

## Teacher's Guide to Close Readings of *Beloved*

This guide is not meant to be an exhaustive list of noteworthy language from these passages; rather, it should provide a starting point for careful study and close analysis.

### **School Teacher passage (175-177)**

Key resources of language to discuss with students:

- Allusion: "When the four horsemen came—schoolteacher, one nephew, one slave catcher and a sheriff—the house on Bluestone Road was so quiet they thought they were too late" (174).
- Simile: "Unlike a snake or a bear, a dead nigger could not be skinned for profit and was not worth his own weight in coin" (174).
- Characterization: "A crazy old nigger was standing in the woodpile with an ax. You could tell he was crazy right off because he was grunting—making low, cat noises like" (175).
- Goal in representation: "see what happened when you overbeat creatures God had given you the responsibility of—the trouble it was, and the loss" (176).

### **Stamp Paid passage (183-185)**

Key resources of language to discuss with students:

- Detail: "Four. Riding close together, bunched up like, and righteous" (184)
- Omission: "He was going to tell him..." (184). "So he did not tell him..." (185). "So Stamp Paid didn't tell him" (185).
- Figurative Language: "So Stamp Paid did not tell him how she flew, snatching up her children like a hawk on the wing; how her face beaked, how her hands worked like claws, how she collected them every which way" (185).
- Goal in representation: "Nobody warned them, and he'd always believed it wasn't the exhaustion from a long day's gorging that dulled them, but some other thing—like, well, like meanness—that let them stand aside, or not pay attention, or tell themselves somebody else was probably bearing the news already to the house on Bluestone Road where a pretty woman had been living for almost a month" (185).

### **Sethe Passage (192-193)**

Key resources of language to discuss with students:

- Figurative Language: "Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings" (192).
- Repetition/Sentence Structure: "And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew" (192).
- Omission: "She did not see the whiteboys who pulled it down, yanked up the post and smashed the gate leaving 124 desolate and exposed at the very hour when everybody stopped dropping by" (192).
- Goal in representation: "'I stopped him...I took and put my babies where they'd be safe'" (193).