



Study of Characters and Plot Summary of the Novel The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

¹Zaheda Mushtaque Khan, ²Dr. Parul Mishra

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Singhania University.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Science and Humanities,
Dronacharya College of Engineering, Farrukhnagar, Gurgaon

Abstract : The Bluest Eye was written by Toni Morrison in 1970. Morrison, a single mother of two sons, wrote the novel while she taught at Howard University. Morrison's novel is set in 1941. She centers the story around a young African American girl named Pecola who grows up during the years following the Great Depression in Lorain, Ohio. Pecola's dark skin color and harsh characteristics, are why she is constantly called "ugly". As a result, she develops an inferiority

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complex, which fuels her desire for the blue eyes she equates with "whiteness". The point of view of the novel switches between the perspective of Claudia MacTeer, the daughter of Pecola's foster parents, and a third-person narrator with inset narratives in the first person. Due to the controversial topics the book raises such as racism, incest, and child molestation, there have been numerous attempts to ban it from schools and libraries.

Plot summary

In Lorain, Ohio, 9-year-old Claudia MacTeer and her 10-year-old sister Frieda live with their parents, a tenant named Mr. Henry, and Pecola Breedlove, a temporary foster child whose house is burned down by her unstable, alcoholic, and sexually abusive father. Pecola is a quiet, passive young girl who grows up with little money and whose parents are constantly fighting, both verbally and physically. Pecola is continually reminded of what an "ugly" girl she is by members of her neighborhood and school community. In an attempt to beautify herself, Pecola wishes for blue eyes – a standard that was perpetuated through the gifting of white, blue-eyed dolls throughout her childhood. Additionally, most chapters' titles are extracts from the Dick and Jane paragraph in the novel's prologue, presenting a white family that may be contrasted with Pecola's. The chapter titles contain sudden repetition of words or phrases, many cut-off words, and no interword separations.

The novel, through flashbacks, explores the younger years of both of Pecola's parents, Cholly and Pauline, and their struggles as African-Americans in a largely White Anglo-Saxon Protestant community. Pauline now works as a servant for a wealthier white family. One day in the novel's present time, while Pecola is doing dishes, drunk Cholly rapes her. His motives are largely