



Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number

Candidate name

School number

School name

Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2013

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Literature

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: Based on her representations of slavery, what does slavery actually mean in Toni Morrison's "Be-loved"?

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature:

Date:

## Supervisor's report and declaration

*The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.*

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

*Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.*

*This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature:

Date:

**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Criteria	Achievement level			
	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	1	2	
B introduction	2	0	2	
C investigation	4	0	4	
D knowledge and understanding	4	0	4	
E reasoned argument	4	0	4	
F analysis and evaluation	4	0	4	
G use of subject language	4	3	4	
H conclusion	2	0	2	
I formal presentation	4	0	4	
J abstract	2	0	2	
K holistic judgment	4	0	4	
Total out of 36		4		

Extended Essay

Based on her representations of slavery,  
what does slavery actually mean in Toni  
Morrison's "Beloved"?

## Abstract

This essay investigates the relevancy of slavery in Toni Morrison's "Beloved." I explored how it was represented through her work and her poetic-like writing style. Slavery is the most prominent theme in this novel. Morrison considered it in every aspect and revealed its truth. Through the characters, she brought about the idea that their past was a burden because of slavery. The struggles that the characters faced were indeed because of slavery. Because of the School Teacher, Sethe was forced to do the unthinkable. Morrison is providing the reader with insight to the psychological and historical legacy of slavery. Beloved represents the psychological aspect, as she is seen as a force rather than an actual being. Morrison uses "Beloved" as a voice for those people who were unable to explain it. The purpose of "Beloved" was for readers to understand slavery and how it affected people. In this essay I explored each part.

Toni Morrison's novel, "Beloved" is not any ordinary story. Her poetic and elegant style of writing takes the reader to a different world. Strong references to slavery are used to portray the struggles that the characters face in "Beloved". The protagonist in the novel, Sethe, has inescapable memories of slavery. Her past is a burden and it is something she will never forget. In an attempt to protect her children from a lifestyle of slavery, she tries to murder them. However, Sethe is only successful in killing one of her daughters, "Beloved." Beloved remains as a connection to Sethe's horrific past as she torments her house in the form of a ghost. Was Sethe wrong in killing her child although she had good intentions? I would have to agree. Toni Morrison uses Sethe as a way to give insight to the effects of slavery, how it will never disappear from the memories of those who were affected by it, and to uncover a history that was lost to willed forgetfulness and forced silences.

In the novel each character faced his/her own individual struggle that stemmed from slavery. Sethe was forced to kill her child and live with the memories, which in turn made her young sons run away. She lived everyday knowing what she did and dealing with the consequences. Denver had to deal with Beloved, not only returning to their home, but her jealousy toward her. Beloved struggled with questioning her mother's motive for killing her. She did not understand why her mother hurt her. If it were not for slavery, and the oppressive plantation of the School Teacher, these events never would have happened. In providing the struggles that each character faces, Toni Morrison is undermining slavery.

Slavery is represented throughout the novel as a burden of the past. Not only is it a burden for Sethe, but for people outside of the novel who were affected by it. One of Toni Morrison's most important messages through "Beloved" was to voice the opinions of those who

were unable or afraid to talk about slavery and its deeply rooted effects. Sethe's memories serve as her burden. She has constant reminders, through the ghost of what she did. No one visits her and no one stops by. When Denver is old enough to realize that she and her mom are isolated from the rest of the world she struggles to change it. Sethe will not allow it because she is firmly set in her beliefs that she did the best thing that she could do to avoid a life from slavery for her children. The fact that Sethe understands that her memories are burdens in her life and continues to not address them shows just how powerful the effects of slavery can be. Slavery has taken away this woman's will to stand up for herself. She fell victim to willed forgetfulness. However, later in the novel when Beloved returns in human form, Sethe leaves the house confident and unafraid of what people think. This shows that although one may fall victim to willed forgetfulness to escape the pain, there will come a day when one has to face it. After Sethe faced her fears, she was a happy woman and celebrated with her children. Morrison is showing people, like Sethe, that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

During slavery, it seemed as though nothing would ever go right for those affected. Oppression was heavy and people were scared to speak out, even until this day. In "Beloved," Toni Morrison is giving light to a lost history; lost history in the sense that no one is brave enough to talk about it. In this novel, Morrison takes a courageous stand and decides to uncover the lost history. She uses literary elements such as metaphors and symbolism to do so. Beloved is used as a symbolic character. She symbolizes the suppressed memories that eventually come to light. Those suppressed memories can turn out to be good or bad once they are released, as shown throughout the adversity of Beloved's character. Metaphors, such as the ghost in the house, are a link to a suppressed past. Bringing about a suppressed past, including its memories,

allows for room to make new memories. Another message Morrison wanted the readers to understand was just that.

“Beloved” is not just a book about a ghost of a child who torments her mother’s house. It is a rather interesting way of insight into the minds of those affected by slavery. Seeing as though the most prevalent theme in the novel is slavery, that is what Toni Morrison’s main message was about. She wanted American readers to understand that in order to address the legacy of slavery, we must confront its history first. In the novel Sethe said, “We must confront and understand the ghosts of the past.” Sethe is used as a voice of reason in an attempt to connect with readers. Slavery in this novel was represented through the struggles that the characters faced, burdens of the past, and lost history. Willful forgetfulness is unacceptable because one must not forget, but confront in order to live. Sethe realizes that after Beloved comes back to her. Suppressing memories and one’s past is also intolerable. In doing so, frustration will build up and one will not be able to lead a happy life. In the beginning of the novel Sethe did just that and she never had any company or friends. After allowing herself to confront her past and face the consequences, she set herself free. Slavery led to her freedom. Toni Morrison wants her readers to know that it does not matter what one faced, how long one faced it, or how what one faced affected themselves, that as long as one is willing to face his/her past, freedom will come.