

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

Autumn

Preface-page 32 (primarily first-person)

The preface introduces two ideas: a selection from a “Dick and Jane” primer, which will be used throughout the book to show the decline of Pecola Breedlove’s life, and Pecola’s impregnation by her own father. Claudia Macteer, the narrator, reveals that Pecola comes to stay for a few days with the Macteer family because her father is in jail for setting their house on fire. Pecola begins her menstrual cycle while at the Macteer’s, introducing Claudia and her sister Frieda to the process of maturation.

Vocabulary

Complete a V.I.S. (Vocabulary Improvement Strategy) for the following terms.

Melancholy (preface) senile (14) peripheral (17) plaintive (21)

Acridness (22) pristine (23) sadism (23) soliloquies (24)

Chagrined (24) verification (31)

Discussion Questions

1. Read aloud and analyze the preface. Explain the selection from the “Dick and Jane” primer and the importance of the portion beginning, “Quiet as it’s kept there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941.” Note the analogy between the marigold seeds and Cholly’s seed.
2. Analyze why the words begin to run together in the “Dick and Jane” section.
3. Explain Claudia’s portrayal of her home and what this reveals about her family.
4. Explain why Pecola comes to stay with the Macteer family and examine what this reveals about her family.

5. Analyze Claudia's reaction to blue-eyed, white baby dolls.
6. Examine the relationship between Pecola and the Macteer sisters. Explain the universality or applicability of the girls' reaction to Pecola's first menstrual period.