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Oprah Book Club Selection, April 2000: Originally published in 1970, *The Bluest Eye* is Toni Morrison's first novel. In an afterword written more than two decades later, the author expressed her dissatisfaction with the book's language and structure: "It required a sophistication unavailable to me." Perhaps we can chalk up this verdict to modesty, or to the Nobel laureate's impossibly high standards of quality control. In any case, her debut is nothing if not sophisticated, in terms of both narrative ingenuity and rhetorical sweep. It also shows the young author drawing a bead on the subjects that would dominate much of her career: racial hatred, historical memory, and the dazzling or degrading power of language itself. Set in Lorain, Ohio, in 1941, *The Bluest Eye* is something of an ensemble piece. The point of view is passed like a baton from one character to the next, with Morrison's own voice functioning as a kind of gold standard throughout. The focus, though, is on a 11-year-old black girl named Pecola Breedlove, whose entire family has been given a cosmetic cross to bear: You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question.... And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it. There are far uglier things in the world than will, ugliness, and poor Pecola is subjected to most of them. She's spat upon, ridiculed, and ultimately raped and impregnated by her own father. No wonder she yearns to be the very opposite of what she is--years, in other words, to be a white child, possessed of the blondest hair and the bluest eye. This vein of self-hatred is exactly what keeps Morrison's novel from devolving into a cut-and-dried scenario of victimization. She may in fact pin too much of the blame on the beauty myth: "Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another--physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion." Yet the destructive power of these ideas is essentially colorblind, which gives *The Bluest Eye* the sort of universal reach that Morrison's imitators can only dream of. And that, combined with the novel's modulated pathos and musical, fine-grained language, makes for not merely a sophisticated debut but a permanent one. --James Marcus No doubt spurred on by Morrison's winning of the 1993 Nobel prize for literature, Plume is releasing trade paperback editions of her novels, beginning with this title (LJ 11/17/0). These editions also include a new afterword by the author.Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. A PARADE BEST BOOK OF ALL TIMEA TODAY SHOW #ReadWithJenna BOCAL CLUB PICK! So precise, so faithful to speech and so charged with pain and wonder that the novel becomes poetry. The New York TimesA profoundly successful work of fiction. . . . Taut and understated, harsh in its detachment, sympathetic in its truth. . . . it is an experience. The Detroit Free PressThis story commands attention, for it contains one black girl's universe. Newsweek 5/3 hours Read by Toni Morrison and Ruby Dee Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is the first novel written by Toni Morrison. It is the story of eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove--a black girl in an America whose love for its blond, blue-eyed children can devastate all others--who prays for her eyes to turn blue: so that she will be beautiful, so that people will look at her, so that her world will be different. This is the story of the nightmare at the heart of her yearning and the tragedy of its fulfillment. "This story commands attention, for it contains one black girl's universe."--Newsweek "Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is an inquiry into the reasons why beauty gets wasted in this country. The beauty in this case is black. [Miss Morrison's prose is] so precise, so faithful to speech and so charged with pain and wonder that the novel becomes poetry."--I have said 'poetry,' but *The Bluest Eye* is also history, sociology, folklore, nightmare and music."--John Leonard, *The New York Times* "A fresh, close look at the lives of terror and decorum of those Negroes who want to get on in a white man's world...A touching and disturbing picture of the doomed youth of [the authors] race."--L.E. Sissman, *The New Yorker* "A profoundly successful work of fiction...so controlled, so good...with the same clean precision that Sherwood Anderson used to carve his troubled little town..."Taut and understated, harsh in its detachment, sympathetic in its truth...it is an experience."--Gary Blonston, *Detroit Free Press* "The freshest, most precise language I've run across in years." Toni Morrison is a wizard."--John A. Williams *Toni Morrison* is also the author of *Sula*, *Paradise*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, *Beloved* (awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1988), and *Jazz*. She has worked in publishing and has taught at various universities.Morrison is currently the Robert F. Goheen Professor at Princeton.Along with the Nobel Prize she received in 1993, Toni Morrison was also awarded the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 1996. Ruby Dee's distinguished career includes roles in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and *Jungle Fever*. Dee was also honored with an Obie Award for her role as Lena in Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena*. She has appeared in several television series, including "Roots," and won an Emmy for "Decoration Day." Nuns go by by quiet as lust, and drunken men and sober eyes sing in the lobby of the Greek hotel. Rosemary Villanucci, our next-door friend who lives above her father's cafe, sits in a 1939 Buick eating bread and butter. She rolls down the window to tell my sister Frieda and me that we can't come in. We stare at her, wanting her bread, but more than that wanting to poke the arrogance out of her eyes and smash the pride of ownership that curls her chewing mouth. When she comes out of the car we will bear her up, make red marks on her white skin, and she will cry and ask us do we want her to pull her pants down. We will say no. We don't know what we should feel or do if she does, but whenever she asks us, we know she is offering us something precious and that our own pride must be asserted by refusing to accept.School has started, and Frieda and I get new brown stockings and cod-liver oil. Brown-ups talk in tired, edgy voices about Zick's Coal Company and take us along in the evening to the railroad tracks where we fill burlap sacks with the tiny pieces of coal lying about. Later we walk home, glancing back to see the great carloads of slag being dumped, red hot and smoking, into the ravine that skirts the steel mill. The dying fire lights the sky with a dull orange glow. Frieda and I lag behind, staring at the patch of color surrounded by black. It is impossible not to feel a shiver when our feet leave the gravel path and sink into the dead grass in the field.Our house is old, cold, and green. At night a kerosene lamp lights one large room. The others are braced in darkness, peopled by roaches and mice. Adults do not talk to us -- they give us directions. They issue orders without providing information. When we trip and fall down they glance at us; if we cut or bruise ourselves, they ask us we are crazy. When we catch colds, they shake their heads in disgust at our lack of consideration. How, they ask us, do you expect anybody to get anything done if you all are sick? We cannot answer them. Our illness is treated with contempt, foul Black Draught, and castor oil that blunts our minds.When, on a day after a trip to collect coal, I cough once, loudly, through bronchial tubes already packed tight with phlegm, my mother frowns. "Great Jesus. Get on in that bed. How many times do I have to tell you to wear something on your head? You must be the biggest fool in this town. Frieda? Get some rags and stuff that window."Frieda restuffs the window. I trudge off to bed, full of guilt and self-pity. I lie down in my underwear, the metal in the black garters hurts my legs, but I do not take them off, because it is too cold to lie stockinged. It takes a long time for my body to heat its place in the bed. Once I have generated a silhouette of warmth, I dare not move, for there is a cold place one-half inch in any direction. No one speaks to me or asks how I feel. In an hour or two my mother comes. Her hands are large and rough, and when she rubs the Vicks save on my chest, I am rigid with pain. She takes two fingers' full of it at a time, and massages my chest until I am faint. Just when I think I will tip over into a scream, she scoops out a little of the salve on her forefinger and puts it in my mouth, telling me to swallow. A hot flannel is wrapped about my neck and chest. I am covered up with heavy quilts and ordered to sweat, which I do, promptly.Later I throw up, and my mother says, "What did you puke on the bed clothes for? Don't you have sense enough to hold your head out the bed? Now, look what you did. You think I got time for nothing but washing up your puke?"The puke swaddles down the pillow onto the sheet--green-gray, with flecks of orange. It moves like the insides of an uncooked egg. Stubbornly clinging to its own mass, refusing to be removed. How, I wonder, can it be so neat and nasty at the same time?My mother's voice drones on. She is not talking to me. She is talking to the puke, but she is calling it my name: Claudia. She wipes it up as best she can and puts a scratchy towel over the large wet place. I lie down again. The rags have fallen from the window crack, and the air is cold. I dare not call her back and am reluctant to leave my warmth. My mother's anger humiliates me; her words chafe my cheeks, and I am crying. I do not know that she is not angry at me, but at my sickness. I believe she despises my weakness for letting the sickness "take hold." By and by I will not get sick; I will refuse to. But for now I am crying. I know I am making more snot, but I can't stop.My sister comes in. Her eyes are full of sorrow. She sings to me: "When the deep purple falls over sleepy garden wads, someone thinks of me. . . . I doze, thinking of plums, walls, and "someone."But was it really like that? As painful as I remember! Only mildly. Or rather, it was a productive and fruitfuling pain. Love, thick and dark as Alaga syrup, eased up into that cracked window. I could smell it -- taste it -- sweet, musty, with an edge of wintergreen in its base -- everywhere in that house. It stuck, along with my tongue, to the frosted windowpanes. It coated my chest, along with the salve, and when the flannel came undone in my sleep, the clear, sharp curves of air outlined its presence on my throat. And in the night, when my coughing was dry and tough, feet padded back and forth, hands reprimed the flannel, readjusted the quilt, and rested a moment on my forehead. So when I think of autumn, I think of somebody with hands who does not want me to die.From the Hardcover edition of *The Bluest Eye*. Toni Morrison explores the issue of beauty and what it means to be considered beautiful. The characters in the novel are all affected by this concept in different ways, with some striving to attain beauty while others reject it entirely. The idea of beauty is complex and ever-changing, and Morrison probes into its many layers through her characters experiences. For many of the characters in *The Bluest Eye*, being beautiful is equated with being happy and successful. They believe that if they can just become more attractive, their lives will improve. This is most clearly seen in Pecola Breedlove, who believes that if she could just have blue eyes, she would be happy. The unattainability of this goal drives her mad. Other characters in the novel view beauty in a different way. Claudia, for example, understands that beauty is not just about whats on the outside. She knows that there is more to it than that, and she values inner beauty over outer beauty. This is evident when she tells Pecola that love makes you do crazy things and that loving somebody ain't nothing but wanting to eat them up. Ultimately, *The Bluest Eye* is a story about the power of beauty and the ways in which it can affect peoples lives. Morrison shows us both the good and the bad that can come from striving for beauty. The characters who are most affected by it are those who allow it to control them completely. The novel is a reminder that beauty is not everything, and that there is more to life than just looking good. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, according to a popular saying. This implies that every person is beautiful in his or her own way depending on how others see them. For Pecola Breedlove, this was an unpleasant notion. Pecola is a 11-year-old African-American girl from Toni Morrisons book *The Bluest Eye*. Throughout most of her brief lifetime, Pecola suffers because of her physical features, and she never really got to understand what it meant to be truly attractive. The novel *The Bluest Eye* explores the different themes surrounding beauty. The most prominent theme is that beauty is not just skin deep. The novel also touches on the topics of self-hatred, internalized racism, and family dynamics. The *Bluest Eye* is a story about the search for beauty and the tragedy that can come with wanting to be something that you are not. One of the main ways that this theme is explored is through the character of Pecola Breedlove. Pecola was born with very dark skin and she has extremely curly hair. She also has a big nose and thick lips. Throughout her life, Pecola is ridiculed by others because of her appearance. The other characters in the novel often refer to her as ugly and they make fun of her. This makes Pecola feel as though she is not worthy of love or respect. She starts to believe that if she could just change her appearance, then she would be happy. Pecola becomes obsessed with the idea of having blue eyes. The *bluest eye* is considered to be the most beautiful color and Pecola feels like she needs to have blue eyes in order to be beautiful. This fixation on beauty leads Pecola down a dark path. Despite being ridiculed because of her appearance, Pecola does not give up on her dream of being beautiful. In fact, she becomes even more determined to achieve it. This is most clearly seen when Pecola's father rapes her. Pecola wishes to have blue eyes in order to appear like the white women who were thought to be ideal. These characteristics also included blue eyes and blonde hair. We still have our standards of beauty today. Caucasians may still regard physical perfection as involving blue eyes, blonde hair, and a slim body. Other ethnic groups have their own ideas of what constitutes beauty. In African-American culture, being thick is considered attractive. There are several references to Caucasian females and girls that Pecola admired in her writings. The novel *The Bluest Eye* shows how the ideal of beauty can play a big role in someones life, and how it can be damaging. The novel also addresses the issue of colorism, which is prejudice or discrimination against people who have a darker skin tone. The characters in *The Bluest Eye* are all affected by colorism in one way or another. The theme of beauty is important in *The Bluest Eye* because it is something that affects everyone, regardless of race. The ideal of beauty is something that is constantly being marketed to us, and we are always trying to live up to these standards. The *Bluest Eye* shows how damaging this can be. The first was Shirley Temple. Shirley Temple, a prominent young actress in the 1930s and 1940s, was most recognized for her curly blonde hair and blue eyes. Pecola showed an interest in the Shirley Temple cups as soon as she moved in with the MacTeer family. Morrison writes, She gazed fondly at the outline of Shirley Temples dentad face (19). Because Pecola drank so much milk, Mrs. MacTeer became concerned about their supply. The tiny girl on Mary Jane candy wrappers is another example of idealized beauty. The girl has blonde hair and blue eyes, and is racially ambiguous. The ideal of beauty that is portrayed in these examples is one that is white and blonde. One of the most significant instances of the theme of beauty in *The Bluest Eye* occurs when Pecola prays for blue eyes. Morrison writes, She wanted to be beautiful so bad she could taste it. And she thought God could do anything (163). Pecola desires for blue eyes stems from her belief that they are a sign of beauty and goodness. The fact that she associates blue eyes with these qualities reinforces the dominant standard of beauty in America at the time. The novel makes it clear that this standard is not attainable for everyone, particularly black women. This contributes to the characters feelings of self-hatred and inadequacy. The *Bluest Eye* challenges the reader to question the definition of beauty, and to consider who decides what is beautiful. edit descriptions of this character BooksToni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, became readers' favorites but not without strife. The book would be banned from multiple institutions over the years. The literary world and book lovers are still reeling from Toni Morrisons passing. Thankfully, the award-winning writer left almost a dozen books depicting the black experience in an unconventional way that will remain available for centuries. With her documentary, *Toni Morrison: The Piece I Am*, streaming on Hulu, viewers are getting an inside look at what drove her writing. Toni Morrison 2012 | PATRICK KOVARIK/AFP/Gettyimages One of the most shocking revelations revealed through the documentary is the amount of criticism Morrison faced for her raw storytelling and the extreme methods the powers that be took in an attempt to censor her work. Her first novel was met with both praise and criticism and became controversial for the number of times it was banned from educational institutions. *The Bluest Eye* was released in 1970 and was the start of Morrisons writing career. Working as an editor, Morrison used her support staff to type drafts of the novel as part of their assignment. Little did they know, they were contributing to history. The novel tells the story of a young African-American girl named Pecola, who grows up during the Great Depression in Lorain, Ohio. The story works in themes of colorism with Pecola having darker skin which regards her as ugly and how it affects her self-esteem and perception of her relatives. *The Bluest Eye* is a story about the search for beauty and the tragedy that can come with wanting to be something that you are not. One of the main ways that this theme is explored is through the character of Pecola Breedlove. Pecola was born with very dark skin and she has extremely curly hair. She also has a big nose and thick lips. Throughout her life, Pecola is ridiculed by others because of her appearance. The other characters in the novel often refer to her as ugly and they make fun of her. This makes Pecola feel as though she is not worthy of love or respect. She starts to believe that if she could just change her appearance, then she would be happy. Pecola becomes obsessed with the idea of having blue eyes. 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In an afterword written more than two decades later, the author expressed her dissatisfaction with the book's language and structure: "It required a sophistication unavailable to me." Perhaps we can chalk up this verdict to modesty, or to the Nobel laureate's impossibly high standards of quality control. In any case, her debut is nothing if not sophisticated, in terms of both narrative ingenuity and rhetorical sweep. It also shows the young author drawing a bead on the subjects that would dominate much of her career: racial hatred, historical memory, and the dazzling or degrading power of language itself. Set in Lorain, Ohio, in 1941, *The Bluest Eye* is something of an ensemble piece. The point of view is passed like a baton from one character to the next, with Morrison's own voice functioning as a kind of gold standard throughout. 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A hot flannel is wrapped about my neck and chest. I am covered up with heavy quilts and ordered to sweat, which I do, promptly.Later I throw up, and my mother says, "What did you puke on the bed clothes for? Don't you have sense enough to hold your head out the bed? Now, look what you did. You think I got time for nothing but washing up your puke?"The puke swaddles down the pillow onto the sheet -- green-gray, with flecks of orange. It moves like the insides of an uncooked egg. Stubbornly clinging to its own mass, refusing to be removed. How, I wonder, can it be so neat and nasty at the same time?My mother's voice drones on. She is not talking to me. She is talking to the puke, but she is calling it my name: Claudia. She wipes it up as best she can and puts a scratchy towel over the large wet place. I lie down again. The rags have fallen from the window crack, and the air is cold. I dare not call her back and am reluctant to leave my warmth. 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Who is pecola's mom in the bluest eye. What happened to pecola at the end of the bluest eye. Pecola ending. How old is pecola in the bluest eye. Does pecola die in the bluest eye. What happened to pecola in the bluest eye. Who is pecola's mother in the bluest eye. Who is pecola's father in the bluest eye.

