

## ABSTRACT

LAUREN CHARISSE FULMORE. Oh, How Ironic: An Exploration of Irony in Toni Morrison Novels. (Under the direction of Professor Dr. Marc K. Dudley.)

This project examines the significance of Black narratives, as told through Toni Morrison novels, and the ironic nature of events that occur. Irony is typically used for its emphatic effect and presents an event contrary to reader expectation. Expanding on the discussion of the Black experience, I will examine three texts of Toni Morrison and analyze the irony she presents in the narratives. These narratives not only incorporate plotlines that do not align with the reader's expectations, but incorporate ironic characters, settings, and scenes. The three texts that I will dissect are *Sula* (1973), *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and *Beloved* (1987). Each of these novels displays tragic racial narratives as influenced by the impact of slavery. Morrison's novels emphasize the importance of this moment in American history on Black narratives.

In the first chapter of this project, I will analyze the tale of *Beloved*, a story taking place after the Civil War and focusing on former slave Sethe, who believes she is haunted by her child, which she murdered as a baby. Although Sethe commits infanticide, she loves her child very much. The second chapter will then examine *Sula* as depicting the relationship a young woman has with her community. Arguably, her heinous actions result in the betterment of the lives of those in her community. The third chapter will then examine *The Bluest Eye*. With whiteness as the standard of beauty within the novel for its black characters, the protagonist prays for blue eyes and white features as she believes this will assuage the abuse she faces.

Slavery has lasting effects on America, which Morrison attempts to overcome as she depicts these narratives through irony. This project focalizes how Black narratives can relay complicated accounts of American history that stress the significance of the absurdity in racial America.