

Essay Question #5

5. In *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), novelist Edith Wharton states the following. At every stage in the progress of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the illuminating incident to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity. Write a well-organized essay in which you describe an “illuminating” episode or moment and explain how it functions as a “casement,” a window that opens onto the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Topic: “Illuminating” incidents

Intro & Thesis: To illustrate the incident of Sethe’s murder (that reveals and emphasizes the psychoanalytic meaning of why Sethe had acted upon it), there are several “illuminating” episodes or moments throughout the story. The whole story circumscribes around Sethe’s murder attempt of her four children, as well as other experiences with slavery that occur with an underlying idea of liberation from slavery.

“Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in the other. She did not look at them; she simply swung the baby toward the wall planks, missed and tried to connect a second time, when out of nowhere in the ticking time the men spent staring at what there was to stare the old nigger boy, still mewling, ran through the door behind them and snatched the baby from the arch of its mother’s swing.”

(Events in chronological order)

1. “Halle’s women” and marriage

A. No ceremony: *You just said so. And I said all right.* “*Is there a wedding?*” Mrs. Garner put down her cooking spoon. Laughing a little, she touched Sethe on the head, saying, *“You are one sweet child.”* And then no more. This section is meant to emphasize on Sethe’s naiveté about her status as a slave because she believes that her marriage to Halle is an important event that should be memorialized like most girls her age, but to her slave owners simply view her marriage with Halle as copulation and see it as natural because the only reason that they bought a female slave was so that she would get pregnant. This is the first instance that shows the Garners in a racist light because although Mrs. Garner meant no offense to Sethe when she patted Sethe on the head and called her a sweet child, it was actually truly demeaning to Sethe because she believed that she deserved a wedding just like every other person in the world and realized that she and her fellow slaves were viewed as lesser to the white people due to this instance.

I. This exchange of lines between Sethe and Mrs. Garner re-emphasizes the dehumanization theme seed in which Mrs. Garner does not even treat her like she treats herself because the institution of society has made it so that she doesn’t even consider the possibility of having a wedding for Sethe, acting as illumination because of the ignorance that even innocent people involved in slavery hold. Mrs. Garner then goes on to laugh at the fact she even wants to be remotely similar to herself and tells her she is “one sweet child.”

B. *Sethe made a dress on the sly and Halle hung his hitching rope from a nail on the wall of her cabin.*

I. As a result of the lack of interest, Sethe is forced to make a dress secretly.

C. Sethe receives earrings from Mrs Garner which shows her kind nature towards Sethe despite the fact that Sethe is her slave, or someone beneath her, because she gives the “crystal” earrings to Sethe when she notices how glum she is about not having a wedding.

Now she noticed something more. The questions Beloved asked: "Where your diamonds?"

"Your woman she never fix up your hair?"

And most perplexing: Tell me your earrings.

D. Four Sweet Home Men excluding Sixo who already had a love and Halle was wedded to Sethe.

And so they were: Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, Paul A Garner, Halle Suggs and Sixo, the wild man. All in their twenties, minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape, thrashing on pallets, rubbing their thighs and waiting for the new girl--the one who took Baby Suggs' place after Halle bought her with five years of Sundays.

She waited a year. And the Sweet Home men abused cows while they waited with her. She chose Halle and for their first bedding she sewed herself a dress on the sly.

Even though the Sweet Home men had fantasized about rape and intimacy, they had decided to leave the new girl alone and let her choose which of them she would wed. This portrayed the mens' promise to commitment to be just with one another and rightfully let one of them have the honor of being with the only girl on the farm. Serious commitment was significant to them since the men viewed marriage as a rare event, which is why they agreed with each other to give each other the right to marry and be happy with Sethe.

E. Adds meaning of work on whole: Dehumanization Seed

I wasn't just set to do it. I was hungry to do it. Like a snake. All jaws and hungry.

"It wasn't no whiteboy at all. Was a girl. The raggediest-looking trash you ever saw saying, 'Look there. A nigger. If that don't beat all.' "

Down in the grass, like the snake she believed she was, Sethe opened her mouth, and instead of fangs and a split tongue, out shot the truth.

Dehumanization was a prominent theme seen throughout the novel for it defined the very treatment that is dished out through slavery. Morrison uses metaphors such as Sethe's hallucination that she is a snake while she see's Amy Denver come closer, for it denotes the very meaning of how slaves begin to view themselves as: animals. It brings out the animalistic side of slaves and how it affects not just the African American community, but the white as well in which their treatment is animalistic, while the “coloredpeople” are viewed as the animals.

2. Sixo and 30 Mile Woman

A. *Once he plotted down to the minute a thirty-mile trip to see a woman. He left on a Saturday when the moon was in the place he wanted it to be, arrived at her cabin before church on Sunday and had just enough time to say good morning before he had to start back again so he'd make the field call on time Monday morning. He had walked for seventeen hours, sat down for one, turned around and walked seventeen more. Halle and the Pauls spent the whole day covering Sixo's fatigue from Mr. Garner.*

Sixo never had the chance to meet up with and become intimate with his love of his life. He spends so much of his time trying to schedule something, showing the hope he still hold for life, which only emphasizes the loss of hope later on. The moment this event had occurred represents the moments of despondency and chagrin that occurs when slaves are constantly are let down or dissatisfied with the

rights that they are deprived of and that it will be an eternal cycle of never ending mistreatment and loss of hope. Furthermore, it represented the natural rights of humans that will unfortunately never be given to slaves.

B. Mental facilities go berserk after losing love of his life.

I. *Shouting Seven-O! Seven-O! because his Thirty-Mile Woman got away with his blossoming seed. What a laugh. So rippling and full of glee it put out the fire. And it was Sixo's laughter that was on his mind, not the bit in his mouth, when they hitched him to the buckboard.*

a. From Paul D's point of view, he notices how Sixo has already broke under the unbearable pressure of constantly hoping for something good of life, but never getting it. Sixo's laugh is the thing that indicates his craziness and illuminated how Sethe would never want her children to go through the same events.

Time never worked the way Sixo thought, so of course he never got it right. Once he plotted down to the minute a thirty-mile trip to see a woman. The kind of thing Sixo would do--like the time he arranged a meeting with Patsy the Thirty-Mile Woman. It took three months and two thirty-four-mile round trips to do it. To persuade her to walk one-third of the way toward him, to a place he knew. A deserted stone structure that Redmen used way back when they thought the land was theirs. Since neither could go anywhere on business of their own, and since the Thirty-Mile Woman was already fourteen and scheduled for somebody's arms, the danger was real.

3. Getting raped and getting milk stolen

A. *"After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still."*

I. Sethe was so traumatized when schoolteacher's nephews raped her, used such experience to influence her in the attempted murder of her children. Her children, being sons and daughters of slaves, were destined for rape; which doesn't have to be sexual. Rape is taking away someone's power, property, or rights without their consent and against their will by the threat or use of violence against them. (dictionary) Sethe was granted none of these. She had no power, no property, and no rights; dehumanizing her. In attempts to keep her children humane and pure, she decides that there is no hope in slavery for them. To her, it is better for them to move on to another life than to stay alive and be raped.

B. *'Come see,' I was thinking. 'Be the last thing you behold,' and sure enough here come the feet so I thought well that's where I'll have to start God do what He would, I'm gonna eat his feet off. I'm laughing now, but it's true. I wasn't just set to do it. I was hungry to do it. Like a snake. All jaws and hungry.*

II. At this point, Sethe has become dehumanized. She refers to herself as a snake and was thinking about eating another human being. This passage shows dehumanization because Sethe comparing herself to a snake and becoming more and more feral because she describes what she'd do if the person that came out of the forest were a white man. Like how she'd eat him and laugh after doing and how she wanted to do this showing the hysteria that plagued Sethe's mind after she left Sweet Home and how she cannot trust white men. It also describes how Sethe only thinks based on her appetite at this point, similar to an animal. Also this shows how Sethe viewed Amy before she was given any kindness

from her and how she could be just as judgmental as white folk.

E. Adds meaning of work on whole: rape/sexual violence theme throughout book (how it occurs in conjunction w/ slavery)

Sethe's is portrayed as overly protective of her children due to her constant reference to her past in which her own mother had only nursed her for the minimum amount of time needed for her to survive. Due to Sethe's deprivation of a maternal figure in her life due to her mother's hanging had caused her to feel fully obliged to care for her children and protect them from the restraining hands of slavery. Moreover, this had caused her to resort to desperation when the "whitemen" had come to collect her and her children and resell them as slaves again, resulting in her murder of her 3rd born child as well as the physical abuse on both her boys, Howard and Buglar. In Sethe's attempt to kill her children, she had meant to liberate her children from a life of slavery, rape, and the dehumanization that she had endured and had not wanted her children to go through as well.

F. **Themes:** Maternal symbolic is seen as a prevailing theme throughout the "illuminating moments" especially in the moment that Beloved begins to *"breakup [this] self-consuming mother-child circle. Impelled by the need to get food for her starving mother, she moves in to the larger community, but the search for food is aligned with her own "hunger" for learning. Denver joins a social order of language and exchange that both feeds her and teachers her to read."*

4. Baby Suggs' Death

A. The struggles from slavery and pains had lead up to her death

B. After all that she endured, Morrison had described Baby Suggs' as having a "tired heart".

C. Colors-

-The two orange patches on her quilt: a combination color of a mix of yellow and red that symbolizes hope and passion.

-Baby Suggs' grey quilt represents: a mix of black and white with black symbolizing positive associations with knowledge and intelligence and white that symbolizes light, innocence, purity, virginity, and timelessness and characters that contain or described as wearing white usually have a "right of passage" in this case, Baby Suggs had a right of passage to the heavens.

D. *"Well, long enough to see Baby Suggs, anyway. Where is she?"/"Dead."/"/"Aw no. When?"/"Eight years now. Almost nine."/"/"Was it hard? I hope she didn't die hard."*
Sethe shook her head. "Soft as cream. Being alive was the hard part."

Through the utilization of the character Baby Suggs, Morrison was able to shows the horrors of slavery and how there are some things worse than death, especially when Baby Suggs and Sethe describe that life as a slave is harder than experiencing death. In this case, it had made the endurance of tragedy and mistreatment of the general population of slaves more lucid.

- E. Good Mother trait- *"And Sethe would oblige her with anything from fabric to her own tongue."*

From this, we can deduce that Sethe is extremely giving to those she deems as her family and influenced by her elders such as Baby Suggs since Baby Suggs feels that Sethe would do anything for her even give "her own tongue," which is a recurring theme in the book.

5. Arrival of Paul D

A. Paul D escape from slavery

I. Iron bit in his mouth

"What did he say?"

"Nothing."

"Not a word?"

"Not a word."

"Did you speak to him? Didn't you say anything to him? Something!"

"I couldn't, Sethe. I just... couldn't."

"Why!"

"I had a bit in my mouth."

Sethe opened the front door and sat down on the porch steps.

II. Other memories of time in prison, iron chains: The "iron circle" is also a recurring symbol in the book showing a power or force on slavery. Iron chains often disallow a person from achieving their goals and are similar to the relentless nature of slave owners in the book because no movement or even breathing are allowed. Having iron eyes, gives the negativity of the iron a positive twist where Sethe has strength and willpower. These eyes are noticed by Paul D in Sethe while she was at Sweet Home because of what additional horror she might have faced at Sweet Home. Iron also plays the role of sparking memories of the past because of the strength and coldness of the metal. For example, Paul D sees iron, he remembers the time when he was in jail then, closely.

Closer than he had when she first rounded the house on wet and shining legs, holding her shoes and stockings up in one hand, her skirts in the other. Halle's girl--the one with iron eyes and backbone to match. He had never seen her hair in Kentucky. And though her face was eighteen years older than when last he saw her, it was softer now. Because of the hair. A face too still for comfort; irises the same color as her skin, which, in that still face, used to make him think of a mask with mercifully punched out eyes. Halle's woman.

II. Schoolteacher's behavior to him

B. Brings back memories that were locked up - his tin box represented his heart that was once empty and (quote about how he can't use his tin can of tobacco in the beginning and then finally puts it to use in the end)

E. Adds meaning of work on whole: In the beginning, he takes out often, but never use his tobacco in his tin can that resembles his empty heart which gets filled and used over time with the love his heart experiences from the joy and happiness that Denver and Sethe first gives him.

6. Reaction of Incident

A. Baby Sugg loses hope (refers to #4)

B. Children run away and their fear of her mother

Her[Baby Sugg's] eyes when she brought my food, I can forget that, and how she told me that Howard and Buglar were all right but wouldn't let go each other's hands.... I only need to know one thing. How bad is the scar?

In this quote, the point of view changes to first-person in Sethe's point of view. We learn her deeper thoughts of how she wanted to forget the world and put it all away. She is affected deeply by most of what she has done, and by the reactions of the people around her. She mentions that she can finally forget baby Sugg's "eyes when she brought [her] food", and how her own children were "all right but wouldn't let go each other's hands", meaning that she was never able to forget earlier and that it was haunting her before. These memories that Sethe says she can finally forget are all the things she doesn't let herself

remember, but remembers anyways. This process of telling Beloved memories that she can forget and letting herself remember them is a healing process that the arrival of Beloved initiates. She doesn't want to face her past and troubles, but in process of trying to forget, she brings up memories that were never mentioned before in the story. This is an important reflection of her life, especially since we learn about certain events that were not revealed earlier. After she recollects these memories, Sethe tells Beloved that "only" "one thing" is needed to know. Sethe wants to make herself believe that she only has one thing left to remember and know. The word "only" gives the reader a sense of desperation in that there is only one thing. It also shows that there are so many things that she could have remembered, but Sethe only wants to know the one thing, asking about "How bad the scar is". Putting emphasis on "only" one thing, heightens its importance even more. She seems to be only concerned about if she hurt Beloved, which relates to the theme seed of motherhood which is seen with Sethe often. She specifically uses the word "scar" because she is afraid of any lasting marks that she has given Beloved. The question emphasizes the motherhood the Sethe represents because she tells Beloved that is is the "only thing [she] needs to know".

C. Townspeople's reaction

A. *When she got out of jail and made no gesture toward anybody, and lived as though she were alone, Ella junked her and wouldn't give her the time of day.*

This quote conveys the theme of community because we can see that Sethe purposely isolated herself from the town because she feels prideful of what she has done, not the horror that the townspeople feel from her actions. Sethe is seen as making "*no gesture toward anybody*" meaning that she took no effort to connect with anybody and explain why she murdered her child. However, in the next clause, an explanation is used because Sethe lived "*as if she were alone.*" After Sethe leaves Sweet Home, her character becomes very solitary and independent. Ella represents the townspeople because she ignores Sethe due to her prideful attitude and how she rejected everyone's attempts at understanding her actions causing everyone to not "*give her the time of day.*" The use of the word "*junked*" conveys how Ella treated Sethe like she was trash once she broke off from the community. It's interesting because "junked" is not an official word that means to throw away like junk. The author uses this word to express the slang that the townspeople have, creating a vivid image to the readers.

Essay Question #14

14. "In many plays a character has a misconception of himself or his world. Destroying or perpetuating this illusion contributes to a central theme of the play." Write an essay in which you consider the following: (1) What the character's illusion is and how it differs from the reality as presented in the play; and (2) How the destruction or perpetuation of the illusion develops a theme of the play. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Topic- A misconception of herself or her world, illusion

-Intro: Sethe's main misconception is that it was alright for her to kill Beloved because she thought that she was protecting Beloved from being drawn back into slavery, while everyone else saw it as a heartless motion. But the main fact that Morrison is trying to convey with this misconception is that although Sethe's actions could never be condoned, they are justified because of slavery. Slavery causes this entire story to occur and is the main driving conflict throughout the work. Sethe's journey from an "glittering iron-eyed" girl to a woman with "mercifully punched out eyes" is shown through schoolteacher's arrival,

Sethe getting her milk stolen and being beaten, until confronting schoolteacher over trying to drag her children back to slavery and her desperate attempt to stop him which caused her to kill her daughter.

-Schoolteacher's arrival: *"There had been six of them who belonged to the farm, Sethe the only female. Mrs. Garner, crying like a baby, had sold his brother to pay off the debts that surfaced the minute she was widowed. Then schoolteacher arrived to put things in order. But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight."*

This passage is also incredibly important because it shows how schoolteacher's influence affected Sethe. While she managed to have "glittering iron" when she was at Sweet Home which signifies her liveliness and also signifies that although it might not have been the most proper enthusiasm due to the "iron" still shown in her eyes, schoolteacher even managed to steal that away from her with her, while also managing to break all the other inhabitants of Sweet Home as well.

-Sethe getting her milk stolen by the schoolteacher's nephews: *"After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still."*

"They used cowhide on you?"

"And they took my milk."

"They beat you and you was pregnant?"

"And they took my milk!"

This section is used to show the rising hysteria that Sethe succumbs to when she remembers the night that she was raped by the nephews and shows that although it happened long ago, it is something that she cannot forget because it is so deeply ingrained in her mind. It also shows what Sethe values because even though Paul D is outraged that they beat her when she was pregnant with Denver, all she worries about is that she cannot get her milk to her child showing her overly excessive maternal instinct once again.

-Book diction and syntax that hints at Sethe's misconception: "The continual shift from the abstract to the concrete creates the illusion of words sliding back to a base in the material world, an effect congruent with Morrison's emphasis on embodiment-on both the son's emphasis on embodiment-on both the physical process of maternity and the concrete presence of the ghosts: "Usually [slavery] is an abstract concept...The purpose of making [the ghost] real is making history possible, making memory real-somebody walks in the door and sits down at the table, so you have to think about it" (qt. in Darling 6)" (Wyatt 475)

-Cause of Sethe's misconception (her rape at the hand of the schoolteacher's nephews): *"That he too had mossy teeth, an appetite. That on a ridge of pine near the Ohio River, trying to get to her three children, one of whom was starving for the food she carried; that after her husband had disappeared; that after her milk had been stolen, her back pulped, her children orphaned, she was not to have an easeful death. No. She told Denver that a something came up out of the earth into her—like a freezing, but moving too, like jaws inside. "Look like I was just cold jaws grinding," she said. Suddenly she was eager for his eyes, to bite into them; to gnaw his cheek. "I was hungry," she told Denver, "just as hungry as I could be for his eyes. I couldn't wait."*

Sethe is determined to continue on her journey to Ohio, not for herself, but for her daughter as shown in the text where she is seen willing to give up and die among the wild onions but fears her unborn child living in her stomach only to die because of her weakness. In this section, Sethe is given animalistic tendencies because she "smells" the hair of the person coming towards her and this is animalistic

because she is using her senses rather than her voice to find the person coming for her. Also, she makes a reference to white men with “mossy teeth” which is a reference to anyone with bad intentions because Sethe fears white men because of how the nephews subjected her to rape and how they used her breasts which were meant to sustain her child and instead turned her into an animal that was not yet milked. Her fear for the white men that she is anticipating causes a change over her which can best be described as dehumanization because she loses her human reasoning and instead seems to only focus on killing the person that poses a threat to her and her children.

Dehumanization caused by her fear of the men with “mossy teeth”: *Down in the grass, like the snake she believed she was, Sethe opened her mouth, and instead of fangs and a split tongue, out shot the truth. "Running," Sethe told her. It was the first word she had spoken all day and it came out thick because of her tender tongue. "Them the feet you running on? My Jesus my." She squatted down and stared at Sethe's feet. "You got anything on you, gal, pass for food?" "No." Sethe tried to shift to a sitting position but couldn't.*

This is meant to show Sethe's perspective when she is cornered and how submissive she is in the face of a white person even though in her earlier dialogue she called her trash. Sethe has kept her animalistic tendencies such as being down in the grass and believing that she had fangs, the diction such as “fangs” emphasizes on the animal characteristics. Later, Sethe realizes that she was just dehydrated and did not, in fact, have fangs and that she was extremely fatigued because she couldn't even sit up straight.”

Acknowledgement of dehumanization occurring in her: *A dying thought if ever there was one, and she waited for the little antelope to protest, and why she thought of an antelope Sethe could not imagine since she had never seen one. She guessed it must have been an invention held on to from before Sweet Home, when she was very young. Of that place where she was born (Carolina maybe? or was it Louisiana?) she remembered only song and dance. Not even her own mother, who was pointed out to her by the eight-year old child who watched over the young ones--pointed out as the one among many backs turned away from her, stooping in a watery field. Patiently Sethe waited for this particular back to gain the row's end and stand. What she saw was a cloth hat as opposed to a straw one, singularity enough in that world of cooing women each of whom was called Ma'am.*

This section is meant to show how Sethe is on the verge of death but she wants to pursue living only for her unborn child or her “antelope” and describes the only two parts of her being alive as being her nipples, something that could be used to sustain her child, and the little antelope or her child. The use of the word “horizontal” is meant to show that she is lying on the ground in agony Sethe, in her agony, also contemplates why she thinks of her child as an antelope when she hasn't even seen an antelope which could show how worried she is that the schoolteacher was right and she really is an animal and is concerned that her child might turn out as one as well. The passage then shifts to Sethe's point of view when she was a child looking toward her mother's back and realizing that she never got to know her mother and her mother never took care of her which could be one of the reasons that Sethe is so adamant about providing for her child especially in regards to milk.

-The schoolteacher's nephew's point of view on Sethe killing her baby because of what they did to her: *“The nephew, the one who had nursed her while his brother held her down, didn't know he was shaking. His uncle had warned him against that kind of confusion, but the warning didn't seem to be taking. What she go and do that for? On account of a beating? Hell, he'd been beat a million times and he was white. Once it hurt so bad and made him so mad he'd smashed the well bucket. Another time he took it out on Samson--a few tossed rocks was all. But no beating ever made him... I mean no way he could have... What she go and do that for? And that is what he asked the sheriff, who was standing there,*

amazed like the rest of them, but not shaking. He was swallowing hard, over and over again." page 176

When the nephew stole Sethe's milk, while her brother held her down, Sethe had begun to stare at the nephew while he nursed her which provoked thoughts of his past and his treatment from his uncle that was similar to slavery. Sethe had impacted this character in the way that when he was taking advantage of her and it was a form of torture, he had begun to remember how he was also tortured and beat even though he was white folk. The nephew's beating was put in parallel comparison with Sethe's extreme beating when she was whipped by them, leaving a scar in the form of a chokecherry tree. When the nephew had kept repeating the same phrase "What she go and do that for?" it made him have guilt for whipping and assaulting her, for he had experienced beatings that were just the same.

Disillusions of men: *"Sethe sighed and placed her hand on his chest. She knew she was building a case against him in order to build a case against getting pregnant, and it shamed her a little. But she had all the children she needed. If her boys came back one day, and Denver and Beloved stayed on--well, it would be the way it was supposed to be, no? Right after she saw the shadows holding hands at the side of the road hadn't the picture altered? And the minute she saw the dress and shoes sitting in the front yard, she broke water. Didn't even have to see the face burning in the sunlight. She had been dreaming it for years.*

Paul D's chest rose and fell, rose and fell under her hand." Page 155/156

In this section, Sethe's distrust of men is pronounced for she placed her hand on his chest physically building an enclosure around him and containing him metaphorically speaking as well. This also shows that she prioritizes her biological family first before others including Paul D which portrays the theme of maternal love and the relationship between mother and child.

-Sethe believes that her daughters are her best things: The main reason that Sethe believes her daughters are her "best things" are because she believes that she was sullied when the two nephews, or men with mossy teeth raped her and stole her milk. She believed that her children were pure and that it was her duty as a mother to protect them and all she wanted was their love.

"Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons: that Beloved was more important, meant more to her than her own life."

In this quote, we once again see that Sethe tries to gain Beloved's forgiveness and acceptance, that her sole reason was because she had no other option. The diction is very clear in that we can see how Sethe feels guilt about what she has done, using words like "pleaded...counting...listing." The use of the long sentence conveys a sense of remorse from Sethe as she tries to make Beloved understand the reasoning for her actions. Sethe had valued Beloved "more...than her own life." This brings out the theme of identity where Sethe plays the role of a dedicated mother but loses sight of self-worth in the process of loving Beloved. Sethe doesn't see that she is "the best thing" about herself as Paul D says later in the book.

-Paul D has to remind Sethe that she herself is the best thing:

"You your best thing, Sethe. You are." His holding fingers are holding hers.

"Me? Me?"

This is the final resolution of the story where Paul D tries to change Sethe's perspective about how important she is and how she should be the most important person in her mind. Her daughters shouldn't be the most important people to her because she needs to love herself before she can possibly begin to love herself. Also, while Sethe responds to this in shock, she reveals that she is later contemplating living for herself showing that Beloved, or slavery, has finally been banished from Sethe's mind.

-Sethe's reasoning of her killing her children is seen as different than what others see her intent was: Sethe viewed her children as an extension of herself and therefore felt that because she has brought

her children into the world, she is the only person allowed to take them out of the world “Morrison’s narrative also dramatizes the problems of Sethe’s maternal subjectivity, which is so embedded in her children that it both allows her to take the life of one of them and precludes putting that act into words” (Wyatt) which she acts on when she finds out that schoolteacher is bent on returning them back to Sweet Home. “Sethe...experiences the wish to give up the fight for survival and die, but while Jacobs says she was “willing to bear on” for the children’s sakes” (127) the reason that Sethe gives for enduring is the physical presence of the baby in her womb: “[T]t didn’t seem such a bad idea [to die],...but the thought of herself stretched out dead while the little antelope lived on...in her lifeless body grieved her so” that she persevered (31).” (Wyatt) Also, “during the journey, Sethe experiences her own existence only in relation to her children’s survival; she is “concerned” not for herself but “for the life of her children’s mother.” She thinks, “I believe this baby’s ma’am is gonna die” and pictures herself as “a crawling graveyard for a six-month baby’s last hours” (30, 31, 34)” (Wyatt)