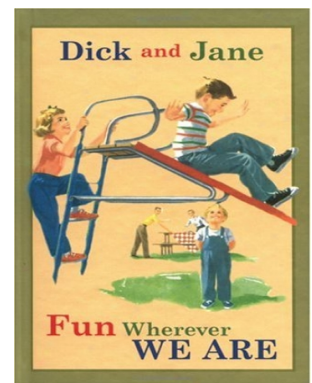


Motifs & Symbols

Dick and Jane

- the ideal family
- the sense of inadequacy felt by the innocent reader who was not represented by the characters in the childhood primer
- omitted punctuation = chaos, things falling apart: Dick and Jane is not all it's cracked up to be
- "depicts the rapid fall of a community, as it lets an innocent child suffer from its oppression and violence." (Ward)



The Seasons

"The novel is divided into the four seasons, but it pointedly **refuses to meet the expectations of these seasons. For example, spring, the traditional time of rebirth and renewal**, reminds Claudia of being whipped with new switches, and it is the season when Pecola is raped. Pecola's baby dies in autumn, the season of harvesting. Morrison uses natural cycles to underline the unnaturalness and misery of her characters' experiences. To some degree, she also questions the benevolence of nature, as when Claudia wonders whether 'the earth itself might have been unyielding' to someone like Pecola" (Ward).



Whiteness and Color

whiteness = beauty and cleanliness
(Geraldine and Mrs. Breedlove)

sterility (Soaphead Church)



color = happiness

rainbow of memories Pauline Breedlove associates with young Cholly

"Morrison uses this imagery to emphasize the destructiveness of the black community's privileging of whiteness and to suggest that vibrant color, rather than the pure absence of color, is a stronger image of happiness and freedom" (Ward).

Cleanliness and Dirtiness

"The black characters in the novel who have internalized white, middle-class values are obsessed with cleanliness. Geraldine and Mrs. Breedlove are excessively concerned with housecleaning -- though Mrs. Breedlove cleans only the house of her white employers, as if the Breedlove apartment is beyond her help. This fixation on cleanliness extends into the women's moral and emotional quests for purity, but the obsession with domestic and moral sanitation leads them to cruel coldness. In contrast, one mark of Claudia's strength of character is her pleasure in her own dirt, a pleasure that represents self-confidence and a correct understanding of the nature of happiness" (Ward).



SYMBOLS

The name “Breedlove”

- The family does not “breed love”
- The word “breed” - procreation; alludes to Cholly’s rape of Pecola: not out of love, but out of anger

The Maginot Line

Line of defensive fortification built before World War II to protect France's eastern border; initially considered to be impregnable it was easily overrun by the Germans in 1940

Miss Marie (aka The Maginot Line) is the biggest, toughest of the women, but she is not impenetrable

The House

--indicate socioeconomic status in this novel

--symbolize the emotional situations and values of the characters who inhabit them

"The Breedlove apartment is miserable and decrepit, suffering from Mrs. Breedlove's preference for her employer's home over her own, and symbolizing the misery of the Breedlove family. The MacTeer house is drafty and dark, but it is carefully tended by Mrs. MacTeer and, according to Claudia, filled with love, symbolizing that family's comparative cohesion" (Ward).



The Marigolds

--Pecola's baby; Claudia and Frieda's honest and innocent belief that they can help Pecola



--a strong and resilient flower: "represents the African-Americans that survived over 400 years of the cultural genocide committed by the whites. The black people of America survived the middle-passage, survived slavery, and survived every other bout of oppression that occurred in America" (Ward).

--"*The Bluest Eye* is about the destruction of a child; this child a seed of her parents, much like the seeds of the marigold, could not grow because of the oppression and violence that she was subjected to. But, this oppression was not just the fault of her parents, it was the fault of a community, and it was the fault of a nation" (Ward).

Ward, Selena. Notes on *The Bluest Eye*.

The Bluest Eye(s)

--the beauty and happiness that Pecola associates with the white, middle-class world

--"They also come to symbolize her own blindness, for she gains blue eyes only at the cost of her sanity" (Ward).

--The bluest "I" - pun on "eye," meaning the "saddest I" or saddest individual: commentary on various characters' sad isolation



Attachments

Lupita Nyong'o Speech.mp4

Barbie Teen_Talk_RARE.mp4