

## The Nobel Prize in Literature 1993



Toni Morrison, the eighth American to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, is a well-known African-American writer.

Morrison was born in 1931 in Ohio. Her family had migrated North to escape racial prejudice and to seek educational and employment opportunities. In Ohio, Morrison was predominantly surrounded by racist whites. However, this did not stop her from achieving great success. She attended Lorain High School, where she excelled as a student. She was a member of the student council, worked in the school library (an honor at her school), and was an associate editor of the high school yearbook. She graduated with honors.

Morrison went to Howard University in Washington, D.C., one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious colleges. There she was shocked to find superficiality among the students around her. Most people seemed concerned with socializing, their physical appearance, and going to parties. Morrison was mostly concerned with her studies and sometimes found it difficult to find a place for herself at Howard. While at school, she discovered the theater and became a member of the campus theatrical company. After graduating, she received a Master's degree in English. From there, Morrison went to Texas to teach English at University. In 1957, Morrison returned to Howard as a member of the faculty where she had the opportunity to teach and to meet many students who would later become famous writers and civil rights activists.

After a trip to Europe, she moved to New York, where she accepted a position as an associate editor with the publishing company Random House. She worked hard during the days and came home to parent her two sons. Then, at night, she would work on her writing, and specifically, the book that would bring her world recognition, *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison drew on many of her own life experiences and memories growing up in Lorain, Ohio to write this first book. After twenty years of editing, Morrison left to become a professor at the State University of New York in Albany.

In 1993, Toni Morrison became the eighth woman and first black woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Along with *The Bluest Eye*, some of her other highly acclaimed work includes: *Beloved*, *Sula*, *Tar Baby*, *Jazz*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.

***"Each night Pecola prayed for blue eyes. In her eleven years, no one had ever noticed Pecola. But with blue eyes, she thought, everything would be different. She would be so pretty that her parents would stop fighting. Her father would stop drinking. Her brother would stop running away. If only she could be beautiful. If only people would look at her." From "The Bluest Eyes"***

