



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor: 8.4  
IJAR 2022; 8(7): 497-500  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 01-05-2022  
Accepted: 05-06-2022

**Dr. Kirti**  
Ward No 1, Master Colony,  
Railway Road, Mahendragarh,  
Haryana, India

## Toni Morrison's novel *Sula*: A critical analysis of the writings

**Dr. Kirti**

### Abstract

*Sula* by Toni Morrison is an Afro-American literary classic that explores the history of the African Diaspora through imagery of loss and rebirth. He experiences the futility and meaninglessness of Suicide Day for the first time in its history. He considers that he might now pass the time by gazing out of his riverbank window at the moon. With the purple and white belt, he wants to hang back. Not going at all. Shadrack is now making one more effort to convince him to make a suicide call on January 3, 1941, which is National Suicide Day. This time, he offers folks a tidy, compassionate way to pass away. His bell had a tinny, impassion less tone, and his rope was badly tied. His voice lost its bite, and he was unconcerned whether he helped them or not. His guest had passed away and would no longer visit. Shadrack emerges as a leader who challenges his followers to prove their mettle in the final moments. He incites their pride and urges them to banish the worst evil—fear of dying. In the current research paper, the author examines Toni Morrison's work *Sula* from the viewpoints of both feminism and the literature of African-American women. In the specific context of the protagonist's relationships with others and with herself, it makes an effort to investigate, using a New Critic method, the obvious presence of the forces of love and death throughout the tale.

**Keywords:** Futility, meaninglessness, persuade, national suicide day

### Introduction

One of the most prominent African American female novelists of the 20th century, Toni Morrison has attempted to explain issues with racism and discrimination through her fictional setting. Morrison, an African American woman, bravely displays African American feminist consciousness in her creative work by aggressively expressing her feminist philosophies.

*Sula* by Toni Morrison is a masterpiece in the way that it organizes the narrative discourse of black consciousness. It provides a nuanced analysis of how the self becomes problematic in connection to how it interacts with the other. The Self acquires new knowledge outlines that continue to have an impact on its consciousness as a result of its ongoing conflict with the other. The subject's reality causes knowledge to change and introduces new categories of experience. This dynamic process weaves across structured networks, interconnections, and linkages, pushing a reformation of the disorganized human state. *Sula*'s story is set in the psycho historical context of the experience of African Americans. They view the procedure for when white people arrive with weapons of mass destruction in the black neighborhood, provisioning starts. They remove any traces of black life. Traumatized, they recall Shadrack's attempts to bring order to the turmoil in their lives and *Sula*'s stabilizing influence over his thunderous environment. Shadrack and *Sula* are two innately energetic elements that are misunderstood despite being essential to the structure of black civilization and creating a space where local knowledge is transformed. People begin to become conscious of new categories of experience, desires, and pains and pleasures.

For psychoanalytically interpreting the imperative of jouissance that penetrates *Sula*'s writing, the temporal period 1919–1965 serves as a starting point. The events drift further back after the prologue, blurring the chronology, although there is a significant jump in time after that. The narrative is not restricted by the movement's linearity, providing the narrator the freedom to connect any two points insofar as doing so aids in reconstructing awareness. Eva has the right and ability to arbitrate on her own behalf. We must go beyond the timeline of the story in order to comprehend how she was able to win this.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Kirti**  
Ward No 1, Master Colony,  
Railway Road, Mahendragarh,  
Haryana, India

The same is true of Helene's escape from the brothel.

### Review of the Literature

In *No Bottom and No Top: Oppositions in Sula*, Madhu Dubey (1994) questions black feminist/nationalist interpretations of Sula. Dubey does admit that the book investigates heterosexuality through Nel and Sula's satisfying relationship and "affirms the newness of the ideal black subject."

Toni Morrison's fiction, according to Susan Willis (1990), who wrote *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience*, aims to heal the alienation of the (black) individual from its culture. Through funk-related tropes that "include metaphors drawn from past moments of sexual fulfilment as well as the use of lack, deformity, and self-mutilation as figures for emancipation," it disrupts the transmission and continuity of culture.

### Significance of the Study

By examining the development or decline of the female protagonists in Morrison's novel, the author has looked at the different circumstances that have contributed to the underprivileged situation of Black girls and women. As this study explores the processes and techniques by which women move from a condition of suppression to one of self-assertion, it becomes more pertinent.

### Objectives of the Study

The goal of the current study is to evaluate Toni Morrison's novel *Sula* critically.

### Hypothesis of the Study

*Sula* by Toni Morrison explores the different manifestations of love and death notably in reference to Sula and how her interactions with other people and with herself shaped the development of her identity, hopefully effectively.

### Research Methodology and Data Collection

The author tried to examine the novel thematically, structurally, and stylistically using the information gathered from prior reviews and critical studies on the subject.

Both primary and secondary sources were used to gather the data. *Sula*, a book by Toni Morrison, is one of the main sources. Three roots make up the secondary sources:

- Print media content consists of books, journal articles, academic papers, etc.
- Research articles and research papers presented at conferences, symposia, seminars, and workshops are examples of non-print media content.
- E-media resources available on various websites include encyclopedias, dictionaries, theories, handbooks, yearbooks, proceedings, etc. These three are employed in the gathering and analysis of data.

### Findings and Discussions

The narrative of Sula and Nel, best friends who grew up in opposing family situations but remained close, can be found in *Sula* (1974). Sula swings the boy and loses her hold as she plays with Chicken Little; the boy falls into the river and drowns. She kept this accident a secret from everyone. One day, her mother's clothing caught fire, killing her after being burned in it. Sula sees two people die right in front of her, but she is powerless to intervene, and she is saddened by this. Nel weds Jude during this time, and Sula departs from

the Bottom. Bottom, a mountainous territory provided for slaves' use by a white master. When Sula and Nel return to the village after ten years, she discovers that everyone views her as a wicked maker. Because they believe she had relationships with white men, she is regarded as a producer of evil. The friendship ends after Jude, Nel's husband, leaves Nel because he loves Sula. The equilibrium of their friendship can only be restored by Sula's passing.

Sula is split into two parts and focuses on the friendship between two black women. In the first section, Sula and Nel meet as children in a black community and get engaged in a little boy's death. In the second section, Sula returns to the neighbourhood as an adult after an unresolved ten-year hiatus. The book is divided into 10 chapters, each of which is set in a different year: 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1927, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941, and 1965.

### From Ignorance to Guilt, Part I

#### 1919

Shadrack is a wounded veteran of World War I. He focuses on his experiences and creates a system to save himself from falling into madness as he teeters on the edge of it. On January 3, 1920, he establishes National Suicide Day.

#### 1920

Helene Wright, Nel's mother, embarks on a trip to the South with Nel. When she comes across the white people outside, her world of dreams that she had formed while looking at white models crumbles. Nel escapes her mother's control and makes friends with Sula.

#### 1921

Although it is not the same as what Shadrack experiences in the fight, Plum returns from World War I "emasculated." Eva Peace, Sula's grandma, burns herself up out of sympathy. Her behavior makes her children question whether she truly loves them. Eva provides context by describing her husband Boy Boy's dissertation and how she constructed a home using insurance proceeds that she could only collect after having her leg amputated.

#### 1922

Sula Peace and Nel Wright get close and share each other's joys and sorrows. They run into Chicken Little, a little child, when they are engaged in ritual play and connecting with the ground. Sula whips him around and throws him into the river water in her eagerness to gain his favor. Shadrack replies, "Always," to Sula's guilt-ridden question.

#### 1923

Eva is questioned by Hannah, Sula's mother, for burning Plum. She receives a curse from Ea for defying her power. Hannah dies from burns after being caught in flames while attempting to start a yardfire. Sula does not respond when she sees her mother being burned.

#### 1927

The preceding chapter's graphic contents are somewhat abated because Nel marries Jude in accordance with common thought.

## Kingdom and Exile, Part II

In regard to the atypical individuals Sula and Shadrack, the second section of the book explores the collective consciousness of the black neighborhood.

### 1937

After ten years, Sula returns to Bottom. She transfers Eva Peace to the nursing facility. Jude's husband Nel is in bed with Sula. Jude abandons Nel and forgets to send his sons' birthday cards.

### 1939

Nel joins the group to curse Sula, who has come to represent evil. Sula becomes isolated and dangerous after breaking up with her pal. Ajax provides some solace. He adores her because she reminds him so much of his mother, but when he departs too, Sula loses all motivation to live.

### 1940

Nel Wright pays a sick Sula a visit. Sula doesn't express any regrets about the life she has led. Sula passes away quietly. Shadrack pays his respects and discovers that his world is empty without Sula.

### 1941

A march is led to the tunnel site by Shadrack. Black people blow up the tunnel since they were not given jobs there. In the tunnel, a land slide claims several black lives.

### 1965

The area experiences a major change. As more black people get employment, their condition is currently improving. Only Nel is concerned about the future. As she tries to record her experiences, a plethora of images from her association with Sula flood her mind.

Shadrack goes on with a new life, riding on the resounding support of the Bottom people, fed up with his lonely existence and persuaded of the spinelessness of black people. The funny march to the tunnel site kills the "adult anguish behind their eyes" and tickles their "ocean's depths." All participants in the Great March are immersed in the life-stimulating power of laughing and christened in their new faith. It is an opening in the cosmic energy's curtain.

They enter the tunnel deeply in their excitement to completely destroy it, only to perish under the rubble of the crumbling structure.

Shadrack appears there as if forgetting "his song and his rope, he merely stood there high up on the bank ringing, ringing his bell," according to those who are able to flee. Shadrack's selfless act of awakening a sleepy community's collective conscience is of immeasurable cultural significance. A person's demise in the tunnel can be compared to an effort to reenter the womb; Plum's identical endeavour caused Eva to burn him to death. Fritz Wittels suggests that those who have given us life are, in a bipolar way, the daimons of death, interpreting Freud's typology of dreams of a return to the mother's womb. Wittels continues by arguing that the dreamer joins the mother again in his or her imagination, imagines that he is emerging from her, and merges with the mother to become one flesh. The phrase "immersion/death in the tunnel" alludes to the end of black people's emasculation and the hope for a fresh start and rebirth.

The insight reflected in Freud's idea of "Thanatos" offers another another perspective on National Suicide Prevention Day. Freud claimed that "Thanatos," or the desire to die, is entrenched in the human mind. It is not something that was computed into it from without; rather, eros, the principle of dynamic relatedness, keeps it in the background of the psyche. A man slides into despair and depression when he loses the ability to relate to others and get sex satisfaction, fulfilment, and a sense of well-being from a variety of interactions, from intensely emotional engagements to practical transactions. Or, to put it another way, "Thanatos" shifts from the background to the foreground. In Shadrack's case, a horrifying death experience occurred when he was a "private." His blood contains death in every way. He must therefore exorcise it. He is introduced to the idea of National Suicide Prevention Day by his dying mindset. To use a line from Walt Whitman's classic poem, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," it is a deft, superb "send up."

Later, Freud softened the stark contrast between "Thanatos" and "eros," suggesting that these two concepts are connected. In fact, he proposed that death creates a passageway to "Eros," or love.

## Conclusion

Reviews of Morrison's books are overwhelmingly positive, and they have been the focus of numerous scholarly volumes and essays in the subjects of gender studies, ethnic studies, postmodern theory, literary theory, and cultural studies. Numerous critics complimented Morrison's nuanced handling of African American identity concerns in her books, noting that the author's development as an artist was impacted by a number of factors that should be studied in relation to the topic at hand.

The friendship between Sula Peace and Nel Right is the subject of the book *Sula*. In the novel, this core relationship emerges against a backdrop of bizarre, intertwined familial ties, the small-town, judgmental black society known as "the Bottom," and finally the distant, exploitative white power structure of Medallion and beyond. The celebration of Nel and Jude's marriage marks the conclusion of the first section of the book. But first, learn how Nel and Sula became friends and embarked on a journey to explore the world of suffering and pleasure, innocence and guilt, and darkness and light environment's symbolic field. It's crucial to note that Sula, a bubbling.

Having unrepressed sexuality and restless creative energy, she avoids a crucial turning point (the radical split's fracture), and as a result, her dialectical relationship with Nel. From an analytical standpoint, it doesn't matter where these two ladies end up, but what causes them to act the way they do when they unite, separate, and lastly, what causes Nel's unrelenting anguish after Sula's death, are undoubtedly crucial.

To arrive at a thorough explanation of the human existential condition, an effort will be made to elucidate the psycho-historical backdrop of the human subject in both its generality (human history) and its particularity (the specific life of the person). Blacks' hierarchical status in society is closely related to the phallic power of white people. The hollowness of one reality is the coherence of the other. Helene, Nel's mother, longs for white models in order to stand out in her own community, which she does brilliantly. However, she becomes a helpless and anxious mess when she interacts with the white outdoors.

The book *Sula* is about ambiguity. It investigates and criticises the concepts of "good" and "evil," frequently pointing out how similar they are. The book explores the puzzling secrets of human emotions and relationships and comes to the conclusion that social conventions are insufficient as a basis for a fulfilling life. The book tempts the reader to categorise the characters and their acts using the diametrically opposed concepts of "good" and "evil," "right," and "wrong," but it also demonstrates the need to avoid this temptation. *Sula* rejects easy explanations while examining how individuals attempt to make sense of lives that are rife with disputes over issues of race, gender, and basic idiosyncratic viewpoints. She does this by highlighting the uncertainty, beauty, and terror of life, in both its successes and horrors.

### Reference

1. Toni Morrison *Sula*. Penguin, USA. Print, 1973.
2. Andrew Benjamin. *Adorno and Benjamin's the Problems of Modernity*. London: Routledge, 1989.
3. Toni Morrison. *Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, edited by Henry Louis, Jr. Gates and K.A. Appiah. Amistad, New York, 1993.
4. *Narrative Discourse* by Genette G Blackwell. Oxford, 1978.
5. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, by Marianne Hirsch. Indiana University Press, 1989.
6. *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* by Louis Hjelmslev, [6] The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1961.
7. *Discourse and the Other: The Production of the Afro-American Text*, by W. Lawrence Hogue. Duke UP, Durham, N.C, 1989.
8. *Moorings and Metaphors: Figures of Culture and Gender in Black Women's Literature*, by Karla F.C. Holloway. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992.