

Discussion Questions

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison (1970)

1. There are references to female beauty throughout *The Bluest Eye*. Pick several instances in which the concept of beauty appears in the text and discuss how these notions of beauty influence the female characters, specifically Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda. How is beauty in the novel associated with whiteness? How does this impact the characters' understanding of themselves?
2. Choose one character (Pecola, Cholly, Maureen, Claudia, etc.), and describe the various aspects of that character's identity (age, race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.). How do these elements contribute to our understanding of the text's theme(s)?
3. On page 17, Morrison writes, "Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment." What do you think this means? Does this have anything to do with the American Dream? Why or why not?
4. Explore the theme of love in the novel. Where does it appear? What forms does it take? Where is there a lack of love, and how does this lack impact the characters?
5. Compare and contrast the characters of Pecola and Claudia. How are they similar and how are they different? What factors contribute to their dominant traits?
6. In *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, Dorothy Allison explores the link between sexuality and violence. Discuss the various ways these topics appear in *The Bluest Eye* and discuss any connections you find between the way the two texts treat sexuality and violence.
7. Discuss how Pecola changes throughout the novel. What is she like at the beginning, the middle, and the end? How do the other characters in the novel influence her? How does society influence her?
8. Explore some of the metanarratives at play in this novel. What are the different "stories" society tells the characters about life and the traits/behaviors that are valuable/desireable? Do the characters internalize these narratives, defy them, something else?
9. What other themes and symbols do you find to be particularly interesting and/or important in the text? Why do these stand out, and how can we connect them to the larger theme of the text and/or the historical moment in which it was written?
10. Compare and contrast an element from *The Bluest Eye* with one (or more) of the other texts we have read so far this semester.