

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

SULA

by Toni Morrison

- What is the significance of the quotation at the start of the book, "Nobody knew my rose of the world but me. . . . I had too much glory. They don't want glory like that in nobody's heart." (*The Rose Tattoo*) How does this set the stage for the novel?
- The novel begins by telling the reader that the Bottom, the neighborhood above Medallion, will soon be gone, replaced by the Medallion City Golf Course. How does knowing that the Bottom will soon be gone influence the rest of the novel? How does this description imply that things are not what they appear to be on the surface?
- What are some possible reasons for Eva's decision to go downstairs and light the fire, "the smoke of which was in her hair for years"? How does this make you feel about her character? Was this an act of sacrifice or selfishness? Can Eva be described as "good" or "bad"?
- Eva gave her children to a neighbor and returned 18 months later, minus one leg. What is the possible symbolic significance of Eva's missing leg? How does it tie into the theme of deceptive appearances in the novel?
- *Sula* contains some adult language and themes. Is this book appropriate for high school students? Are African Americans portrayed in a positive or negative light in the book? What about the portrayal of white people?
- The novel takes place over the course of 45 years. How do relations between the races change over the course of the novel? How are the inhabitants of the Bottom and Medallion changed by what's going on in the world around them?
- One reviewer commented that *Sula* is "a complex story of friendship and disappointment, death and sex, desperation and vulnerability" (Gayle Sims, *Knight-Ridder Newspaper*). How would you characterize the novel?
- Sula and Nel become friends and later seem to be each other's alter egos. How does Nel's decision to marry inform Sula's life? How does Sula's leaving influence Nel?



Skokie Public Library

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