

Study Guide For Toni Morrison Sula Course Hero Study Guides

to Toni Morrison's Sula

Toni Morrison's *Sula*, published in 1973, is a powerful and critically acclaimed novel that explores complex themes of race, gender, and community. Set in the small, predominantly African American town of Medallion, Ohio, the story follows the lives of two young women, Sula and Nel, as they navigate the complexities of their upbringing and relationships.



Study Guide for Toni Morrison's Sula (Course Hero Study Guides) by Esta S.

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 933 KB

Print length : 34 pages

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Screen Reader : Supported



This study guide provides a comprehensive overview of *Sula*, including a summary of the plot, analysis of major themes, character descriptions, and exploration of the novel's significant symbolism. Whether you're a student studying *Sula* for a class or a general reader seeking a deeper understanding of Morrison's work, this guide will serve as an invaluable resource.

Plot Summary of Sula

Sula and Nel, both born in Medallion in the early 20th century, grow up together as best friends. However, their paths diverge significantly as they reach adolescence. Sula becomes an independent and rebellious young woman, while Nel conforms to societal expectations and marries a local man.

Over the years, Sula's unconventional lifestyle and relationships cause tension within the community. She challenges traditional gender roles, engages in extramarital affairs, and even murders a man. Meanwhile, Nel's life is marked by domesticity and a sense of isolation.

As the story progresses, Sula and Nel's friendship is tested by their contrasting choices and values. Their relationship is ultimately destroyed by a tragedy that forever alters the lives of everyone in Medallion.

Major Themes in Sula

Race and Identity: Sula examines the complexities of race and racial identity within the African American community. Both Sula and Nel navigate a society that marginalizes and devalues them because of their race.

Gender and Oppression: The novel explores the ways in which women are oppressed in society. Sula breaks free from traditional gender roles, while Nel remains confined by societal expectations.

Community and Belonging: Sula highlights the importance of community and belonging. However, it also shows that communities can be both supportive and oppressive.

Love and Loss: The novel examines the transformative power of love as well as the devastating effects of loss. Sula and Nel's friendship is both a

source of strength and a source of pain.

Character Descriptions

Sula Peace

Sula is a strong-willed and fiercely independent young woman. She challenges societal norms, pursues her own desires, and refuses to conform to others' expectations. Her rebellious nature sets her apart from the rest of the community and eventually leads to her downfall.

Nel Wright

Nel is Sula's best friend who takes a more traditional path in life. She marries a local man and settles down into domesticity. However, she remains fascinated by Sula's unconventional lifestyle and struggles with her own feelings of dissatisfaction.

Jude Greene

Jude is a complex and enigmatic character who becomes Sula's lover. He is a musician and artist who is attracted to Sula's rebellious spirit. However, he also has a dark past and struggles with his own demons.

Eva Peace

Eva is Sula's mother who bears the scars of a life marked by poverty and abuse. She struggles to provide for her daughter and often projects her own fears and insecurities onto Sula.

Symbolism in Sula

The River Bottom: The river bottom, located outside of Medallion, represents a place of freedom and escape. It is where Sula and Nel first meet and where Sula ultimately finds solace and acceptance.

The Tree of Life: The tree of life, located in the center of Medallion, symbolizes the interconnectedness of the community. It is also a place of healing and renewal.

The Dancing Shawl: The dancing shawl, worn by Sula, represents her vibrant and free spirit. It is also a symbol of her power and sensuality.

The Fire: The fire that destroys Medallion at the end of the novel represents both destruction and rebirth. It symbolizes the end of one era and the beginning of a new one.

Toni Morrison's *Sula* is a powerful and moving novel that delves into complex themes of race, gender, community, love, and loss. Through its vivid characterizations, rich symbolism, and lyrical prose, *Sula* provides a deep and thought-provoking exploration of the human experience. This study guide has provided a comprehensive overview of the novel, offering insights into its major themes, characters, and symbolism. By delving further into these aspects, readers can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Toni Morrison's masterpiece.



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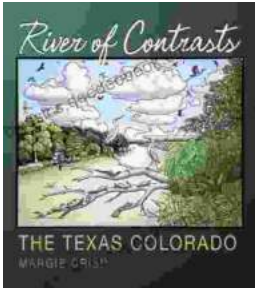
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