event and how it destroyed him.

- *Like a greedy child it snatched up everything. Just once, could it say, No thank you? I just ate and can't hold another bite? 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 all. And not stopping them--looking and letting it happen.... There is also my husband squatting by the churn smearing the butter as well as its clabber all over his face because the milk they took is on his mind.*

Sethe is angrily trying to stop conjuring memories into her consciousness causing her to become frustrated and angry as shown through the usage of "God damn it." She also reveals that she can never forget the boys with mossy teeth which symbolizes an insatiable hunger that she associates with men. The fact that she remembers the nephews nursing from her and stealing her milk shows how traumatizing it was to her. Through the rape, the nephews managed to turn nursing into a farce because instead they chose to treat Sethe like an animal for milking rather than keep up the sacred act of a mother sustaining her child's life force. This section also reveals the fact that Sethe cannot even hope to comprehend her husband being there for her rape because accepting that into her mind would destroy her so she is trying to push down the memory although she can still visualize him at the churn in agony.

- *No thank you. I don't want to know or have to remember that. I have other things to do: worry, for example, about tomorrow, about Denver, about Beloved, about age and sickness not to speak of love.*

This section shifts from her anger at Halle to her concern for her daughters because although she is in anger at Halle's negligence to protect her from harm's way, she cares more about protecting her daughters.

- *But her brain was not interested in the future*

This statement represents how Sethe cannot let go of the past and therefore cannot create a good future for herself. It also shows how stubborn Sethe is because she is unwilling to delve into the past and try to correct it so that she could have a chance at a better future.

- *Exactly like that afternoon in the wild onions-- when one more step was the most she could see of the future. Other people went crazy, why couldn't she? Other people's brains stopped, turned around and went on to something new, which is what must have happened to Halle. And how sweet that would have been: the two of them back by the milk shed, squatting by the churn, smashing cold, lumpy butter into their faces with not a care in the world.*

Sethe is wondering how she is still sane after going through the horrors of slavery and wonders why she cannot succumb to insanity like Halle and believes that it would be much easier than living how she is right now.

- *...about how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it. She already knew about it, had seen it time after time in the place before Sweet Home. Men, boys, little girls, women. The wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back. Days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on the corners of the mouth but nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye. Sethe looked up into Paul D's eyes to see if there was any trace left in them... "People I saw as a child," she said, "who'd had the bit always looked wild after that. Whatever they used it on them for, it couldn't have worked, because it put a wildness where before there wasn't any. When I look at you, I don't see it. There ain't no wildness in your eye nowhere." "There's a way to put it there and there's a way to take it out.*

Sethe is recounting the horrors of the past slavery and remembers how desperate the slaves were for the iron bits to be removed. The wildness is a motif that represents the savagery that occurs due to slavery because once they are treated like an animal, the more they become like an animal Sethe is concerned that Paul D might have some of that same savagery in his eyes that caused her to kill one of her children.

- *Sethe rubbed and rubbed, pressing the work cloth and the stony curves that made up his knee. She hoped it calmed him as it did her. Like kneading bread in the half-light of the restaurant kitchen. Before the cook arrived when she stood in a space no wider than a bench is long, back behind and to the left of the milk cans. Working dough. Working, working dough. Nothing better than that to start the day's serious work of*

### *beating back the past*

This section is meant to show Sethe's usual day and reinforce the fact that Sethe has to force the memories of the past from her thoughts each day and shows that although she wants to forget the past, all she is capable of doing is beating it back and causing it to retreat into the deep recesses of her mind until some tragic memory causes it to resurface.

## **Chapter 8**

- *"It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk--it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain't blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. What God have in mind, I wonder. I had me some whippings, but I don't remember nothing like this. Mr. Buddy had a right evil hand too.*

The chokecherry tree is a metaphor that, "masks suffering and puts it at the distance of a beautiful image—an act of poetic detachment appropriate, perhaps to Amy's position of onlooker after the event but not to Sethe's subjective experience of pain....[The chokecherry tree] inscribes her as [a] slave (Spillers 67)." (Wyatt 478) Amy tells Sethe that the scars on her back represent a chokecherry tree in order to mask the fact that they are atrocious to look at and instead uses the image of a tree to lessen the brutality of the act.

- *"I have to let my water some kind of way."  
"Let's see you walk on em."*

*It was not good, but it was possible, so Sethe limped, holding on first to Amy, then to a sapling.*

This section is used to show Sethe's growing hope for survival due to Amy's assistance because instead of crawling on the ground pretending she was a snake, waiting for death, she is now attempting to walk and giving it her all to survive.

- *Sethe looked down at her stomach and touched it. The baby was dead. She had not died in the night, but the baby had. If that was the case, then there was no stopping now. She would get that milk to her baby girl if she had to swim.*

This section shows that in Sethe's atrocious physical state, she has little to no expectation for her unborn baby to survive. However, she's still determined to bring her milk to her baby that is already alive. This shows a change in Sethe because she went from being hopeless to being adamant in her attempt to get milk to her baby.

- *Nothing happened for so long they both believed they had lost it. Sethe arched suddenly and the afterbirth shot out. Then the baby whimpered and Sethe looked. Twenty inches of cord hung from its belly and it trembled in the cooling evening air. Amy wrapped her skirt around it and the wet sticky women clambered ashore to see what, indeed, God had in mind.*

In this section, after the birth of her daughter, she contemplates what God has in store for her which contrasts with her later view in life where she only is not truly pious.

## **Chapter 9**

- *"Helped her endure the chastising ghost; refurbished the baby faces of Howard and Buglar and kept them whole in the world because in her dreams she saw only their parts in trees; and kept her husband shadowy but there--somewhere. Now Halle's face between the butter press and the churn swelled larger and larger, crowding her eyes and making her head hurt. She wished for Baby Suggs' fingers molding her nape, reshaping it, saying, "Lay em down, Sethe. Sword and shield. Down. Down. Both of em down. Down by the riverside. Sword and shield. Don't study war no more. Lay all that mess down. Sword and shield." And under the pressing fingers and the quiet instructive voice, she would. Her heavy knives of defense against misery, regret, gall and hurt, she placed one by one on a bank where dear water rushed on below."*

This passage reflects how she refers to her in terms of a tree. Howard and Buglar were seen as part of the trees and—though only seen in the shadows—even Halle was there. This style of breaking things into parts occurs



throughout. (THE SCHOLARLY ARTICLE: to be cited later) Also, how she sees Howard and Buglar's faces as babies shows her maternal love for them. She isn't able to let go of them and thinks of them frequently. And along with all these emotions comes the pain knowing she will never see them again. Then she remembers back to Baby Suggs's advice about letting her pain down, and not to be angry and just to be at rest. Again, this brings up the theme that the dehumanization was not at the fault of the men and Sethe shouldn't be angry and fight back. Slavery had caused the misery rather than an actual person or group of people. And also how she had laid all her burdens by the river symbolizes how it should flow away, meaning it's moving or moving on. Also, in the future Beloved comes out of the river which foreshadows how Sethe lays down all her troubles on Beloved, and Beloved later helps Sethe to accept such burdens. The river also symbolizes the life cycle in which Beloved escaped to go back to the living, only later to return and go on into the afterlife.

- *Nine years without the fingers or the voice of Baby Suggs was too much. And words whispered in the keeping room were too little. The butter-smear'd face of a man God made none sweeter than demanded more: an arch built or a robe sewn. Some fixing ceremony. Sethe decided to go to the Clearing, back where Baby Suggs had danced in sunlight.*

This passage showed that Sethe missed Baby Suggs and how she has trouble accepting the past because Baby Suggs represented loving one's self which Sethe was unable to do because she still lives in the shadow of slavery. Sethe doesn't know how to love herself and therefore has trouble with dealing with things including her miserable past, because she can't even accept herself. Baby Suggs represents that acceptance long gone, and now Sethe is seeking it because she doesn't know what it's like to be truly happy and to "dance in the sunlight".

- *It was in front of that 124 that Sethe climbed off a wagon, her newborn tied to her chest, and felt for the first time the wide arms of her mother-in-law, who had made it to Cincinnati.*

This sentence shows that Sethe has someone to lean on after she escapes Sweet Home. It's the reward she has after the misery and a turning point in her life from slavery into freedom. She receives comfort from Baby Suggs who greets Sethe like she's her mother. This reinforces the recurring theme of maternal love.

- *Sethe wanted to be there now. At the least to listen to the spaces that the long-ago singing had left behind. At the most to get a clue from her husband's dead mother as to what she should do with her sword and shield now, dear Jesus, now nine years after Baby Suggs, holy, proved herself a liar, dismissed her great heart and lay in the keeping-room bed roused once in a while by a craving for color and not for another thing.*

Sethe feels forlorn without Baby Suggs to motivate her and to advise her on how to live life loving oneself, how to fully appreciate her new found freedom, and to be actually free. Sethe associates her strength with Baby Suggs and sees Baby as being someone wise. And Sethe regards Baby Suggs as someone who had lost such a spark on her dying days, but she still longs for it.

- *Yet it was to the Clearing that Sethe determined to go--to pay tribute to Halle. Before the light changed, while it was still the green blessed place she remembered: misty with plant steam and the decay of berries.*

Sethe correlates Halle to the Clearing. They're both positive things that happened in her lifetime that she wants to remember as it is. When she says "before the light changed", she's implying that she would rather remember Halle before their attempt to leave Sweet Home like she would like to remember Baby Suggs before her depression. Because that was before the corruption had taken place.

- *She put on a shawl and told Denver and Beloved to do likewise. All three set out late one Sunday morning, Sethe leading, the girls trotting behind, not a soul in sight.*

Sethe referred to the clearing as some sort of memorial for Halle. She took Denver and Beloved, the only remaining children she had to the "memorial". This is kind of like a family reunion of some sorts, even though this was before Sethe realized that Beloved was her dead daughter. She took them to visit the place, showing them their roots so to speak, and showing them few of the only pure memories she had. They went on Sunday as well, which is a holy day; the sabbath. And also because that is the place where Baby Suggs "preached".

- *There was nothing to be done other than what she had done, but Sethe blamed herself for Baby Suggs' collapse. However many times Baby denied it, Sethe knew the grief at 124 started when she jumped down off the wagon, her newborn tied to her chest in the underwear of a whitegirl looking for Boston.*

Sethe understood that no one was at fault for Baby Suggs' collapse in her status as well as her spirit, because that was all caused by slavery. Sethe does, though, blame herself, showing that she does not love herself. She sees herself as one that is sub-human that had no business interrupting Baby Sugg's new life, and that's because that's how she was raised to think. As a slave, she was treated as if she wasn't human at all.

- *She began to sweat from a fever she thanked God for since it would certainly keep her baby warm.*

Sethe has always put her children before herself. She loved her children more than herself to the point where her fever was a good thing as long as it kept her daughter warm.

- *The stone had eaten the sun's rays but was nowhere near as hot as she was. Too tired to move, she stayed there, the sun in her eyes making her dizzy... Just when she thought he was taking her back to Kentucky, he turned the flatbed and crossed the Ohio like a shot. There he helped her up the steep bank...*

Stamp Paid finds Sethe and crosses the river, marking that Sethe had moved into a different world. The river signifies the change in her life, crossing it into a different condition. It's the transition between slavery and freedom. She struggled so much to get his better life, not only for her, but for her children.

- *It was not real yet. Not yet. But when her sleepy boys and crawling-already? girl were brought in, it didn't matter whether it was real or not. Sethe lay in bed under, around, over, among but especially with them all. The little girl dribbled clear spit into her face, and Sethe's laugh of delight was so loud the crawling-already? baby blinked... She kept kissing them. She kissed the backs of their necks, the tops of their heads and the centers of their palms, and it was the boys who decided enough was enough when she liked their shirts to kiss their tight round bellies.*

Sethe was so happy to see her sons that she keeps kissing them and hugging them, emphasizing the recurring theme of motherly love. Morrison puts "crawling-already?" to describe Sethe's perspective of Beloved. She hasn't seen Beloved in a long time that when Sethe came back, she was continually in shock that her baby is already crawling. The line "it didn't matter whether it was real or not" helps with the happy tone Morrison is going for with their reunion.

- *She stopped when and because they said, "Pappie come?"*

*She didn't cry. She said "soon" and smiled so they would think the brightness in her eyes was love alone.*

Sethe loves her children more than herself and puts on a strong front to make them feel better. This shows Sethe's strong personality that can withstand through almost any pain. This also shows that her maternal love extends to the point where she will let herself suffer, but treat others lovingly and sweetly.

- *Baby Suggs inched the spoiled fabric through her fingers and came upon what felt like pebbles. She held them out toward Sethe. "Going away present?"*  
*"Wedding present."*

Sethe regards Mrs. Garner pleasantly, for she was somewhat kind to her and Sweet Home. The diamond earrings in the pile of soiled fabric represents the rare hope and happiness that comes with a miserable situation. Mrs. Garner was the hope and reminder for Sethe that the corruption is in slavery itself not the people. And the fact that they were given as a wedding present regards Mrs. Garner as a sort of friend to Sethe.

- *Sethe jingled the earrings for the pleasure of the crawling-already? girl, who reached for them over and over again.*

In the later passages when Beloved asks about the diamonds, it's actually in reference to these diamonds. It's one of the small clues that later lead to Sethe's discovery that Beloved was her daughter.

- *Sethe had had twenty-eight days--the travel of one whole moon--of unslaved life. From the pure clear stream of spit that the little girl dribbled into her face to her oily blood was twenty-eight days. Days of healing, ease and real-talk. Days of company: knowing the names of forty, fifty other Negroes, their views, habits; where they had been and what done; of feeling their fun and sorrow along with her own, which made it better. One taught her the alphabet; another a stitch. All taught her how it felt to wake*

*up at dawn and decide what to do with the day. That's how she got through the waiting for Halle. Bit by bit, at 124 and in the Clearing, along with the others, she had claimed herself. Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another.*

Sethe had a bout a month of freedom which was the happiest month of her life. The pure clear stream and the oily blood refer to purity, being away from corruption. Oil represents something that's pure. Healing, ease, and real-talk are used to contrast what was at Sweet Home which was injury, hardships, and dehumanization. And with other freed slaves, she can relate and know each other. They were able to act like humans and act like a community which is unlike Sweet Home, as well. There, she learned new skills that was denied to her before. This is the new opportunities she has as someone who is now free. Now she can wake up and decide what to do; a freedom she has never had. She becomes her own boss. Everything was fine, she was even going into discovering herself and claiming herself. She was in the process of truly stop being a slave, at the clearing with Baby Suggs. This is the flow before the incident with schoolteacher coming back stagnates the progress and reverses it.

- *Now she sat on Baby Suggs' rock, Denver and Beloved watching her from the trees. There will never be a day, she thought, when Halle will knock on the door. Not knowing it was hard; knowing it was harder.*

She finally admits that Halle would ever come back. Sethe accepts this fact despite the fact that it would be easier to deny it. But she would rather admit to truth and accept the pain than live in denial, which is a progress in response to Beloved's presence; because Beloved is the one who helps Sethe accept.

- *Just let me feel your fingers again on the back of my neck and I will lay it all down, make a way out of this no way. Sethe bowed her head and sure enough--they were there. ...Still she was grateful for the effort; Baby Suggs' long distance love was equal to any skin-close love she had known.*

She's remembering the light, motherly caresses of Baby Suggs, because she has been deprived of that all her life up until moving to 124. And when Baby Suggs passed away, she's left missing the sensation, needing the support.

- *She knew Paul D was adding something to her life--something she wanted to count on but was scared to. Now he had added more: new pictures and old memories that broke her heart. Into the empty space of not knowing about Halle---a space sometimes colored with righteous resentment at what could have been his cowardice, or stupidity or bad luck--that empty place of no definite news was filled now with a brand-new sorrow and who could tell how many more on the way... A blessing, but in its place he brought another kind of haunting: Halle's face smeared with butter and the dabber too; his own mouth jammed full of iron, and Lord knows what else he could tell her if he wanted to*

Sethe was stirred by Paul D's presence. Sethe is confused about taking Paul D as her lover, because depending on him might lead to hurt if he leaves. That's why she's afraid. And his presence also brings her pain of the past, altering some parts like introducing to Sethe Halle's real fate. Sethe is now even more sorrowful because instead of her usual excuses of him being a coward or having bad luck, the definite truth had hurt her. Because it's the truth, there's no doubt about it. And now she's expecting Paul D to bring even more memory because to Sethe, Paul D is like a gate to the miserable past.

- *Years ago--when 124 was alive--she had women friends, men friends from all around to share grief with... But now there was someone to share it, and he had beat the spirit away the very day he entered her house and no sign of it since.*

Ever since her isolation in her city, she had had no one except her family. Now with Paul D, she feels less lonely.

- *Sethe was actually more surprised than frightened to find that she was being strangled. Or so it seemed. In any case, Baby Suggs' fingers had a grip on her that would not let her breathe.*

How Sethe initially believed that Baby Suggs was going to massage her, but then she got strangled symbolizes Sethe's views on relationships. Sethe has trouble trusting Paul D because of the hurt he causes. Sethe loves Beloved, but Beloved has the potential to hurt her. Throughout the story, there are scenes of vulnerability from Sethe that results in pain.

- *Sethe moaned. The girl's fingers were so cool and knowing. Sethe's knotted, private, walk-on-water life gave in a bit, softened, and it seemed that the glimpse of happiness she caught in the shadows swinging hands on the road to the carnival was a likelihood if she could just manage... The peace Sethe had come*

*there to find.*

This represents Beloved's calming effect on Sethe. Even though she initiated the choking and the pain, Beloved feels guilty and eases the pain. Beloved superficially good for Sethe because it gives her closure about her past. It also makes her think of the rare pleasant parts of her life. It's ironic, considering Beloved is the one who caused the pain in the first place.

- *"...if she could just manage the news Paul D brought and the news he kept to himself. Just manage it. Not break, fall, cry each time a hateful picture drifted in from of her face... Why now, scared? needing Baby? The worst was over, wasn't it? She had already got through, hadn't she? With the ghost in 124 she could bear, do, solve anything.."*

Sethe associates Paul D as her past. Now that Paul D is back, she realizes how many memories are embodied in home, mostly negative. And now, she's having an internal conflict, trying hard to stay strong.

- *"Now a hint of what had happened to Halle and she cut out like a rabbit looking for its mother."*

Since Sethe had been choked, this line hints that the same injury had happened to Halle as well, making her panic like "a rabbit".

- *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. Then Sethe, grabbing Beloved's hair and blinking rapidly, separated herself. She later believed that it was because the girl's breath was exactly like new milk that she said to her, stern and frowning, "You too old for that."*

Sethe didn't know how to stop that intimate moment between Beloved and herself, because at that moment she was being manipulated by Beloved and under her spell. The kiss Beloved gave to Sethe was accepted because of Sethe's maternal instinct of accepting her child's kiss. But with the smell of the girl's breath that smelled like, she stops. The new milk ties back to the daughter that Sethe killed. It was another clue of Beloved's true identity. Sethe then rejects Beloved when she comes to her senses. She states that grown woman shouldn't act like that, kissing and hugging people who aren't related to them. But at this time, she doesn't know that Beloved was actually her daughter.

- *All silent as before, but with a difference. Sethe was bothered, not because of the kiss, but because, just before it, when she was feeling so fine letting Beloved massage away the pain, the fingers she was loving and the ones that had soothed her before they strangled her had reminded her of something that now slipped her mind.*

Sethe is reminded of her daughter, but ignores the thought that Beloved might be here. She was bothered because she had wanted to forget the painful memory of her daughter and the murder that correlated with her. Beloved both "strangles her" and "massages away the pain."

- *Like a faint smell of burning that disappears when the fire is cut off or the window opened for a breeze, the suspicion that the girl's touch was also exactly like the baby's ghost dissipated.*

Sethe realizes the familiarity of Beloved's massages. They reminded Sethe of the baby ghost and how she would touch her. The similes Morrison picks are those that are ghostly. The smell of burning with the fire cut creates smoke, a translucent figure. The opened window as well, it's something faint. Both are very subtle like the similarities of the touches.

## **Chapter 10**

No Sethe perspective at all in chapter 10 (All Paul D's perspective in prison)

## **Chapter 11**

No Sethe perspective in chapter 11 (Beloved and Paul D's intimate rape scene)

## **Chapter 12**

- *Sethe found that remarkable and more evidence to support her conclusions, which she confided to Denver. (Third person limited to Sethe)*

*"Where'd you get the dress, them shoes?"*

*Beloved said she took them.*

*"Who from?"*

*Silence and a faster scratching of her hand. She didn't know; she saw them and just took them.*

*"Uh huh," said Sethe, and told Denver that she believed that Beloved had been locked up by some whiteman for his own purposes, and never let out the door. That she must have escaped to a bridge or someplace and rinsed the rest out of her mind. Something like that had happened to Ella except it was two men- a father and son- and Ella remembered every bit of it. For more than a year, they kept her locked in a room for themselves. Sethe thought it explained Beloved's behavior around Paul D, whom she hated so.*

Sethe, having herself been raped, had come to the conclusion that Beloved was raped too. This shows how the theme of dehumanization is prominent to the entire book that even Sethe's reasoning constantly refers to the evils of men, especially white men. Also, she did not react negatively toward the thought that Beloved had stolen her clothes and shoes because in Sethe's eyes anyone had to do anything to survive in that time, especially the African American women. She blames slavery for Beloved's actions.

### **Chapter 13:**

- *"... 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."*page 149

This passage shows that Sethe is both mentally and intellectually stronger than Paul D, for he is thinking about asking the woman who he physically protects to protect him emotionally and give him the answers as to why Beloved is physically fixed on him. It also shows that she's physically vulnerable as a black woman from the perspective of others.

- *"Then she dumped the skin of some things, heads of other things and the insides of still more things-what the restaurant could not use and she would not-in a smoking pile near the animal's feet.*page 150

The quote reflects how Sethe was resourceful and was not selective of how to get by. She made use of the resources presented to her no matter what condition. And that also reflects her accepting and uncomplaining personality. She doesn't demand too much for herself.

- *"Another woman would have squinted or at least teared if the wind whipped her face as it did Sethe's. Another woman might have shot him a look of apprehension, pleading, anger even, because what he said sure sounded like part one of Goodbye, I'm gone. Sethe looked at him steadily, calmly, already ready to accept, release or excuse an in-need-or-trouble man. Agreeing, saying okay, all right, in advance, because she didn't believe any of them- over the long haul- could measure up. And whatever the reason, it was all right. No fault. Nobody's fault."*

*"So, when he saw the diminished expectation in her eyes, the melancholy without blame..."*

*"Well, say it, Paul D, whether I like it or not."*page 150-151

This scene shows that Sethe doesn't let any circumstance affect her. She is compared to other women who would react at a more emotional state than she would. She learned from her difficult on how to deal with pain and uncomfortable situations. This passage also ties into the fact that Sethe doesn't want to blame the white people for the corruption, but blame it on slavery. Therefore, while anticipating Paul D's misinterpreted news, she is accepting of it even before he speaks.

- *"Laughing, she pulled them away lest somebody passing the alley see them misbehaving in public, in daylight, in the wind."*page 151

Sethe still has that fear that misbehaving would lead to punishments such as being whipped for her actions such as she had experienced in the past. Even when there was no sin committed, just them having fun. She learned this reaction from living as a slave at Sweet Home and other places where they brutally punish slaves.

- *"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. Needing to be good enough, alert enough, strong enough, that caring-- again. Having to stay alive just that much longer. O Lord, she thought, deliver me. Unless carefree, motherlove was a killer. What did he want her pregnant for? To hold on to her? have a sign that he passed this way? He probably had children everywhere anyway. Eighteen years of roaming, he would have to have dropped a few. No. He resented the children she had, that's what. Child, she corrected herself. Child plus Beloved whom she thought of as her own, and that is what he resented. Sharing her with the girls. Hearing the three of them laughing at something he wasn't in on. The code they used among themselves that he could not break. Maybe even the time spent on their needs and not his. They were a family somehow and he was not the head of it.”page 155*

When Sethe had remembered her confrontation with Paul outside the restaurant, she remembered he had asked to have a baby for him. However, this section says the thought of having another child had scared her for she would have to take care of the child at her old age. But she doesn't want to live that old. She wants to die, due to all the misery she had faced with each child she bore. Unless she didn't care for her children, it juxtaposed her as also being a killer for she wouldn't have the same love for that child as she did with her children previously. Then she began to question Paul D's intent of getting her pregnant, showing that she lost her trust with men. After what the schoolteacher's nephews had done with her. Also, she lost this trust when she remembered how Halle had watched her get violated by the school teacher and his nephews and hadn't acted upon it, even though he was supposedly her husband. She also questioned why he wanted to have her another child when he disliked her current child (plus Beloved who at this moment, she is still confused about).

- *“Sethe sighed and placed her hand on his chest. She knew she was building a case against him in order to build a case against getting pregnant, and it shamed her a little. But she had all the children she needed. If her boys came back one day, and Denver and Beloved stayed on--well, it would be the way it was supposed to be, no? Right after she saw the shadows holding hands at the side of the road hadn't the picture altered? And the minute she saw the dress and shoes sitting in the front yard, she broke water. Didn't even have to see the face burning in the sunlight. She had been dreaming it for years. Paul D's chest rose and fell, rose and fell under her hand.” Page 155/156*

In this section, Sethe's distrust of men is pronounced for she placed her hand on his chest physically building an enclosure around him and containing him metaphorically speaking as well. This also shows that she prioritizes her biological family first before others including Paul D which portrays the theme of maternal love and the relationship between mother and child.

#### **Chapter 14**

No perspective of Sethe in this chapter.

#### **Chapter 15**

- *“So when Sethe arrived--all mashed up and split open, but with another grandchild in her arms--the idea of a whoop moved closer to the front of her brain. But since there was still no sign of Halle and Sethe herself didn't know what had happened to him, she let the whoop lie-not wishing to hurt his chances by thanking God too soon.”page 160*

Sethe had impacted Baby Sugg's in the way that her late arrival to 124, though very battered from her journey, had given her the hope that her son Halle was still alive and out there somewhere before she could assume the worst about him. When Sethe arrives later than her children and Halle is missing, it portrays the overall theme of slavery and how, even though they were family and supposed to be “on board” all together, they were separated just how many African Americans were bought, sold, and taken apart from each other in the slave trade. This was ironic though for Sethe and her family were not being traded again, but were traveling to their freedom and the idea still lingers on that even though they were once a slave now free, they will always be affected by slavery.

## Chapter 16

- *“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, when out of nowhere the ticking time the men spent staring at what there was to stare at—the old nigger boy, still mewling, ran through the door behind them and snatched the baby from the arch of its mother's swing.”* Page 175

This scene describes Sethe when schoolteacher comes to take her and her children away. This is the point in her life where she is most desperate. She attempts to liberate her children from a life of slavery, rape, and dehumanization by killing them. She kills the baby girl first, later to be Beloved, and then attempted to kill the other children. And although, from a third person perspective, she had gone crazy; Sethe's point of view is that she's saving her children and that what she's doing isn't really bad. She's also trying to kill all of the children and later also herself which reinforces the theme of family. Her maternal love for her children is what caused her to make such a drastic action, though controversial and misunderstood. But when schoolteacher saw that she had acted in such a manner, he found her unfit to return to Sweet Home. His belief that the children were dead/as good as dead gave him the impression that they were useless; saving them from being taken up in captivity again. And although this means that Sethe wins in which herself and her children are not taken back to captivity, she is forced to live the rest of her life knowing that she had killed her daughter in that attempt. And so again, according to Morrison, Sethe isn't the one at fault, rather than the slavery system.

- *“The nephew, the one who had nursed her while his brother held her down, didn't know he was shaking. His uncle had warned him against that kind of confusion, but the warning didn't seem to be taking. What she go and do that for? On account of a beating? Hell, he'd been beat a million times and he was white. Once it hurt so bad and made him so mad he'd smashed the well bucket. Another time he took it out on Samson--a few tossed rocks was all. But no beating ever made him... I mean no way he could have... What she go and do that for? And that is what he asked the sheriff, who was standing there, amazed like the rest of them, but not shaking. He was swallowing hard, over and over again.”* page 176

When the nephew stole Sethe's milk, while her brother held her down, Sethe had begun to stare at the nephew while he nursed her which provoked thoughts of his past and his treatment from his uncle that was similar to slavery. Sethe had impacted this character in the way that when he was taking advantage of her and it was a form of torture, he had begun to remember how he was also tortured and beat even though he was white folk. The nephew's beating was put in parallel comparison with Sethe's extreme beating when she was whipped by them, leaving a scar in the form of a chokecherry tree. When the nephew had kept repeating the same phrase “What she go and do that for?” it made him have guilt for whipping and assaulting her, for he had experienced beatings that were just the same.

- *“I'll have to take you in. No trouble now. You've done enough to last you. Come on now.”*  
*She did not move.*  
*“You come quiet, hear, and I won't have to tie you up.”*  
*She stayed still and he had made up his mind to go near her.* page 178

In this exchange, when the sheriff is about to take Sethe away, Sethe doesn't move. The readers can understand that she must be feeling shock at what she's done. This scene follows Sethe's murder of her daughter. She doesn't try to save herself argue around it, because she accepts that she did knowingly kill her daughter. She makes no effort whatsoever to fight the sheriff away. She accepts the way things are. And in a way, she does reach this stage in dehumanization in which she's just shocked at what she's done. This reflects her personality as accepting. She has learned to accept the evils that goes on due to her past at the slave homes she comes from. She doesn't associate the inhumanity that occurs with slavery with actual people therefore she doesn't try to run away from the Sheriff.

- *“The old man moved to the woman gazing and said, ‘Sethe. You take my armload and gimme yours.’*

*She turned to him, and glancing at the baby he was holding, made a low sound in her throat as though she'd made a mistake, left the salt out of the bread or something.*”Page 178

Sethe had her third born in her arms (later to be Beloved) and Stamp Paid had baby Denver in his arms and asked Sethe to make a trade in what they were carrying. Instead, Sethe looks at Denver in Stamp's arms and gets upset about how she forgot to try and kill her as well. Her desperation of trying to keep her family safe had caused her into thinking that the only way to save them is to kill them, and forgetting Denver, she feels that she neglected her as a loving mother. Sethe believes that attempting to kill her would have made her a better mother. This twisted set of morals are caused by slavery. She feels that the corruption and evils from slavery outweigh the evils of murder. Her intentions are purely maternal and she is invoking her version of maternal love through a desperation caused by slavery.

- *“Sethe reached up for the baby without letting the dead one go.”*Page 179

This line shows the regret and shock and denial Sethe went through after she had killed her baby. She isn't able to let her go, because she is unable to accept the fact of the event that had occurred previously. It was horrific, and so inhumane that she automatically tries to block it. It was another thing slavery had caused. It robbed her of her daughter. It continues to haunt in her in those few moments after the death, and will continue to haunt her in years to come.

- *“Outside a throng, now, of black faces stopped murmuring. Holding the living child, Sethe walked past them in their silence and hers. She climbed into the cart, her profile knife-clean against a cheery blue sky. A profile that shocked them with its clarity. Was her head a bit too high? Her back a little too straight? Probably. Otherwise the singing would have begun at once, the moment she appeared in the doorway of the house on Bluestone Road. Some cape of sound would have quickly been wrapped around her, like arms to hold and steady her on the way. As it was, they waited till the cart turned about, headed west to town. And then no words. Humming. No words at all.”*Page 179

This passage happens after Sethe kills her daughter when she's in the wagon on her way to prison with Denver in her arms. This passage expresses the distinction her society finds her now. She didn't look insane which is implied on the descriptions of how she carried herself. Even the crowd didn't think she looked insane. That's why they weren't singing their prayers like they usually do. They sympathized with her rather than thinking she's insane. That's why when she left on the wagon, they hummed wordless songs. Because they knew that it was slavery that caused the death of the daughter and not really Sethe herself. It was a tragedy, and at that time no one really blamed Sethe rather than blaming slavery itself. They understood how dehumanizing slavery could be and how it took its toll on Sethe.

- *“When she came back, Sethe was aiming a bloody nipple into the baby's mouth. Baby Suggs slammed her fist on the table and shouted, “Clean up! Clean yourself up!” They fought then. Like rivals over the heart of the loved, they fought. Each struggling for the nursing child. Baby Suggs lost when she slipped in a red puddle and fell. So Denver took her mother's milk right along with the blood of her sister.”*Page 179

This showed not only Sethe's uncaring, unthinking mode due to the deed she committed, but it also shows that that because of Sethe's sacrifice of Beloved, Denver can survive. Milk is needed to survive, but Denver's milk as Beloved's blood in it. If Sethe did not kill Beloved, schoolteacher would have gotten all of Sethe's children including Denver back to Sweet Home. It was Beloved's death that saved Denver.

## **Chapter 17**

- *“And he said so. “This ain't her mouth. I know her mouth and this ain't it.” Before Stamp Paid could speak he said it and even while he spoke Paul D said it again. Oh, he heard all the old man was saying, but the more he heard, the stranger the lips in the drawing became.”*page 181

During the age of slavery, people had become so dehumanized until the fact that they would be recognizable only by a certain distinct physical trait they have. This is why Paul D, when he sees the newspaper drawing of “Sethe” denies it for everything but her lips resembles her, not wanting to believe that it is her just because of



that small misconception. This same idea is seen throughout the book, where people are recognized only by certain traits such as when Sethe's mother tells Sethe that if she were to ever die, that there is a scar of a circle with a cross in the middle of it, so she would know how to identify her body. When the novel describes how the lips became stranger to Paul D, it refers to the fact that Paul D was in such disbelief of the event that Stamp was describing to him and what Sethe had done to her children. Furthermore, it represents how slavery drives people to desperate measures, bringing out the animalistic side of human beings whether they are white or black. It lastly represents how people that experience slavery, from both sides of the ordeal lose track of their morals for they are so disregarding of how unethical much of the behavior is, violent beatings become a normal part of everyday life, as well as being traded off as items than as living things.

- *"Stamp looked into Paul D's eyes and the sweet conviction in them almost made him wonder if it had happened at all, eighteen years ago, that while he and Baby Suggs were looking the wrong way, a pretty little slavegirl had recognized a hat, and split to the woodshed to kill her children."* page 184

The description of Stamp Paid's perspective of Paul D, and how Paul had looked after he was told of Sethe's actions had been so radical and unbelieving of the situation for how extreme it was that he, himself, even questioned if it really occurred. The race to go to the shed to kill her children was an act to be blamed by slavery with the fact that many slaves would rather choose death than go through the trauma that slavery causes, which is why Sethe had attempted to kill her children, "wishing for them to be in a better place than here on earth in hell."

## Chapter 18

Sethe's first-person narration, mostly Sethe's dialogue; Sethe reveals her story to Paul D, turning point for her

- *...but twenty years ago when I was a girl, babies stayed babies longer.*

Slavery wasn't as developed back then, and Sethe notices it more as her own children have to grow up more quickly than she did. She goes on about how Denver didn't really have a carefree childhood, having to deal with so much pain with the loss of her sister and the absence of her father and brothers. Even later, we can see how Denver grows up to become very independent while Sethe takes care of Beloved. She also notices how Beloved was the "already-crawling? baby", showing how fast that she has grown up. This point of view could be because Sethe's children had to face what Sethe did to them, making them grow up faster, furthering the author's point of view that slavery is what caused most of the problems in the book.

- *Milk was all I ever had*

Sethe emphasizes motherhood as her only role in life, not really loving herself. All Sethe did after Beloved's arrival was care for Beloved and Denver as she began to skip work and only spend time with them. She felt like that was her duty, and the milk symbolizes motherhood and the caring role of mothers. This relates to the theme seed of motherhood and identity. Sethe believes that being a mother was "all she ever had" and she identifies with this description. Milk, which is the strongest bond between a mother and her child, is a recurring element with Sethe in which she repeats its importance and her strong connection with it. The identity that she holds with motherhoods shows how she believes that being a mother is her only worth. Since she is a slave, she has very few possessions that she owns, since they technically belong to the owner of that slave, not the slave itself.

- *Circling him the way she was circling the subject. Round and round, never changing direction, which might have helped his head. Then he thought, No, it's the sound of her voice; it's too near. Each turn she made was at least three yards from where he sat, but listening to her was like having a child whisper into your ear so close you could feel its lips form the words you couldn't make out because they were too close. He caught only pieces of what she said--which was fine, because she hadn't gotten to the main part--the answer to the question he had not asked outright, but which lay in the clipping he showed her.*

The this quote was Paul D's account of being told about the murder and his view on Sethe. The syntax involves long and complex sentences that mimic the "round and round, never changing direction" of Sethe's path. The sentence length helps us to feel Sethe's rhythm as she "circl[es] around the subject." The repetition of "close" and the idea of "near" brings out a feeling of being trapped as Paul D tries to accept the cruel fact of Sethe's attempt to murder. The circling is significant in that we can clearly see how Paul D goes around the topic, avoiding the truth

and going in circles to keep from reaching that subject.

- *Sethe knew that the circle she was making around the room, him, the subject, would remain one. That she could never close in, pin it down for anybody who had to ask.*

This quote talks about Sethe's consciousness of the way she is telling the story, and the way that the story is told is similar to how the book is told, showing how strongly Sethe's point of view is connected to the book's ideas and structure. The book mirrors the way that Sethe is telling the story to Paul. In the same way that she would "never pin it down for anyone", and the book never exactly gets to the main action of the story, the murder of the children. The story that "would remain [a circle]" also shows how the book and her story will remain a mystery. Circles are an archetype that means inclusion, wholeness, focus, nurturing, centering, revolution, and completion. It represents inclusivity of nature. In the same way, Sethe becomes completed from the circle that is made around the story. Circles also represent the passage of time: clocks, Earth, and the sun are all round, which usually symbolize passage of time, which relates to this story where a circle is made around the memory that Sethe hopes to forget in the book. The time shifts between paragraphs can be seen as circular, because of how Sethe tries to circumvent her way around her repressed memories.

The syntax of this sentence is interesting in that it utilizes commas to create a fragmented sense, replicated the way the book shows the memories of Sethe, in fragments.

- *"I did it. I got us all out. Without Halle too. Up till then it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided... We was here. Each and every one of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got em out and it wasn't no accident. I did that. ... Me having to look out. Me using my own head. But it was more than that. It was a kind of selfishness I never knew nothing about before. It felt good. Good and right.*

The first quote is in Sethe's point of view which shows how she finally was able to feel better about herself and feel "selfish". Sethe recalls about a major change that she experiences throughout the story. She is finally able to do something, "the only thing [she] ever did on my own", giving her power and a sense of accomplishment. She is more confident, which may be a reason why she had the courage and initiative to kill her own children. Before, Sethe was all about taking care of others, never minding much about herself because it was her job as a mother and a slave. Because Sethe was affected by slavery, she never was able to experience taking care of herself, and she liked this feeling of "a kind of selfishness".

"Good" is a simple term but for Sethe it means that she felt loved and relaxed for once. "Right" also conveys a sense that Sethe feels that this is what people are supposed to feel like and be treated like. This contributes to the theme seed of dehumanization. Sethe was dehumanized as a slave, pushed to feel below everything and not loving herself. She uses the more personal form "I" and "me" because she emphasizes what she herself has done. These short fragments show the conviction and oneness with this Sethe thinks these few lines. The period shows the emphasis of her broken train of thought which imitates the way she talks. The repetition of "me" and how it felt "good and right" shows a realization of how nice it felt to do something for herself for a change. The sentence "Good and right" is left alone and repeated, showing how important these thoughts are. The diction and syntax also shows her lack of education and inner African American language through her improper grammar: "We was here", "Me having to.." and "Me using...". Also, the short chopping sentences show how she slowly pieces everything in her life together little by little like how these sentences were pieced together bit by bit to create a bigger image.

- *The prickly, mean-eyed Sweet Home girl he knew as Halle's girl was obedient (like Halle), shy (like Halle), and work-crazy (like Halle). ... This here Sethe was new. ... This here Sethe talked about safety with a handsaw. This here new Sethe didn't know where the world stopped and she began.*

The two quotes above show the turning point for Sethe when she escaped. Paul D describes Sethe as "prickly, mean-eyed" because in the past, Sethe had built a wall to protect herself from the possible hurt from the whites. Slavery made Sethe tough where she ignored painful events. This was the "Sweet Home girl" that Paul D knew but the Sethe he saw in front of him was different. This Sethe finally felt free which basically softened her to feel equal to the whites. This freedom was an achievement for her for it had broken the barrier that stood between her and the outside world of whites. The quote is from Paul D's point of view where we have an outside look upon

her. Not from a biased point of view, we can see a big change in Sethe and how she is a dynamic character as she grows and changes.

The repeat of “This here” shows how much Sethe has changed that he must make distinctions between the old her and the one that is “here”. The repeat of that parenthesis of “(like Halle)” also might shed some light onto the marriage of Sethe and Halle and how Paul D had previously viewed Sethe. Apparently, to Paul D, Sethe and Halle are very similar, which might be a reason for their marriage. However, this also raise the question of female right and how much power and respect Sethe really had. As a female slave, she might be looked down upon even among that male slaves, which is seen here, in Paul D’s perspective of how she is similar to Halle, and is a almost a reflection of him; and when she is not included in the talks of escape after she asked what a train was.

## Chapter 19

This chapter switches third-person limited between Stamp Paid and Sethe. Sethe is described as excited after discovering that Beloved is a reincarnation of her daughter. She believes that she doesn't have to remember anything else of her past, while describing her past to the readers in a rare third person point of view.

- *Every eighteen or twenty years her unlivable life would be interrupted by a short-lived glory? Well, if that's the way it was--that's the way it was.*

This is in Sethe’s point of view, and we can see how she realizes the situation of her life. Despite her troubles, she still persists and lives her life with a sort of nonchalant mood toward life. She has no reaction to it, saying “if that’s the way it was--that’s the way it was”. She puts no input into how her life is even if her life may be seen as unfair from another person’s point of view. Because this is presented in third-person limited, the reader can get a sense of Sethe’s feeling, seeing her train of thought in the last sentence.

The diction is interesting in the first sentence because it actually reveals her inner feelings. “Unlivable life” is a paradox describing her own life, one that she is barely even to get through. She is able to express that she doesn’t feel like living her life through the single word unlivable. “Short-lived glory” shows how much she loved the time she had spent in that month of celebration. She describes it as “short-lived” because she had wanted it to be much longer; this words connotes, in this context, a feeling that the time spent in glory should have been much longer. “Glory” is a very positive word, connoting prideful joy in which something great is overcome along with showing that Sethe sees a great sense of achievement in herself. Though the quote is in Sethe’s point of view, we don’t get a sense of what Sethe actually feels but her actions and the way she describes her life help to show her attitude that she herself is not quite aware of.

- *Her[Baby Sugg’s] eyes when she brought my food, I can forget that, and how she told me that Howard and Buglar were all right but wouldn't let go each other's hands.... I only need to know one thing. How bad is the scar?*

In this quote, the point of view changes to first-person in Sethe’s point of view. We learn her deeper thoughts of how she wanted to forget the world and put it all away. She is affected deeply by most of what she has done, and by the reactions of the people around her. She mentions that she can finally forget baby Sugg’s “eyes when she brought [her] food”, and how her own children were “all right but wouldn’t let go each other’s hands”, meaning that she was never able to forget earlier and that it was haunting her before. These memories that Sethe says she can finally forget are all the things she doesn’t let herself remember, but remembers anyways. This process of telling Beloved memories that she can forget and letting herself remember them is a healing process that the arrival of Beloved initiates. She doesn’t want to face her past and troubles, but in process of trying to forget, she brings up memories that were never mentioned before in the story. This is an important reflection of her life, especially since we learn about certain events that were not revealed earlier. After she recollects these memories, Sethe tells Beloved that “only” “one thing” is needed to know. Sethe wants to make herself believe that she only has one thing left to remember and know. The word “only” gives the reader a sense of desperation in that there is only one thing. It also shows that there are so many things that she could have remembered, but Sethe only wants to know the one thing, asking about “How bad the scar is”. Putting emphasis on “only” one thing, heightens its importance even more. She seems to be only concerned about if she hurt Beloved, which relates to the theme

seed of motherhood which is seen with Sethe often. She specifically uses the word “scar” because she is afraid of any lasting marks that she has given Beloved. The question emphasizes the motherhood the Sethe represents because she tells Beloved that is is the “only thing [she] needs to know”.

The word “scar” means both emotional and physical scars and covers a broad range of evidence of attacks. The first sentence has a syntax full of commas, showing the fluid train of thought that Sethe has when she thinks about the memories, flowing from one memory to another. The inquisitive sentence at the end is asking something of Beloved and is different from the rest of the quotes because instead of revealing her memories, it shifts the focus to the other person, which is Beloved.

- *There was no entry now. No crack or crevice available. She had taken pains to keep them out, but knew full well that at any moment they could rock her, rip her from her moorings, send the birds twittering back into her hair... All news of them was rot...All news of them should have stopped with the birds in her hair.*

She talks about how she has protected herself mentally from what the whites have done to her. She sees herself as an impenetrable wall that has not been breached. She talks about the “pains” she has to take which refers to the murder of her children. As she talks about how she could return to the slave life, Sethe describes the slave life as savage and wild with “the birds twittering back into her hair.” We get a sense of Sethe’s disgusted attitude towards the whites and slavery as she describes how it “rip[s] her from her moorings,” or how she is torn away from her family. Sethe continues to explain her thoughts about whites with comments of how their actions were “rot[ten]” and she includes how their actions weren’t really news, especially when there were so many more important news like the “birds in her hair” or the jungle of slavery.

The use of the word “entry” connotes an area that can be entered, which Sethe believes is her. This could mean that she thinks of herself as a physical area, referring to her mental space that the white intrude on, or it could mean a more literal meaning in which the white actually enter her when they rape her. These two possibilities are the double meaning behind the words and the following sentence clarifies this, saying that “no crack or crevice [was] available” for the whites to enter in. “Crack” denotes the small opening usually created from immense pressure, which perfectly describes the weaknesses that Sethe could have. “Crevice” means some small vulnerability, usually found in rocks or in hidden places, that allows small animals or elements to pass through. This word is appropriately used because Sethe sees herself as a rock or a type of metal, along with other people (seen when Paul D talks about her “glittering iron eyes”). Sethe had been broken. but because she had worked so hard to keep the whites out, she left no space where the whites could hurt her. “Moorings” are the place where ships are placed that usually provides stability or security, usually where devices such as anchors or cables are usually to moor the ship to place. This word, along with the word “rip”, meaning to tear forcibly or quickly from something or someone, are appropriately used, showing her feelings for slavery and her experiences with it. “Rip” connotes a sense that something is being destroyed in the process of pulling something away from other. Slavery to her parallels to pulling safety and security away from someone, even when anchors are put. She then uses the metaphor “send[ing] the birds twittering back into her hair” because it shows the raw nature with with the whites push Sethe “back into”. We believe that the image of a woman with bird in her hair is one of savagery and primal nature. She also uses the word “rot”, meaning the act of decay of an object, usually a carcass, reflects how Sethe feels about what the white are doing to her world: the whites are slowly making the rate of decay increase so that the blacks are slowly dying from the things that white are doing to, not only them, but to other blacks as well.

The passage uses commas to list the mounting amount of things that the whites have done to Sethe to increase the pressure of the increasing amount of transgressions that the white have done and emphasizing the actions themselves with the slight pause that the commas create.

- *Clever, but schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers--not the defined.*

Sethe's position on how slaves are treated by whites can be seen within this quote when she calls Sixo's remark to schoolteacher as "clever." She understand where Sixo is coming from because Mr. Garner has taught them all to believe in themselves and part of their worth, treating them somewhat as men, so she thinks that they way that Sixo argued, "Six take and feed Sixo give you more work.", was "clever". It showed how he was helping his master by helping himself, and a good argument to not get caught. She believes that Sixo's reasoning was believable and should have been justifiable, but whites have the superiority: "definitions belonged to the definers -- not the defined". Whoever holds the higher position, in this case the definers, the ones who make the power of the words themselves; whoever is in a lower position is in a position and schoolteacher was in charge so he beat Sixo.

The dash is an important element of syntax because it shows the emphasis with which Sethe is thinking these thoughts. She has already experienced the unfairness that makes the defined have absolutely no say in the act of the defining.

- *...she despised herself for the pride that made pilfering better than standing in line at the window of the general store with all the other Negroes.*

In this quote, she is explaining how she has been made (by herself) to stoop so low after the incident. She doesn't even want to stand in line with the other Negroes because she is too prideful of the action she took in protecting her children. She feels like she doesn't deserve to feel that, that she should be proud that she stopped her children from being enslaved. This relates to the theme seed of community, in which Sethe is isolated because of the action she has taken and the general view of the community that she did a horrendous act, something she should be ostracized from society. The society believes her believed act of love to be bad, pressuring her to steal from the job she is given and try to lower the amount of contact with the rest of town, in an effort to lower the amount of judgement about her.

Sethe uses the word "pride", meaning the feeling of pleasure from achievements attributed to a kill one has that is quickly admired, to describe what is making her pilfer the goods in an interesting way because pride is usually positive. However, in this case it is negative because SHE believes it to be pride, but everyone else is ashamed of what she did. The act of hurting her children to prevent them from going into slavery is something she is prideful because she was able to get her children away from slavery, while the townspeople, the people that will "stand in line at the window of the general store" think that this was savage an unnecessary. In this case "pride" is used to express all these things, especially the seemingly paradoxical use of the team.

- *Thank God I don't have to rememory or say a thing because you know it. All. You know I never would a left you. Never. It was all I could think of to do... Schoolteacher was teaching us things we couldn't learn.*

This first-person narration is in Sethe's point of view where she tries to reason for the things she had done. Because Beloved came back to Sethe, Sethe feels comforted like she doesn't need to explain why she did the things she did and Beloved understands. As Sethe addresses Beloved in her thoughts, Sethe's justification for what she had done are revealed, and we can see that Sethe felt desperate. The strange paradox of how she believes that she doesn't have to explain to Beloved, making her explain her story, is continued. She also used the word "rememory", an action she takes in remember the repressed memories of slavery and Sweet Home. She also tries to justify the action she had taken to protect Beloved insisted that "you know I never would have left you", an ambiguous phrase which could have a double meaning. The more literally meaning would refer to the parting of death that Sethe initiates, but it could also mean that Sethe would "Never.", with a period, leave Beloved for Schoolteacher and slavery. The conviction that she has for these thoughts are represented by the sentence of one word: "Never." The last sentence talks about how Schoolteacher was forcing them to a lifestyle that they couldn't handle anymore, the reason that they left and additionally justification for the killing of Beloved. Saying that they "couldn't learn" some things hints to the fact that it was against their nature to the things that the Schoolteacher wanted them to, which goes back to the dehumanization theme seed that the Schoolteacher is strongly related to.

- *"No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up." ... I just kept lifting my feet and pushing back. When I bumped up against a tree my scalp was prickly. ... Flies settled all over your face, rubbing their hands. My head*

*itched like the devil. Like somebody was sticking fine needles in my scalp.*

The dialogue is schoolteacher when he describes Sethe as human but also as an animal. From this quote we get a sense of how some of the whites really see their slaves. His syntax and language, which will be explained in the second paragraph is very nonchalant, as if they are talking about a simple object rather than an actual living being, one with feelings and high mental capacity. However, more importantly, we see Sethe's response to this. Sethe overhears the schoolteacher's conversation but she doesn't really respond to it. She tries to block it out and repress it as she "just kept lifting [her] feet and pushing back", which does not help in her healing process, leading to the appearance of Beloved and the healing that she receives from her. She pushes it back and doesn't really react much to the dehumanization, distracting herself with minor details of how she feels physically, most noticeably talking about her scalp. She talks about how her "scalp was prickly" and her "head itched like the devil", which could show how her head is hurting from what she has just seen and the reaction to it. She talks about how "somebody was sticking fine needles in her scalp", which is the third mention of her head. Literally speaking, this would mean that she is undergoing a migraine of some sort because of the mental processes that are going on in her head, but figuratively speaking this would mean that the someone was putting thoughts that were not wanted in her head. When she talks about the "fine needles in [her] scalp," she is referring to the mental pain she feels but doesn't really know what to do as a response. This basically reflects her life and how she always tried to repress things that hurt her.

The choices of imagery and figurative language is important in the this quote. The "flies" that "settled all over [her] face" is refers to the scavenging nature of the flies in which they feed on dead or soon-to-be-dead corpses. She also used the phrase "itched like the devil" to show that her head itched like there was a devil in her head because her head is full of evil thoughts. The use of the word "devil" is highly negative, bringing many images of hell and the afterward as well, making the image and message that she is conveying even more negative. She also compares her itched to how one feel was "somebody [sticks] fine needles in [her] scalp". She specifically uses "fine needles" instead of any other description because the small things that they did to her have added up. It's the small things that get to someone when someone hurts you mentally. The syntax is very simple with short sentences to show schoolteacher does not think of Sethe or any colored person as really an equal. He brings out a condescending tone as he classifies Sethe as only part human, reflecting the famous 3/5 compromise in history where slaves are only counted as part of humans because they needed votes, but were not a full person because they were considered property of the slave owners. The use of the repetition of "no" gives him words a feeling of informal conversation and is a common day phrase, showing that this probably happen quite a lot and that he isn't really affected by it. "I told you..." also gives the same feeling, in addition to a feeling that this has happened many times before, making the readers feel that he has already told the students that this has happened many times. The last part of what he says, "And don't forget to..." add to the picture that the author is trying to describe. The schoolteacher obviously has done this before and feels no remorse for the fact that he is dehumanizing them by treating them like test subjects. The fact that he is teaching a lesson on them itself is a dehumanizing fact, but it is also the attitude of the schoolteacher that makes it even worse to subject the readers to. Once the point of view shifts back to Sethe, we understand her denial as she tries to focus on other things, using highly descriptive words to concentrate on shifting the topic.

- *Once, long ago, she was soft, trusting. She trusted Mrs. Garner and her husband too. ... That for every schoolteacher there would be an Amy; that for every pupil there was a Garner, or Bodwin, or even a sheriff, whose touch at her elbow was gentle and who looked away when she nursed.*

Sethe trusted so much in everybody before because of the many kind people she had encountered in her life. Sethe believed there was a balance in life. She describes how she was previously so believing of the whites, despite what they did to her. She thought that the world was full of an equal amount of good and bad people. The readers noticed how Sethe realizes that even the sheriff is being nice to her because he "looked away when she was nursed." However, it seems after this, she no longer thought of the world as equal parts good and evil because of the enormous amounts of horrible experiences that she needed to go through.

The use of “once” and “long ago” separated by commas emphasizes how this was the past and Sethe was no longer like this. Since “once” and “long ago” actually mean the same thing, the syntax of this part shows the extreme length of time that she had these feelings. Sethe uses the same method to describe the characteristics that she used to have: “soft, trusting”. “Soft”, meaning easy to mold or cut, is appropriate in that Sethe’s viewpoint of the white was molded easily. She was also trusting in that she trust the Garners to take care of her in which they did, but she also trust schoolteacher to help her, which he obviously did not. She trusted in humanity enough to believe that she would not be traumatized. She talks about who specifically she trusted that failed her then, and she includes a list of the balances that she has seen in her life. We can see that Sethe’s character has gone through a change because of a dramatic event like her troubled times at Sweet Home under the control of schoolteacher. The use of complex sentences helps to show a longing for the past and the time when she had so much faith in humanity.

- *"While the boys is small." That's what he said and it snapped me awake. They tagged after me the whole day weeding, milking, getting firewood. For now. For now.*

In this quote, Sethe is talking to her husband about their situation at Sweet Home with schoolteacher. Halle tells Sethe that their situation seems to be okay “while the boys is small”. Sethe realizes that the boys won’t be young forever and they too will be enslaved and suffer the same things she had.

Sethe repeats “for now” to emphasize the time restrictions that she is under. She feels a sort of hysteria and panic in the thought that her children will be enslaved. The word choice “snapped me awake” is interesting in that it connotes the image of someone being woken up from a deep slumber, a parallel to Sethe being stuck in this daydream of paradise with spending happy days with her family. This is similar to Sethe’s situation where she finally realizes that slavery in any form, no matter how kind or “soft-spoken” the masters are, is still a horrible institution that she doesn’t want her children to experience. The syntax in the third sentence describes what Sethe does the whole day, creating a sense of a close family throughout the boys’ infant days. The word “tagged” also implies close proximity between Sethe and the boys, which emphasizes the next few sentences about how things will be completely different when the boys eventually grow up.

- *But I got you out, baby. And the boys too.*

This quote emphasizes Sethe’s determination to free her children from the grasps of the whites and slavery. The use of the word “but” suggests Sethe’s strong belief that she had rescued her “baby” from slavery despite all the hardships they had to face. This is actually the first time that Sethe addresses Beloved as her “baby” which shows her motherly nature in caring for her daughter. Also, the sentence “and the boys too” is separated to create a sense that Beloved was Sethe’s main focus and her boys were already forgotten. However, the mention of the boys helps us to realize that Sethe doesn’t feel like she only impacted Beloved but also the boys. Sethe’s mention of the boys “too” creates a sense that Sethe feels like this was an accomplishment for her because of the emphasis created by the separation of the boys.

- *Not till later. So I sent you all to the wagon with the woman who waited in the corn. Ha ha. No notebook for my babies and no measuring string neither. What I had to get through later I got through because of you. Passed right by those boys hanging in the trees... I walked right on by because only me had your milk, and God do what He would, I was going to get it to you. You remember that, don't you; that I did? That when I got here I had milk enough for all?*

This quote is a description of the road she took when she was escaping from Sweet Home. Along with the description, we learn Sethe’s inner thoughts about caring for her children. The laugh “ha ha” is somewhat remorseful for not being able to care for her children since she sent them to “the woman who waited in the corn.” She talks about how there is no “notebook” or “measuring string” because the dehumanization of slavery is something she definitely doesn’t want her children to experience, not only emphasizing this aspect of slavery but bringing to light the severity with which this is experience. She then explains to Beloved the intensity that she had her feeling for her, helping her go through “what [she] had to get through”, passing the boys she knew for a few years hung in the trees. The recurring symbol of milk is seen here. Sethe is always talking about how she is the only one with the milk because it is the main and strongest bond between a mother and a child, especially a baby.

Sethe explains how “only” she “had you milk”.

It is interesting that Sethe refers to God in this quote because she isn't religious at all, but she is referring to it not in a religious way, but in a way to show the intensity of her emotions, meaning to convey that despite what “God do what He would” she was “going to get [the milk] to you”. The syntax of the last few sentences are also interesting in that she uses the word “that” three times showing the importance of the action that this pronoun is referring to. The two questions also help bring her desperation of gaining Beloved's forgiveness showing that she had no other action than what she did, but that she had done everything she could do.

## Chapter 20

- *She come back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing. I didn't have time to explain before because it had to be done quick. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be, but my love was back and she back now.*

Sethe is describing how she doesn't need to be guilty of what she did, saying she “come back to me of her own free will”. Because Sethe herself already feels guilty for what she had done to her children it is important that she keeps on repeating how she “don't have to explain a thing”. She's justifying the lack of explanation with the time limits that were put on there before, “it had to be done quick. Quick”. The last sentence reassures her that she had to be safe, but the fact that she is back now is what she focuses on.

- *Nan had to nurse whitebabies and me too because Ma'am was in the rice. The little whitebabies got it first and I got what was left. Or none. There was no nursing milk to call my own. I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left.*

This continues with the recurring motif of milk in which she experiences a lack of milk, which might have played a part in creating the intensity of emotions that she has right with her her own milk. She feels as if she has not owned milk herself and later tells how she protected her milk for all her children. She fiercely wants to protect her children from the feeling of how “it is to be without the milk that belongs to you”.

- *...after they handled me like I was the cow, no, the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the horses. But I wasn't too nasty to cook their food or take care of Mrs. Garner. I tended her like I would have tended my own mother if she needed me. If they had let her out the rice field, because I was the one she didn't throw away. I couldn't have done more for that woman than I would my own ma'am*

Sethe expands on how the feeling of dehumanization that she feels, “like she was the cow, no the goat”. She realizes that they treat the slaves like animals, but they are capable of so much more. The whites don't even realize this. However, Sethe still treated Mrs. Garner as if she is “my own ma'am”.

- *I'll tend her as no mother ever tended a child, a daughter. Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to nobody else-- and the one time I did it was took from me--they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby. ... I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left.*

This quote is presented in Sethe's point of view where she reveals her thoughts about caring for her children. Sethe has a strong sense of motherhood, which she sees as her major role in life. When she talks about “tend[ing] her as no mother ever tended a child, a daughter,” Sethe shows that she is determined to give the life she did not have to her own daughter. Because Sethe lost her own mother when she was very young, she feels this obligation to try to provide a life she couldn't live to Beloved. Sethe's explanation of the time when her milk was not for “nobody else,” she tries to justify what happened so that she convinces herself that she has done all she could to be the perfect mother that she lacked in her childhood.

Sethe repeats and emphasizes how her milk was only for her “baby” and “nobody else”. The syntax is important because of the stuttering, simple and choppy language that is seen because of the heavy usage of commas. The phrases that are separated by a commas repeat and clarify the the main sentence which also adds emphasis where it is needed. She tries to use these clarifications to justify her actions that she did for Beloved later. The use of “fight and holler” help to create a sense of no control over this troubling situation.



- *Think what spring will be for us! I'll plant carrots just so she can see them, and turnips. Have you ever seen one, baby? A prettier thing God never made. White and purple with a tender tail and a hard head.*

This quote involves Sethe talking to Beloved as they imagine and dream about their future together. It is important that spring is something that they are dreaming toward because it is the archetype of birth and novelty, in which they probably think that something new will happen. It is also important that they are talking about vegetables and life from seed, which could symbolize a new beginning and of the start of a different life. This is like a rebirth because Sethe gets so caught up with trying to live happily with Beloved that everything she says is happy despite the bitterness of the world. This is a period of relief for Sethe because she believes that the worst of winter has passed. This signifies the change in Sethe where her attitude toward the world changes as she sees beauty in many things like “carrots...and turnips.” She calls carrots and turnips “a prettier thing God never made” because the colors associated with the turnips are “white and purple” which are associated with rebirth and growth.

### Chapter 21

This chapter is entirely in Denver’s point of view and doesn’t mention Sethe.

### Chapter 22

This chapter is entirely in Beloved’s point of view that does not provide much important information on Sethe.

### Chapter 23

This chapter is in Beloved’s point of view which then switches to a poem that alternates between all 3 point of views (Beloved, Denver, Sethe). Metaphorical language is mainly employed in this chapter.

- *Three times I lost her: once with the flowers because of the noisy clouds of smoke; once when she went into the sea instead of smiling at me; once under the bridge when I went in to join her and she came toward me but did not smile. She whispered to me, chewed me, and swam away. ... She smiles at me and it is my own face smiling.*

Beloved explains how Sethe was “lost” three times. Beloved in this instance can be clearly shown that she represents not only Sethe’s reincarnated daughter but also the previous generations of blacks affected by slavery. Thus, we can infer that the “sea” that Beloved mentions refers to the Middle Passage. In the past, slave families were torn apart and sent to the Middle Passage which Beloved recalls as she sees her mother, not necessarily Sethe, being pulled away to the Middle Passage. The first instance of Beloved losing Sethe involves the time when Sethe was in the garden with Beloved. Sethe left Beloved on the blankets near the flowers and the “noisy clouds of smoke” referred to the white men coming on horses to take away Beloved. The last instance of Beloved losing Sethe was when Sethe attempted to join Beloved through an act of suicide but failed. Sethe went under a bridge to drown herself, attempting to join Beloved in the afterlife. Because Sethe wasn’t successful in joining Beloved in the afterlife, Beloved lost Sethe in that they still were not together. When Beloved says, “she whispered to me, chewed me, and swam away” she refers to the attempted suicide in which Sethe “swam away” because she didn’t join her in the afterlife. Beloved finds her “own face smiling” in Sethe when she “smiles” at her. Beloved feels a strong connection with her mother when she sees how similar they are especially after Beloved has grown up.

These quotes have an intricate spacing pattern which is used to show all the stories are about mother daughter relationship and help to give emotion and reason to the horrible situations that happen and to the one that happened regarding Sethe. The first one refers to the ones about the mother-daughter separation when the mother voluntarily threw herself into the sea, which is why Beloved says that she lost “Sethe” “into the sea instead of “smiling at her”. Since she does not know the reason that her mother left her, she has much grief and believes herself to be abandoned which factors into why Beloved reappeared.

In the second scenario where “Sethe” is lost again “because of the noisy cloud of smoke” which shows that a riot broke on the ship and the “noisy cloud of smoke” referring to the gunfire by the whites on the ship prevented the daughter from getting to her mother. The riot shows the horrors of slavery because the riot either an attempt at

mass suicide or a means of desperate escape, through the sea, probably the former. The mother went to the sea again, leaving Beloved behind.

- (S:) *Do you forgive me? ... (B:) Can they get in here?// (S:) No. They tried that once, but I stopped them. They won't ever come back.*

In this quote, Sethe asks for forgiveness from Beloved because Sethe understands that's she has probably hurt Beloved deeply from her actions. Sethe seems to always ask for forgiveness from Beloved which is seen through her actions in the latter part of the book where she starves herself in order to feed Beloved. Beloved is concerned with whether the whites/slave owners will reach Sethe because she understands that the reason why Sethe murdered her was the institution of slavery, not because she wanted to. Sethe responds by saying that she was successful in her attempt to protect her children from being enslaved. She is firm in her belief that what she has done succeeded because "they won't ever come back." Sethe then tells Beloved that she was the sole reason why the whites didn't enslave them, that she "stopped them."

The questions in this quote evoke a conversation that reveals deep thought that both characters have. The use of the word "they" instead of a specific word gives a sense of ambiguity that reflects how people try to avoid the topic. Both Beloved and Sethe do not mention specifics, using "they" three times and "them" once. The word "ever" shows how Sethe feels like the action she has taken will be final in confronting slavery. Sethe also uses this word to comfort Beloved because of Beloved's concern about becoming separated again.

- *If they put an iron circle around your neck I will bite it away.//Beloved. ...//You're back. You're back.* Beloved tells Sethe that if anybody tries to enslave her again, which is the "iron circle around your neck," Beloved will "bite it away". This shows the relationship between Beloved and Sethe, where we see that Beloved is fiercely protective over Sethe from slavery. Sethe responds with a mere word which conveys the effect of the words on her. Sethe is touched that Beloved still loves her so much despite what she had done. However, that one word also conveys how Sethe believes that it might not be possible for a daughter to protect a mother, especially from slavery because the way slavery works. The last line is Beloved telling Sethe happily that she is back, repeating it twice for emphasis and feeling. We see the very close relationship between the two characters. Beloved's devotion to and dependence on Sethe are revealed through this quote. However, this can be misleading because what is seen as love in the beginning is transformed into Beloved's selfishness that feeds on Sethe.

The words "bite it away" from Beloved denotes the action of seizing especially with the teeth or jaws to grip, enter, or wound, connoting a feeling of fierceness and savagery from the protective stance that Beloved takes. The "iron circle" is also a recurring symbol in the book showing a power or force on slavery. The iron circle that Beloved is talking about is referring to a chain, one similar to the one that Paul D. These iron chains often disallows a person from achieving their goals and are similar to the relentless nature of slave owners in the book because no movement or even breathing are allowed. Having iron eyes, gives the negativity of the iron a positive twist where Sethe has strength and willpower. These eyes are noticed by Paul D in Sethe while she was at Sweet Home because of what additional horror she might have faced at Sweet Home. Iron also plays the role of sparking memories of the past because of the strength and coldness of the metal. For example, Paul D sees iron, he remembers the time when he was in jail.<sup>1</sup>

- (B:) *You are my face; you are me  
I have found you again  
you have come back to me  
(S:) You are my Beloved*

In the first line, Beloved shows that she is Sethe's daughter because she has the same face as her and has her blood running through her veins as shown by "you are me." This exchange of thoughts in Beloved and Sethe's views also shows how possessive the mother-daughter pair are of one another.

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<sup>1</sup> "Iron in Beloved Essay." *Exampleessays.com*. DMCA, n.d. Web. 12 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.exampleessays.com/viewpaper/37749.html>>.

This first line is from Beloved who feels strongly connected with Sethe because they share the same characteristics. The use of the sentence “you are my face” would reflect this but it could also be figurative where Beloved feels possessive over Sethe. Saying the words “you are me” could refer to the actions that happen later in the story where Beloved takes part of Sethe with her, making Sethe weak. In the second line by Beloved, she is telling Sethe how she has finally reunited with her mother again, saying again because Beloved is a ghost the transcends history.

“Again” refers to the other times that the ghost of Beloved experience, seen in the chapter with the weird wording. She says “you have come back to me” because Sethe and Beloved have reunited with each other already.

Sethe tells Beloved that she is her “Beloved” referring to her name, but also the original reason why she is called Beloved, because she is beloved. The original context of the name in a commonly used phrase at funerals, “Dearly Beloved” in which the preacher refers to the dead person as Beloved no matter their name. They use the word “Beloved” because the preacher and the audience want to convey the sense that the person who died has been loved, which Sethe has done. Sethe uses “my” because the possession both are very attached to each other and because Sethe’s motherly bond with her gives her the feeling of possession.

- *You are mine*  
*You are mine*  
*You are mine (x2)*

These three lines are seen two times within the chapter, with each character, Sethe, Denver, and Beloved, each saying a line. What is important and relating to Sethe and her characterization is the lines said by Sethe and Beloved in which they both refer to each other. This odd relationship makes Denver feel left out, which is what happens at the end, allowing her to go out and find independence from Sethe.

The “you are mine” said by Sethe is significant in knowing her character because it shows the strength with which Sethe has feeling for Beloved, a feeling of possessiveness. Beloved shows the same in her line, but there is a slight difference in meaning. Sethe’s quote shows motherly care, but Beloved has more of a crazier possessiveness and selfish nature than Sethe. There seems to be a more of an emphasis on the word “mine” to refer to Sethe as a possession or belonging rather than Sethe who has a silent emphasis on the word “you” because she is focusing on Beloved and the mere fact that her daughter has reincarnated to come back with her.

- *I have your milk (S)*  
*I have your smile (B)*  
*I will never leave you again (S)*  
*You forgot to smile (B)*  
*You went in the water (S)*

This exchange of thoughts between Sethe and Beloved reinforce the motifs and ideas seen in the previous quotes. In the first line that is said by Sethe to Beloved, we see another instance of the mention of milk in which Sethe is the only one that has the milk for Beloved.

In the second line, Beloved talks again about how she is similar to Sethe and how she has her smile, which has a double meaning. Considering the craziness of Beloved and the succubus-like properties she has on Sethe and everyone around her, Beloved probably means how she takes Sethe’s smile from her and how she sucks the life out of her. It may also be referring to the similarity in characteristics between family members. As Sethe tells Beloved that she went in the water, she refers to water as the archetypal rebirth and life which brought Beloved back to Sethe.

## Chapter 24

This chapter is taken in Paul D’s point of view with no important information on Sethe.

## Chapter 25

This chapter focuses on a conversation between Paul D and Stamp Paid, revealing community theme about Sethe

- *"You pick any house, any house where colored live. In all of Cincinnati. Pick any one and you welcome to stay there. I'm apologizing because they didn't offer or tell you. But you welcome anywhere you want*

*to be. My house is your house too. John and Ella, Miss Lady, Able Woodruff, Willie Pike--anybody. You choose. You ain't got to sleep in no cellar, and I apologize for each and every night you did. I don't know how that preacher let you do it. I knowed him since he was a boy."*

In this quote, we can see how Stamp Paid feels guilty for not offering his fellow a good place to stay. Before, the people of the town thought that Paul D had known all along about what Sethe had done, afraid of what could happen if Paul D stayed with her. Then as Paul D moved out, the townspeople didn't know what to do because they didn't understand what had happened, afraid of getting caught in the tangle of problems. However, the black race has a strong sense of community because they have gone through the same troubling experiences and hardships. This strong community can be shown through Stamp Paid's words as he offers Paul D a place to stay.

### Chapter 26

This chapter is taken in Denver's point of view that provides an outside perspective on Sethe.

- *once Sethe saw it, fingered it and closed her eyes for a long time, the two of them cut Denver out of the games. ... Games her mother loved so well she took to going to work later and later each day until the predictable happened: Sawyer told her not to come back. And instead of looking for another job, Sethe played all the harder with Beloved ...*

The readers see a gradual change in Sethe as she begins to ignore everything and everyone around her because she became so consumed by trying to love Beloved. Sethe starts to leave out Denver, only caring for Beloved like feeding her most of the food and tending to her every needs. Denver starts to become independent. The act that impels Sethe to cut Denver out of the games, in which Sethe "saw it, fingered it [the scar on Beloved's chin] and closed her eyes for a long time", would represent a turning point in which Sethe sees the damage that she has given Beloved, an actual tangible scar. When she finally sees the scar, Sethe slowly turns into the desperate person that wants Beloved's approval and forgiveness, seen when she sacrifices her job (in the next sentence of the quote) because she wants to please Beloved so much that she gives up her job. Instead of finding another job, Sethe "played all the harder with Beloved" emphasize the turning point of Sethe's character.

The phrase "played all the harder with Beloved" is interesting because it creates a playful tone where Sethe sees the situation like it's just a game, only "play[ing]" with Beloved. She disregards work which is described as going to "work later and later" instead of just going to "work later" because the author wants to emphasize the slow process that Sethe goes through which leads up to the significant response of Sawyer, the person hiring Sethe. Instead of firing her right away, Sethe is fired when "until the predictable happened".

- *In the very teeth of winter and Sethe, her eyes fever bright, was plotting a garden of vegetables and flowers--talking, talking about what colors it would have. She played with Beloved's hair, braiding, puffing, tying, oiling it until it made Denver nervous to watch her.*

Morrison also uses a list of actions in the last sentence of this quote because she wants to show the readers the different actions that Sethe takes on Beloved's hair alone, list four things in total. The fact that Denver is "nervous" from watching her also gives information to the reader because Denver's personality is not one that is made easily nervous especially from actions by her mother whose she feels some hostility towards. The garden of vegetables and flowers that Sethe wants to plan of may be significant because of its reference to the flower, nature, and garden archetypes. The colors that it would have is important because of the recurring motif of colors.

"Very teeth" conveyed the imagery of savagery and fierceness of the cold, conveying the harshness of that season for Sethe. Morrison describes Sethe in this quote as having "eyes fever bright" because she wants to convey the hyper mental state that Sethe is in. The syntax in this quote is significant because of the chopping feeling that the many commas give this quote, shown the list and the clarifiers throughout the first sentence. The repetition of the word "talking" emphasizes the colors Sethe is talking about.

- *Then the mood changed and the arguments began. Slowly at first. A complaint from Beloved, an apology from Sethe. A reduction of pleasure at some special effort the older woman made. Wasn't it too cold to stay outside? Beloved gave a look that said, So what? Was it past bedtime, the light no good for sewing? Beloved didn't move; said, "Do it," and Sethe complied.*

In this quote, we can see a typical mother-daughter relationship that starts to develop between Beloved and Sethe. However, more importantly, we can see how Beloved starts to take advantage of Sethe because instead of disciplining Beloved, Sethe just succumbs to whatever Beloved wants.

The combination of simple and truncated sentences gives us a sense of argument as if we are following Beloved and Sethe's arguments with a frustrated remark accompanied by some type of reasoning.

- *She took the best of everything--first. The best chair, the biggest piece, the prettiest plate, the brightest ribbon for her hair, and the more she took, the more Sethe began to talk, explain, describe how much she had suffered, been through, for her children, waving away flies in grape arbors, crawling on her knees to a lean-to. None of which made the impression it was supposed to.*

This quote adds to the fact of Beloved's succubous nature in taking advantage of Sethe and feeding off of her. Beloved had the best things, and especially because this is presented through Denver's eyes, we can infer that this is bias since Denver felt rejected in this family once Beloved became the main attraction.

The use of the long compound sentence brings out the effect of Beloved's selfish nature in which she takes up everything that Sethe has to offer. The word "first" emphasizes how Beloved was Sethe's priority, especially because Beloved was her firstborn daughter. The word "crawling" brings the readers back to the past of Sethe's "already-crawling? baby" that parallels to Beloved "crawling on her knees to a lean-to."

- *Beloved accused her of leaving her behind. Of not being nice to her, not smiling at her. She said they were the same, had the same face, how could she have left her? And Sethe cried, saying she never did, or meant to---that she had to get them out, away, that she had the milk all the time and had the money too for the stone but not enough. That her plan was always that they would all be together on the other side, forever.*

The first sentence conveys the same ideas as before, but syntax must be talked about because it is special.

The reaction of Sethe is important part of this quote because she doesn't literally cry, but she never uses a voice even close to crying. Beloved guilt trips Sethe into thinking that she wasn't a good mother for "leaving her behind." However, Sethe tries to disprove Beloved and make her understand that her intentions were good and that "her plan was always that they would all be together on the other side, forever." We are revealed that Sethe's plan was to kill the whole family so that they'd be "on the other side" or in the afterlife together.

- *She [Beloved] said when she cried there was no one. That dead men lay on top of her. That she had nothing to eat. Ghosts without skin stuck their fingers in her and said beloved in the dark and bitch in the light.*

Beloved, as a supernatural ghost, is talking about the dead slaves that were on top of her during the Middle Passage. These all refer to Middle Passage and how she was starving and suffocating onboard with the "dead men [that] lay on top of her". The "ghosts without skin" were the whites that raped her and said "beloved" during their intimate relationship. They said they loved her during the night but in the daytime they didn't, calling her "bitch in the light". This evokes the theme of dehumanization because in the dark when you cannot identify whether a person was black or white, the whites treated blacks as equals, calling them loved and whatnot. Blacks and whites were the same, both human, and so the dark helped conceal the physical differences between them. However, in the light, when the whites can identify a black person, the whites suddenly shift positions toward them, calling them "bitch". This leads to the idea that the whites only considered appearance as difference while blacks were only treated as equals during rape.

- *Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons: that Beloved was more important, meant more to her than her own life.*

In this quote, we once again see that Sethe tries to gain Beloved's forgiveness and acceptance, that her sole reason was because she had no other option. The diction is very clear in that we can see how Sethe feels guilt about what she has done, using words like "pleaded...counting...listing." The use of the long sentence conveys a sense of remorse from Sethe as she tries to make Beloved understand the reasoning for her actions. Sethe had valued Beloved "more...than her own life." This brings out the theme of identity where Sethe plays the role of a dedicated mother but loses sight of self-worth in the process of loving Beloved. Sethe doesn't see that she is "the

best thing” about herself as Paul D says later in the book.

- *That she would trade places any day. Give up her life, every minute and hour of it, to take back just one of Beloved's tears. Did she know it hurt her when mosquitoes bit her baby? That to leave her on the ground to run into the big house drove her crazy? That before leaving Sweet Home Beloved slept every night on her chest or curled on her back? Beloved denied it. Sethe never came to her, never said a word to her, never smiled and worst of all never waved goodbye or even looked her way before running away from her.*

This quote continues Sethe’s guilt as she reasons for how much she values Beloved. The diction in this quote creates a sense of panic as Sethe tries to make Beloved understand since “Beloved denied it.” The words “every minute and hour” drags on the sentence to emphasize the importance of Beloved over Sethe’s own life where she would “give up her life” just so Beloved wouldn’t get hurt. The description about Sethe “leav[ing] her on the ground to run into the big house” refers to the time when Sethe worked for Mrs. Garner and left Beloved alone. This “drove her crazy” and the use of “drove” creates a sense that Sethe could not control it and could not stop it from happening. The point of view is in third person limited but it first switches from limited in Sethe’s point of view to Beloved’s point of view. Sethe’s short sentences and questions brings out Sethe’s desperation in trying to gain forgiveness. However, as “Beloved denied it,” the sentence becomes long to exaggerate the pain that Beloved went through in the absence of Sethe and Sethe’s love for her.

- *But the pain was unbearable when they ran low on food, and Denver watched her mother go without--pick-eating around the edges of the table and stove: the hominy that stuck on the bottom; the crusts and rinds and peelings of things.*

This quote is in Denver’s point of view, showing a semi-unbiased view of what is happening during the time that Sethe goes crazy. This information is really valuable and a wonderful addition to the story because it gives character to Denver while informing the readers of what is happening to Sethe and Denver, while being somewhat unbiased about it. In this quote, Denver talks about how it is “unbearable” when she has to watch her mother “go without” food because she gives it all the Beloved. Refer to earlier quote analyses to see the reason why Sethe does this. In this quote we see the fruits of the break down the Sethe has regarding Beloved because she starves herself so much that she has to eat the food that no one in the house eats anymore, even what she would have never eaten before. These actions take place without much interference from Denver, proving her worth as the most reliable narrator (and only other narrator) for these scene.

Although “pick-eating” is not an actual word in the dictionary, this word gives the impression of a bird who is pecking at food. The combination of the words pick, meaning to select something among alternatives, gives the readers the impression that Sethe is hungrily hovering over Beloved and picking from what Beloved is throwing away or not eating. The details of the quote at the end are important because of the vivid imagery that they convey. “Crust”, the hard end of the bread, that are edible, but are usually eaten with the inside part of the bread. Usually just the crusts of bread are not eaten unless someone is very hungry, like Sethe. The “hominy stuck on the bottom” also conveys the image of a starved Sethe seeing as how getting something unstuck from the bottom, not even on the sides, is a very hard task, a task one undertakes only if there is extreme hunger, as in Sethe’s case. Lastly, the “rinds and peelings of things” are usually not eaten as well. “Rinds” and “peelings” are the tough outer covering of skin of some fruits or vegetable. These words just further the desperation and hunger of Sethe.

- *Saw Sethe's eyes bright but dead, alert but vacant, paying attention to everything about Beloved--her lineless palms, her forehead, the smile under her jaw, crooked and much too long--everything except her basket-fat stomach.*

This quotes shows the succubus-like property that is seen of Beloved on Sethe. Although Sethe’s eyes are “bright” because she is happy that she can serve Beloved and of her appearance to her, her eyes are also “dead” in that she has not been eating properly or taking care of herself properly because she is serving Beloved. The author describes Sethe’s eyes also as “alert” because she wants to be able to serve Beloved properly and is paying close attention to her. “Vacant” is another descriptor because she is left with little energy; Sethe has used it all

to serve Beloved wholeheartedly. However, this sentence is ended the apparently more important fact that she loves Beloved because of the way this part is describe, with words that convey the love that she sees. The author mentions that “everything [is looked at] except her basket-fat stomach”, meaning that Sethe doesn’t literally look at her stomach, but that she is also not seeing what the stomach represents. The basket-fat stomach is proof of the fact that Beloved is eating everything that Sethe has. Sethe’s adoration blinds her to the fact the Beloved is fatter than what she should be.

The author uses the “basket-fat stomach” as one of the things that Beloved has because she wants to readers to know that Beloved’s stomach is as fat as a basket, a container that holds/carry things.

The author uses a series of seemingly paradoxical phrases to describe the way Beloved is affected Sethe. Sethe is basically experiencing physical distraction and lifelessness, but internally she is very happy.

- *She also saw the sleeves of her own carnival shirtwaist cover her fingers; hems that once showed her ankles now swept the floor. She saw themselves beribboned, decked-out, limp and starving but locked in a love that wore everybody out.*

Denver explains to the reader that her mother, Sethe, has become so small that the “hems that once showed her ankles now swept the floor” and the “sleeves cover her fingers”. This alarming description shows the extent of the damage that Beloved has caused Sethe: Sethe’s body structure has changed to become so small and helpless. Denver also says that some of these things may also apply to her because to say that it is “themselves” that were “limp and starving”. Denver sees everyone in the house responding to the actions of Beloved, but it was something that was “wore everybody out.” The author describes the love in the house as something that tired everybody out because of the nature of Beloved, who keeps wanted and is never happy. She never reciprocates the acts of love, other than the unquenchable desire to listen and hear more about Sethe. In later quote it is evident that she starts to complain a lot and takes control of the house through yelling and manipulation of Sethe’s emotions.

Denver uses the words “beribboned, decked-out, limp and starving” and “wore” because of the various diction and connotations that these words expressed. Beribboned means highly decorated with many ribbons; decked-out means to be dressed in fine clothing. This shows the exhaustion with which the characters in the house are feeling of superiority as they dress fancily. The “carnival shirtwaist”, “beribboned”, and obscure descriptions of Sethe provide outrageous images that show the craziness of situation of how things have gone out of hand with the overwhelming amount of unnecessary items. This also helps to show how greedy they’ve become in trying to obtain all the luxuries they can.

- *What was more--much more---out there were whitepeople and how could you tell about them? Sethe said the mouth and sometimes the hands.*

In a conversation that Denver and Sethe had in which Denver ask how you can tell who the nice whites are. Sethe responds by saying you can look at their mouth and sometimes the hands”, which is similar to how Paul D characterizes Sethe. When Paul D first found out about the article on Sethe’s attempt to murder, he looks at the picture and says “that’s not Sethe’s mouth”. Also when he sees Denver at the end in this chapter, he says she has Sethe’s mouth, remembering people by their mouths. Sethe also says that you can tell sometimes by the hands of the whites because she refers to the gentle touch of the caring whites who do not use their hands to abuse blacks but to be gentle with them and treat the blacks more as human.

The repetition of “more” separated by dashes gives emphasis over the idea about how white people really are. Blacks normally see whites as harsh and unforgiving, so when Denver asks about if there is more to whites than just their known characteristics, we see a faith in humanity where Denver is optimistic about the attitudes of the whites.

- *"They got me out of jail," Sethe once told Baby Suggs.*

The word “once” shows big transition and change in character. This quote is important because it shows the transition and the change in character because of the hardships Sethe had experienced. She was previously soft but after Baby Suggs and after the murder of Beloved that she still believed in humanity.

- *When she got out of jail and made no gesture toward anybody, and lived as though she were alone, Ella junked her and wouldn't give her the time of day.*

This quote conveys the theme of community because we can see that Sethe purposely isolated herself from the town because she feels prideful of what she has done, not the horror that the townspeople feel from her actions. Sethe is seen as making “no gesture toward anybody” meaning that she took no effort to connect with anybody and explain why she murdered her child. However, in the next clause, an explanation is used because Sethe lived “as if she were alone.” After Sethe leaves Sweet Home, her character becomes very solitary and independent. Ella represents the townspeople because she ignores Sethe due to her prideful attitude and how she rejected everyone’s attempts at understanding her actions causing everyone to not “give her the time of day.” The use of the word “junked” conveys how Ella treated Sethe like she was trash once she broke off from the community. It’s interesting because “junked” is not an official word that means to throw away like junk. The author uses this word to express the slang that the townspeople have, creating a vivid image to the readers.

- *Sethe feels her eyes burn and it may have been to keep them clear that she looks up. The sky is blue and clear. Not one touch of death in the definite green of the leaves. It is when she lowers her eyes to look again at the loving faces before her that she sees him.*

Sethe begins to cry which is the burning sensation she feels. She tries to prevent tears from falling by looking up at the clear blue sky. Blue is an archetypal color meaning peace, which could mean that Sethe is symbolically clearing her soul with the peace she sees in the sky. The third sentence talks about how there is no death “in the definite green of the leaves,” continuing the peaceful mood created in the second sentence. “Green” and “leaves” usually symbolizes nature and life. The “loving faces that she sees before her” are the townspeople that came to help remove the evil succubus. The beginning of the quote shows a feeling of peace and tranquility, followed by the main action of Sethe seeing the passerby. This gives us a feeling of suspense.

- *Guiding the mare, slowing down, his black hat wide-brimmed enough to hide his face but not his purpose. He is coming into her yard and he is coming for her best thing. She hears wings. Little hummingbirds stick needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings.*

A white guy is passing by “guiding the mare, slowing down” presumably to see what is happening. The “black” color of the passerby's hat is significant in that it archetypally means darkness, representing the evil white supremacy especially since he is on a mare giving him a perspective that allowed him to look down on the townspeople. This quote is in Sethe’s point of view which shows how she always assumes that the whites are always after her when she thinks that the white man is “hid[ing] his face but not his purpose.” Sethe is reminded of the past in which “he [schoolteacher] [came] into her yard” to take her children away. Sethe refers to her “best thing” as Beloved because she believes that she has been sullied by the men with “mossy teeth” and regards her children as pure contributing to their being her “best thing”. The sound of the wings symbolizes the chaos such as how Sethe loses control of reality, not noticing if this was really the schoolteacher or even an atrocious white person. Since this is in Sethe’s point of view, she experiences unnatural things like the “little hummingbirds stick needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings.” The hummingbirds are a recurring motif throughout the story. These small and light birds could represent her children who are “stick[ing] needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair” and “beat their wings”. The birds show the frantic nature and the desperation of Sethe. The hummingbirds also symbolize how Sethe actually wants to fly away from this world. The hummingbirds suggest frenzy and confusion, as well as an unnatural event, signified by their beaks thrust into Sethe's hair. The hummingbirds also represent Sethe's physical urge for flight, and at the same time the small jewel-like birds signify Sethe's children--"all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful." The repetition of the single sound--"No. No. Nono. Nonoho" contains the visceral and inarticulate reaction, the protective reaction that compels Sethe to take her children "through the veil." The veil, used by Du Bois to represent the "color- ' line," the division between black .and white flesh and vision (16), here represents the division between life and death, as if at this moment the only escape from the threat of the white world is death.

- *Standing alone on the porch, Beloved is smiling. But now her hand is empty. Sethe is running away from her, running, and she feels the emptiness in the hand Sethe has been holding. Now she is running into*



*the faces of the people out there, joining them and leaving Beloved behind. Alone. Again. Then Denver, running too.*

Once again, Sethe abandons Beloved as shown through the use of “*But now her hand is empty*” and “*running away from her, running, and she feels the emptiness in her hands*”. This is in Beloved’s point of view and is biased since she feels like Sethe is leaving her just like how she left Beloved alone when she killed her and didn’t join her on the other side. The syntax composed of very short sentences to convey lost, empty feeling just like how an abandoned child would feel.

- *Away from her to the pile of people out there. They make a hill. A hill of black people, falling. And above them all, rising from his place with a whip in his hand, the man without skin, looking. He is looking at her.*

The metaphorical language is complex and hard to decipher, but it is referring to “a hill of black people, falling”, which could be the hills of blacks that could have been killing during the Middle Passage. The third paragraph reinforces this theory because “above them all, rising from his place” he is holding “a whip in his hand”. The “man without skin”, usually refers to the white people in the book. The black people are said to be in a position below the man and the man is supposed to be holding a whip, signifying white superiority.

## Chapter 27

This chapter is in third-person limited point of view, following the thoughts of Paul D. Paul D visits Sethe after Beloved disappears.

- *Bare feet and chamomile sap.  
Took off my shoes; took off my hat.  
Bare feet and chamomile sap  
Gimme back my shoes; gimme back my hat.  
Lay my head on a potato sack,  
Devil sneak up behind my back.  
Steam engine got a lonesome whine;  
Love that woman till you go stone blind.  
Stone blind; stone blind.  
Sweet Home gal make you lose your mind.*

This quote appearing in italics in the beginning of the chapter is a song or poem that Paul D made up about Sethe. It is evident that this song is by Paul D to Sethe because of the content of the poem and because the following chapter makes developments between Paul D and Sethe after Beloved has left. The first line refers to the first time, in the book, that Paul D meets Sethe. It describes how Sethe looked with “bare feet” and “chamomile sap” on her feet. The next line tells of what Paul D did afterwards. After repeating the first line, giving an emphasis on what Sethe did, the next line tells Sethe to give his “shoes” and “hat back”, meaning that Paul D doesn’t originally plan on staying at the house, but Sethe essentially kept him there mentally.

“Lay my head on a potato sack” refers to the fact that when they were at Sweet Home they slept in the barn of the farm on the cold ground and since they were poor slaves they probably used burlap sacks as blankets or “potato sack[s]” as blankets. “Devil sneak up behind my back” represents vulnerability because as they are enslaved so they cannot trust anyone to watch their back because as shown by Sethe getting raped, the white folks believe that they own the slaves so they can take complete advantage of them.

The use of “stone blind” completely blind showing that Paul D is willing to go completely blind as long as he is able to love Sethe thoroughly and without any regret.

The last line reaffirms that fact that is Sethe who the poem is talking about, talking about the Sweet Home gal, since Sethe is the only female slave at Sweet Home. Paul D believes Sethe to “make you lose you mind”, but in the chapter it is clarified at the end that this action is because of love, not because of hate or annoyance.

- *“... I tell you something, if she had got to him, it'd be the worst thing in the world for us. You know, don't you, he's the main one kept Sethe from the gallows in the first place.”*

*"Yeah. Damn. That woman is crazy. Crazy." (Paul D)*

*"Yeah, well, ain't we all?"(Stamp Paid)*

This conversation is between Paul D and Stamp Paid in regards the situation with Sethe. This conversation is meant to clarify that Sethe tried to kill the sheriff in earlier lines and how in shock the two men are. Paul D repeats the word crazy two times to emphasize how he does not condone Sethe's action and believes that she shouldn't have done that. In the first use of the word crazy he is implying the Sethe is insane to try to kill the person who brought her out of jail, one of the good people in the world, but in the second use the Paul D emphasizes, because it is in a separate sentence, the word a different way. It shows the love the Paul D has for Sethe, that he loves that she loves her children so much and is going through so much. The use of "Damn" emphasizes this point. Stamp Paid represents the viewpoint of the rest of them because although they do not like the pride the Sethe exhibits in the action she took to protect her children, they understand that everyone is a bit mad because they have all undergone the torture known as slavery.

- *"What ink? Who?"*  
*"You shaved."*  
*"Yeah. Look bad?"*  
*"No. You looking good."/*  
*"Devil's confusion. What's this I hear about you not getting out of bed?"*  
*She smiles, lets it fade and turns her eyes back to the window.*  
*"I need to talk to you," he tells her.*  
*She doesn't answer.*

Sethe has deteriorated, both mentally and physically, because Beloved disappeared causing her to believe that she has nothing left to live for and she is shown to be slightly distant from Paul D because she answers his questions in the simplest way possible and doesn't elaborate on any of her answers. Her smile is also described as "fading" showing that although she is glad that Paul D is with her, she doesn't even have enough energy to keep up a facade of happiness to keep Paul D from worrying.

- *"Oh, I don't have no plans. No plans at all."....Sethe closes her eyes and presses her lips together. She is thinking: No. This little place by a window is what I want. And rest. There's nothing to rub now and no reason to. Nothing left to bathe, assuming he even knows how. ... And if he bathes her in sections, will the parts hold?*

Sethe wonders what she has left to live for now that Beloved is gone and Denver has moved on and become independent and now wants to spend her days resting in bed, similar to how Baby Suggs was when she gave up on life and laid in bed with her quilt over her.

"Nothing to rub" denotes the act of moving a hand or cloth repeatedly to and fro, paralleling the situation that Sethe is in because she used to be rubbed figuratively by the memories that she had. The memories are the things that repeatedly went to and fro across her mind and when Paul D ask her to bathe saying that he'll rub her in sections like Baby Suggs did when she first arrived from Sweet Home, she feels like she doesn't really exist anymore. When Sethe wonders if Paul D rubs her in sections and if "the parts [will] hold?" is supposed to connote brokenness and separation because she wonders if her body will break apart if someone tries to touch her which is meant to symbolize how fragile she is just like how glass shatters if touched in the wrong way.

- *"She left me."*  
*"Aw, girl. Don't cry."*  
*"She was my best thing."*

Paul D manages to catch Sethe when she is still distraught over Beloved's disappearance and sees her in her vulnerable state when she is crying which is a direct contrast to her earlier "iron eyes" which conveys the image of strength. The last line is important in that Sethe believes that the "best" part of herself are her children which is why she was so intent on getting the milk to her children because she believes that she was "dirtied" by the boys with the "mossy teeth" and left slavery because she didn't want her children to be subjected to that kind of torture.

- *"You your best thing, Sethe. You are." His holding fingers are holding hers.*

*"Me? Me?"*

This is the final resolution of the story where Paul D tries to change Sethe's perspective about how important she is and how she should be the most important person in her mind. Her daughters shouldn't be the most important people to her because she needs to love herself before she can possibly begin to love herself. Also, while Sethe responds to this in shock, she reveals that she is later contemplating living for herself showing that Beloved, or slavery, has finally been banished from Sethe's mind.