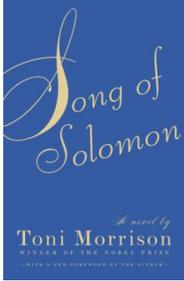


Books by the Stack



Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison

Milkman Dead was born shortly after a neighborhood eccentric hurled himself off a rooftop in a vain attempt at flight. For the rest of his life he, too, will be trying to fly.

Why you'll like it: *Family saga, literary, character-driven, melancholy, complex.*

About the Author: Toni Morrison was born in Lorain, Ohio on February 18, 1931. She received a B.A. in English from Howard University in 1953 and a master's degree in English from Cornell University in 1955. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. She has won several awards including the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Song of Solomon* in 1977, the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* in 1988, the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012, the Edward MacDowell Medal for her outstanding contribution to American culture in 2016, and the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction in 2016. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the definition of “love” in the world of *Song of Solomon*? How does the relationship between love for an individual and love for an ideology explored in the novel? What are the similarities and differences between Hagar’s and Guitar’s expression of love?
2. What is the relationship between whites and blacks in *Song of Solomon*? What does the novel reveal about Morrison’s attitude toward race problems?
3. The importance of names is a prevalent theme in the novel. Explore the significance of some of the people’s and places’ names. Which characters have more than one name? Why?
4. What roles do ghosts, magic, and voodoo play in *Song of Solomon*? Are the ghosts real or imagined? How do they impact the lives of the characters with whom they come in contact?
5. How does the disintegration of Milkman and Guitar’s friendship reflect the disintegration of Macon and Pilate’s relationship? Why is Guitar a threat to Milkman’s personal growth? Why does Macon refer to Pilate as a “snake”? Why is Pilate a threat to Macon’s way of life?
6. What lessons does Milkman learn on his journey south? How do these lessons help him cope with life, deal with personal relationships, and appreciate his spiritual inheritance?
7. When Milkman returns home at the end of the novel, after Pilate locks him away in the cellar, he arrives at his house with only a box full of Hagar’s hair and “almost none of the things he’d taken with him” (2.15.334) How are we meant to feel about materialism, the art of owning things, after reading this book?

8. In Chapter 2, Guitar is described as “the boy who not only could liberate [Milkman], but could take him to the woman who had as much to do with his future as she had his past.” What are some examples of how Guitar “liberates” Milkman.

9. Consider the novel’s ambiguous ending. Does Milkman die on his “flight” across Solomon’s Leap, or does he “soar” as a result of his newfound faith? Why does Morrison leave this issue unresolved?

(Questions adapted from cliffnotes.com)



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