

# *Beloved: A Unit Plan*

By Paul Horton and Rick Vanderwall

## **Overview**

This humanities unit provides a thoughtful approach to a class reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Not only does it address the novel, this unit also gives students the opportunity to respond to the history of slavery's deeper context and its aftermath by creating plays and other writings. This unit is intended for an upper-level high school class of above average ability, possibly AP.

## **American Literature Curriculum Standards**

- Apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They will draw on their previous experience, interactions with other readers and writers, knowledge of word meaning and other texts, word identification strategies, and understanding of textual features (e.g. sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics);
- Adjust their spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes;
- Participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities; and
- Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., to learn, enjoy, persuade, and exchange information).

## **Social Studies Curriculum Standards**

- Reconstruct the meaning of a historical passage;
- Read historical narratives imaginatively;
- Use visual and mathematical data;
- Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas;
- Differentiate between historical facts and interpretations;
- Consider multiple perspectives;
- Compare competing historical narratives;
- Interpret historical data;
- Identify the gaps in the available records and marshal contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place;
- Identify issues and problems in the past and relevant historical antecedents;
- Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances;
- Demonstrate understanding of religious diversity in the colonies and how idioms about how religion evolved; and
- Demonstrate understanding of African life under slavery by analyzing how African Americans drew upon their African past to develop a new culture.

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## Lesson Plan Menu: Choose What You Want to Use

### I. Pre-reading Activities

1. [African Ideas of the Afterlife and \*Beloved\*](#): Students read excerpts from African-American scholars on African beliefs in the afterlife. They then use that information to better understand *Beloved's* role in Sethe's life.
2. [The Tragedy of Slavery and its Aftermath, in \*Beloved\*: Establishing Contexts for Understanding](#): Students review the history of slavery in America to understand better its long-lasting damage on the African-American psyche.
3. [Creating Characters in a Historical Context: The Family Tree](#): In this extension of the history of slavery activity, students create a family tree based on their research into the periods of history involving slavery.

### II. Support for the Reading Activities

1. [Literature Circle Reading Response Activity](#): Students focus on parts of *Beloved* in this group activity.

(The following two assignments interrelate)

2. [Connecting the History of Slavery and Scriptwriting: A Checklist](#): In preparing to write scripts of slaves' experiences, students research slavery by reading slave narratives and analyses of slavery' effect on the people enslaved. [link to lp\_scriptwriting]
3. [Adapting \*Beloved\*: A Readers Theatre Approach](#): In this extension of the lesson on scripting, students write out class scripts for sections of *Beloved*.

### III. Post-Reading Activity

[A Culminating Assignment: Weaving Together Strands of Memory](#): In this culminating assignment that synthesizes the history with the fiction, students write their own "re-memories" using Morrison's style. [link to lp\_culminating]

Rick Vanderwall is the Chair of the Language Arts Department at Malcolm Price Laboratory School in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Paul Horton teaches History at Holy Innocents Episcopal School in Atlanta, Georgia.