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The Time Machine

UNIT 1-

Manjula Padmanabhan

Manjula Padmanabhan (born 23 June 1953) is an Indian playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, and children's book author. Her works explore science, technology, gender, and international inequalities.

Life

Padmanabhan was born in Delhi in 1953 to an Indian diplomat father. She was raised in Sweden, Pakistan, and Thailand.^{[1][2]} She was an avid reader of comics and cartoons, and often drew and wrote as a child.^[3]

When Padmanabhan was sixteen, her father retired and her family returned to India, where she was surprised by the more traditional society and was limited by not knowing Hindi or Marathi.^[1]

Padmanabhan attended [Elphinstone College](#). While at school, she worked at [Parsiana](#) to gain financial independence from her family.^[1]

Career and works

Padmanabhan continued working as a journalist and book reviewer into her 20s and 30s.^[3] She began her career as an illustrator in 1979 with Ali Baig's book *Indrani and the Enchanted Jungle*.^[2]

In 1982, Padmanabhan created a comic strip, *Doubletalk*, which featured the female character Suki.^[4] She wrote a pitch to [The Sunday Observer](#) editor Vinod Mehta, who published her strip for many years.^{[5][6]} Suki then appeared six days a week in Delhi paper [The Pioneer](#) from 1992 to 1998. When Vinod Mehta left the publications and *The Pioneer* stopped publishing comics, Padmanabhan stopped creating *Doubletalk*.

Padmanabhan won the first ever [Onassis Award](#) for her play [Harvest](#). An award-winning film [Deham](#) was made by [Govind Nihalani](#) based on the play.

Padmanabhan has continued to work as an author and illustrator, and has published short stories within many different volumes.

Padmanabhan returned to creating comics featuring Suki with the strip *Suki Yaki* for [The Hindu's Business Line](#).

Manjula Padmanabhan is a renowned Indian playwright, author, illustrator, and cartoonist known for her incisive explorations of dystopia, gender, technology, and social inequality. Her works, including the award-winning play *Harvest*, blend science fiction with sharp feminist and postcolonial critiques, making her a pivotal figure in Indian English literature.

Early Life

Padmanabhan was born in Delhi in 1953 to a diplomat father, spending her formative years in Sweden, Pakistan, and Thailand. This multicultural upbringing exposed her to diverse cultures early on, fostering her love for comics, cartoons, and storytelling—she often drew and wrote as a child.

Returning to India at 16 after her father's retirement, she faced culture shock in a more traditional society, limited by not knowing Hindi or Marathi. She attended Elphinstone College in Mumbai and gained independence by working at *Parsiana* magazine. This period shaped her outsider perspective, evident in her later critiques of Indian societal norms.

Career Beginnings

Padmanabhan started as a journalist and book reviewer in her 20s and 30s, transitioning to illustration in 1979 with Ali Baig's *Indrani* and the *Enchanted Jungle*. In 1982, she launched the comic strip *Doubletalk* featuring the character Suki, pitched successfully to *The Sunday Observer's* Vinod Mehta.

The strip ran for years, later appearing six days a week in *The Pioneer* from 1992 to 1998 until comics were discontinued. This work honed her satirical style, blending humor with commentary on gender and urban life, and marked her entry into visual storytelling.

Major Plays

Padmanabhan's plays often tackle dystopian futures, gender violence, and exploitation, fitting into India's feminist literary wave post-1980s. Her debut *Lights Out* (1984) stemmed from shock over the 1984 anti-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi's assassination, critiquing societal apathy toward violence against women in slums.

Harvest (1997), her breakthrough, won the Onassis International Prize for Theatre and Drama—the first for an Indian playwright. Set in 2010, it depicts a poor Indian family selling brother Jeetu's organs to a corporation in a sterile "Receive" room, highlighting commodification of the Third World body by the First World. Jaya resists, asserting bodily autonomy amid themes of infertility, organ harvesting, and dehumanization.

Other plays like those in *Blood and Laughter* (2020) and *Laughter and Blood* (2020) mix sci-fi with social satire. *The Mating Game Show* explores absurd gender dynamics, while her works overall negate binaries, portraying matriarchal solidarity in dystopias.

Novels and Stories

Padmanabhan's novels weave postcolonialism, ecology, and feminism. *Escape* (2009) follows Meiji in a sex-ratio imbalanced world ruled by tyrannical "Boys," where uncles embody resistance—vision, intelligence, empathy—against technological oppression. Meiji's journey uncovers socio-political woes tied to gender imbalance.

Children's book *Unprincess!* (2005) subverts fairy-tale princess tropes, rejecting damsels in distress for empowered girls beyond patriarchal norms. Short stories like "The Rehearsal" (2019) and "The Other Woman" (2012) delve into speculative fiction, echoing Ramayana-inspired subversion.

Her 2023 collection *Stolen Hours and Other Curiosities* surveys multiple "worlds," blending sci-fi with everyday absurdities, often questioning subaltern womanhood. Novels like *The Island of Lost Girls* further probe identity erasure and societal burdens on women.

Themes and Style

Padmanabhan excels in feminist sci-fi as a postcolonial tool, linking gender subjugation to anti-colonial resistance. Works evoke organ harvesting as metaphor for exploitation (*Harvest*), riots as collective paralysis (*Lights Out*), and AI eroding values in futuristic India.

Her style mixes stark realism with speculative elements: panoptic surveillance in living rooms, matriarchal dystopias, ecological feminism. Characters like Jaya embody agency, refusing impregnation offers; princesses dismantle stereotypes. Poverty and unemployment drive moral decay, harvesting a "gloomy" human future.

Satire permeates—*Doubletalk's* Suki mocks urban hypocrisies—while avoiding binaries for nuanced solidarity. Her oeuvre reimagines Indian English literature's contours.

Awards and Legacy

The Onassis Prize for *Harvest* (1997) elevated her globally, staging in Greece and beyond. Plays published in 2020 volumes cement her theatrical impact. Recent works like 2023's *Stolen Hours* and *Substack* essays (e.g., "Moving On," 2026) show ongoing vitality.

Living between the US and Delhi, Padmanabhan influences feminist discourse, sci-fi, and comics. Critics note her role in women's movements, from 1983 plays amid India's independence era to dystopias mirroring AI's human cost. Her surveys of "worlds within words" inspire reimaginings of gender, nation, and tech.

Manjula Padmanabhan stands out as a versatile Indian artist whose oeuvre spans theatre, prose, illustration, and journalism, often dissecting power structures through speculative lenses. Building on her foundational works like *Harvest* and *Lights Out*, her later contributions deepen these critiques while expanding into visual and autobiographical realms.

Illustration Career

Padmanabhan's visual work complements her writing, starting with book illustrations in the late 1970s. Her comic strip *Doubletalk*, featuring the irreverent Suki—a sharp-tongued urban woman—ran for over 15 years across major Indian newspapers, satirizing everyday hypocrisies from relationships to politics.

She authored and illustrated children's books like Indrani's Adventures series and Unprincess!, which playfully dismantle gender stereotypes by portraying self-reliant heroines who reject princely rescues. These works, aimed at young readers, embed feminist messages in whimsical narratives, influencing a generation of Indian illustrators.

Her standalone illustrations appear in publications worldwide, blending intricate line work with biting commentary, as seen in covers for literary magazines. This dual role as writer-illustrator underscores her multimedia approach to storytelling.

Journalism and Essays

From the 1980s, Padmanabhan freelanced for outlets like The Hindu, Indian Express, and Outlook, reviewing books and penning columns on culture, gender, and expatriate life. Her essays, collected in pieces like those on Substack (e.g., "Moving On" in 2026), reflect on relocation between India and the US, aging, and artistic survival.

These writings reveal a personal evolution: from culture-shocked teen in 1960s India to global nomad, she critiques nationalism and diaspora without nostalgia. Her journalistic eye sharpens her fiction, grounding sci-fi in real socio-economic divides.

Later Plays and Adaptations

Post-Harvest, Padmanabhan's *The Mating Game Show* (part of 2020 collections) skewers commodified romance in a game-show format, where contestants are auctioned like organs—echoing Harvest's market logic on bodies. *Blood and Laughter* (2020) juxtaposes gore with humor, staging matriarchal uprisings against patriarchal tech overlords.

Adaptations of her plays, including *Harvest* in Greek and international theatres post-1997 Onassis win, globalized her reach. Recent productions in India address contemporary issues like AI ethics, as analyzed in studies of her work's prescience.

Her script *Shaft* explores underground economies, while experimental pieces like *The Living Room* invert domestic spaces into surveillance zones, prefiguring smart-home dystopias.

Novels in Depth

Escape (2009) imagines a 2016 India skewed by female infanticide, where "Boys" enforce brutal quotas on women. Protagonist Meiji flees with uncles symbolizing lost humanism, culminating in ecological sabotage against drone-enforced patriarchy—a prescient eco-feminist warning.

The Island of Lost Girls (2023) traces amnesia-plagued women rebuilding society on a remote isle, probing memory, migration, and female solidarity amid climate ruin. These novels extend Harvest's organ trade to broader exploitations: sex ratios, data bodies, environmental theft.

Critical Reception

Scholars position Padmanabhan in postcolonial feminist sci-fi, alongside authors like Vandana Singh, for hybridizing Indian myths with cyberpunk. *Harvest* critiques neoliberal globalization, where Mumbai slums fuel Western longevity via "Contact" rooms—mirroring real organ trafficking scandals.

Critics praise her avoidance of didacticism; Jaya's rebellion in *Harvest* is visceral, not sermonizing. Women's studies highlight her slum-dwellers (*Lights Out*) as agents, not victims, amid riots symbolizing national fractures post-Emergency.

Her comics earn acclaim for pioneering feminist humor in Indian media, predating digital memes. Recent analyses (2025) link her AI themes to current debates on human values erosion.

Personal Life and Influences

Padmanabhan divides time between Delhi and the US, married to artist Ali Baig until his passing. Her diplomat childhood—Stockholm winters, Bangkok monsoons—bred cosmopolitanism, fueling outsider critiques of caste, class, and gender in India.

Influenced by comics (Tintin, Asterix) and sci-fi (Ursula Le Guin), she self-taught playwriting amid 1980s women's theatre movements. Recent Substack posts detail her shift to digital essays amid 2020s upheavals.

Global Impact

Padmanabhan's Onassis win opened doors for South Asian dramatists; *Harvest* translations into 10+ languages sustain its staging. Her work inspires eco-feminist theatre in India and diaspora lit fests.

In 2026, her Substack and new stories like *Stolen Hours* (2023) affirm relevance, addressing post-pandemic isolation and tech alienation. She mentors young artists, advocating speculative fiction for social change.

Key Aspects of Her Work and Character:

- **Feminist & Dystopian Themes:** Padmanabhan's writing, such as [Escape](#) and [The Island of Lost Girls](#), centers on strong female perspectives, questioning gender inequality, patriarchy, and the devaluation of women.
- **Futuristic & Social Commentary:** She is known for creating, chillingly plausible, alternative, and dystopian futures, particularly focusing on the commodification of human beings in *Harvest*.
- **Multifaceted Creator:** She is a cartoonist who created the long-running character "Suki," a playwright who won the 1997 Onassis Award, and an illustrator of numerous children's books.

- **"Alien" Perspective:** Having lived in multiple countries as the daughter of a diplomat, her work often reflects a sense of alienation and a unique, outsider's viewpoint on Indian society.
- **Distinctive Style:** Her prose and plays are often characterized as dark, witty, and satirical, focusing on the uncomfortable realities of modern life.

Some of her notable works include the plays *Harvest* and *Lights Out*, the sci-fi novels *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*, and the memoir *Getting There*.

In *Harvest* (1997), Padmanabhan explores organ trade in a futuristic India, creating characters who reveal commodification of the body.

Jaya: The moral core, a practical wife resisting her husband Om's deal to sell organs to a wealthy American, Virgil. She values humanity over money, confronting corruption with unyielding spirit, even preferring death over submission. Her resistance highlights women's agency amid exploitation.

Om: Dazzled by wealth, he betrays family for financial gain, becoming a willing participant in dehumanization. His shift from provider to commodity seller critiques poverty-driven desperation.

Ma: Greedy and preferential, she favors Om for profit potential over son Jeetu, treating kin as marketable assets. Her indifference shreds familial bonds.

Jeetu: Om's prostitute brother, initially resistant but succumbs to the "new normal," pursuing Jaya illicitly. Represents chaotic opportunism in moral decay.

These figures illustrate a society where bodies are bartered, emotions commodified.

Characters in *Lights Out*

Lights Out (1987) depicts urban voyeurism during a gang rape witnessed from an apartment.

Leela: Distraught middle-class wife horrified by the violence, she urges action but yields to patriarchal constraints. Her powerlessness exposes women's silenced voices against societal norms.

Bhaskar: Curious husband more intrigued than outraged, prioritizing spectacle over intervention. Embodies bystander apathy.

Mohan: Selfish neighbor reveling in the horror, questioning "What harm is there in watching?" His scopophilia critiques male detachment from justice.

The play indicts collective inaction, turning witnesses into complicit gazers.

Figures in Escape

Padmanabhan's novel *Escape* (2007) portrays a dystopian world hostile to males.

Meiji: Protagonist discovering her male origins, she navigates identity amid tyranny. Her uncles guide her escape, symbolizing lost humanity.

Eldest Uncle: Visionary resistor against the state, representing prophecy.

Middle Uncle: Intelligent strategist; Youngest Uncle: Empathetic protector, her father. They counter technological dehumanization with core human traits.

Meiji's journey blends personal revelation with cosmic truth-seeking.

Suki the Cartoon Icon

Padmanabhan's alter ego, Suki, from 1980s comics, is an outspoken educated woman challenging corruption, gender roles, climate issues, and inequality. Unruly and quotidian, she fills a void in Indian graphic narratives as a radical female voice.

Themes Across Characters

Padmanabhan's creations consistently probe power imbalances—post-colonialism, westernization, violence. Women like Jaya and Leela resist yet face helplessness; men like Om and Bhaskar enable decay. Figures symbolize broader critiques: organ trade as class war, voyeurism as apathy, dystopias as gendered oppression. Her characters evolve from personal struggles to allegories, urging ethical awakening without resolution.

As playwright

- 1995 - *The Artist's Model*.
- 1996 - *Sextet*.
- 1997 - *Harvest*. London: Aurora Metro Books
- 2016 - "Lights Out"⁹

As author and illustrator

- 2015 - *Island of Lost Girls*. Hachette.
- 2013 - *Three Virgins and Other Stories* New Delhi, India: Zubaan Books.
- 2011 - *I am different! Can you find me?* Watertown, Mass: Charlesbridge Pub.
- 2008 - *Escape*. Hachette.
- 2005 - *Unprincess!* New Delhi: Puffin Books.
- 2005 - *Double talk*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- 2004 - *Kleptomania: Ten Stories*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- 2004 - *Mouse Invadors*. Pan MacMillan. Written under the name Manjula Padma.
- 2003 - *Mouse Attack*. Pan MacMillan. Written under the name Manjula Padma.
- 2000 - *This is Suki!* New Delhi: Duckfoot Press.
- 1996 - *Hot death, cold soup: twelve short stories*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- 1986 - *A Visit to the City Market* New Delhi: National Book Trust

As illustrator

- 1989 - Indi Rana and Manjala Padmanabhan. *The Devil in the Dustbin*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

- 1984 - Maithily Jagannathan and Manjula Padmanabhan. *Droopy dragon*. New Delhi: Thomson Press.
- 1979 - Baig, Tara Ali, and Manjula Padmanabhan. *Indrani and the enchanted jungle*. New Delhi: Thomson Press (India) Ltd.

Comic strips

- 2015 - Suki Yaki. *The Hindu's Business Line*.
- 1982-1998 - *Doubletalk*. *The Sunday Observer* and *The Pioneer*.

Short stories

- 2019 - "The Rehearsal" in *Displaced lives : fiction, poetry, memoirs, and plays from four continents*. Ed. Frank Stewart, series editor; Alok Bhalla, Ming Di, guest editors. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press.
- 2012 - "The other woman" in *Breaking the bow : speculative fiction inspired by the Ramayana*. Ed. Anil Menon, Vandana Singh. New Delhi: Zubaan.

UNIT 2 - Toni Morrison

Chloe Anthony Wofford "Toni" Morrison (born **Chloe Ardelia Wofford**; February 18, 1931 – August 5, 2019) was an American novelist and editor. She was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#) in 1993. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. The critically acclaimed *Song of Solomon* (1977) brought her national attention and won the [National Book Critics Circle Award](#). In 1988, Morrison won the [Pulitzer Prize](#) for *Beloved* (1987).

Born and raised in [Lorain, Ohio](#), Morrison graduated from [Howard University](#) in 1953 with a B.A. in English. Morrison earned a master's degree in American Literature from [Cornell University](#) in 1955. In 1957 she returned to Howard University, was married, and had two children before divorcing in 1964. Morrison became the first Black female editor for fiction at [Random House](#) in New York City in the late 1960s. She developed her own reputation as an author in the 1970s and '80s. Her novel *Beloved* was made into a [film](#) in 1998. Morrison's works are praised for addressing the harsh consequences of [racism in the United States](#) and the Black American experience.

The [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) selected Morrison for the [Jefferson Lecture](#), the U.S. federal government's highest honor for achievement in the humanities, in 1996. She was honored with the [National Book Foundation's](#) Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters the same year. President [Barack Obama](#) presented her with the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) on May 29, 2012. She received the [PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction](#) in 2016. Morrison was inducted into the [National Women's Hall of Fame](#) in 2020.

Early years

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Ardelia Wofford,^[2] the second of four children from a working-class, Black family, in [Lorain, Ohio](#), to Ramah (née Willis) and George Wofford.^[3] Her mother was born in [Greenville, Alabama](#), and moved north with her family as a child. She was a homemaker and a devout member of the [African Methodist Episcopal Church](#).^[4] George Wofford grew up in [Cartersville, Georgia](#). When Wofford was about 15 years old, a group of white people lynched two African-American businessmen who lived on his street. Morrison later said: "He never told us that he'd seen bodies. But he had seen them. And that was too traumatic, I think, for him."^[5] Soon after the lynching, George Wofford moved to the racially integrated town of Lorain, Ohio, in the hope of escaping racism and securing gainful employment in Ohio's burgeoning industrial economy. He worked odd jobs and as a welder for [U.S. Steel](#). In a 2015 interview Morrison said that her father, traumatized by his experiences of racism, hated whites so much he would not let them in the house.^[6]

When Morrison was about two years old, her family's landlord set fire to the house in which they lived, while they were home, because her parents could not afford to pay rent. Her family responded to what she called this "bizarre form of evil" by laughing at the landlord rather than falling into despair. Morrison later said her family's response demonstrated how to keep your integrity and claim your own life in the face of acts of such "monumental crudeness".^[7]

Morrison's parents instilled in her a sense of heritage and language through telling traditional African-American folktales, ghost stories, and singing songs.^{[4][8]} She read frequently as a child; among her favorite authors were [Jane Austen](#) and [Leo Tolstoy](#).^[9]

Morrison became a [Catholic](#) at the age of 12^[10] and took the [baptismal name](#) Anthony (after [Anthony of Padua](#)), which led to her nickname, Toni.^[11] Attending [Lorain High School](#), she was on the debate team, the yearbook staff, and in the drama club.^[4]

Career

Adulthood, Howard and Cornell years, and editing career: 1949–1975

In 1949, she enrolled at [Howard University](#) in [Washington, D.C.](#), seeking the company of fellow Black intellectuals.^[12] Initially a student in the drama program at Howard, she studied theatre with celebrated drama teachers [Anne Cooke Reid](#) and [Owen Dodson](#).^[13] It was while at Howard that she encountered [racially segregated](#) restaurants and buses for the first time.^[5] She graduated in 1953 with a B.A. in English and a minor in Classics, and was able to work with key members of the Harlem Renaissance era such as [Alain Locke](#) and [Sterling Brown](#). Additionally, she participated in the university's theater group, known as the Howard Players, where she had the opportunity to travel the Deep South, which was a defining experience of her life.^[14]

Morrison went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in 1955 from [Cornell University](#) in [Ithaca, New York](#).^[15] Her master's thesis was titled "[Virginia Woolf's](#) and [William Faulkner's](#) treatment of the alienated".^[16] She taught English, first at [Texas Southern University](#) in [Houston](#) from 1955 to 1957, and then at Howard University for the next seven years. While teaching at Howard, she met Harold Morrison, a Jamaican architect, whom she married in 1958. Their first son was born in 1961 and she was pregnant with their second son when she and Harold divorced in 1964.^{[8][17][18]}

After her divorce and the birth of her son Slade in 1965, Morrison began working as an editor for L. W. Singer, a textbook division of publisher [Random House](#),^[4] in [Syracuse, New York](#). Two years later, she

transferred to Random House in New York City, where she became their first Black woman senior editor in the fiction department.^{[19][20]}

In that capacity, Morrison played a vital role in bringing [Black literature](#) into the mainstream. One of the first books she worked on was the groundbreaking *Contemporary African Literature* (1972), a collection that included work by Nigerian writers [Wole Soyinka](#), [Chinua Achebe](#), and South African playwright [Athol Fugard](#).^[4] She fostered a new generation of Afro-American writers,^[4] including poet and novelist [Toni Cade Bambara](#), radical activist [Angela Davis](#), [Black Panther Huey Newton](#)^[21] and novelist [Gayl Jones](#), whose writing Morrison discovered. She also brought to publication the 1975 [autobiography](#) of the outspoken boxing champion [Muhammad Ali](#), *The Greatest: My Own Story*. In addition, she published and promoted the work of [Henry Dumas](#),^[22] a little-known novelist and poet who in 1968 had been shot to death by a transit officer in the [New York City Subway](#).^{[5][23]}

Among other books that Morrison developed and edited is *The Black Book* (1974), an anthology of photographs, illustrations, essays, and documents of Black life in the United States from the time of slavery to the 1920s.^[5] Random House had been uncertain about the project but its publication met with a good reception. Alvin Beam reviewed the anthology for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, writing: "Editors, like novelists, have brain children – books they think up and bring to life without putting their own names on the title page. Mrs. Morrison has one of these in the stores now, and magazines and newsletters in the publishing trade are ecstatic, saying it will go like hotcakes."^[4]

The 2025 biography *Toni at Random* was written by [Dana A. Williams](#) about Morrison's time employed as an editor at the publishing company Random House.^[24] A review by [Martha Southgate](#) in *The New York Times* stated: "With great respect and meticulous research, Williams reveals Morrison as a hard worker, a devoted literary citizen and one of the most important book editors of the 20th century."^[25] *The Chicago Review of Books* described it as "an edifying look at a beloved creator's work as not only a writer, but a champion of writers",^[26] while a starred review in *Publishers Weekly* concluded that the biography is "a triumphant account of an underexplored aspect of Morrison's influence on American literature."^[27]

First writings and teaching, 1970–1986

Morrison had begun writing fiction as part of an informal group of poets and writers at Howard University who met to discuss their work. She attended one meeting with a short story about a Black girl who longed to have [blue eyes](#). Morrison later developed the story as her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, getting up every morning at 4 am to write, while raising two children on her own.^[17]

The Bluest Eye was published by [Holt, Rinehart, and Winston](#) in 1970, when Morrison was aged 39.^[20] It was favorably reviewed in *The New York Times* by [John Leonard](#), who praised Morrison's writing style as being "a prose so precise, so faithful to speech and so charged with pain and wonder that the novel becomes poetry ... But *The Bluest Eye* is also history, sociology, folklore, nightmare and music."^[28] The novel did not sell well at first, but the [City University of New York](#) put *The Bluest Eye* on its reading list for its new [Black studies](#) department, as did other colleges, which boosted sales.^[29] The book also brought Morrison to the attention of the acclaimed editor [Robert Gottlieb](#) at [Knopf](#), an imprint of the publisher Random House. Gottlieb later edited all but one of Morrison's novels.^[29]

In 1975, Morrison's second novel *Sula* (1973), about a friendship between two Black women, was nominated for the [National Book Award](#). Her third novel, *Song of Solomon* (1977), follows the life of Macon "Milkman" Dead III, from birth to adulthood, as he discovers his heritage. This novel brought her national acclaim, being a main selection of the [Book of the Month Club](#), the first novel by a Black writer to be so chosen since [Richard Wright's](#) *Native Son* in 1940.^[30] *Song of Solomon* also won the [National Book Critics Circle Award](#).^[31]

At its 1979 commencement ceremonies, [Barnard College](#) awarded Morrison its highest honor, the [Barnard Medal of Distinction](#).^[32]

Morrison gave her next novel, *Tar Baby* (1981), a contemporary setting. In it, a looks-obsessed fashion model, Jadine, falls in love with Son, a penniless drifter who feels at ease with being Black.^[17]

Resigning from Random House in 1983,^[33] Morrison left publishing to devote more time to writing, while living in a converted boathouse on the Hudson River in Nyack, New York.^{[34][35]} She taught English at two branches of the State University of New York (SUNY) and at Rutgers University's New Brunswick campus.^[36] In 1984, she was appointed to an Albert Schweitzer chair at the University at Albany, SUNY.^[37]

Morrison's first play, *Dreaming Emmett*, is about the 1955 murder by white men of Black teenager Emmett Till. The play was commissioned by the New York State Writers Institute at the State University of New York at Albany, where she was teaching at the time. It was produced in 1986 by Capital Repertory Theatre and directed by Gilbert Moses.^[38] Morrison was also a visiting professor at Bard College from 1986 to 1988.^[39]

In 1987, Morrison published her most celebrated novel, *Beloved*. It was inspired by the true story of an enslaved African-American woman, Margaret Garner,^[40] whose story Morrison had discovered when compiling *The Black Book*. Garner had escaped slavery but was pursued by slave hunters. Facing a return to slavery, Garner killed her two-year-old daughter but was captured before she could kill herself.^[41] Morrison's novel imagines the dead baby returning as a ghost, Beloved, to haunt her mother and family.^[42]

Beloved was a critical success and a bestseller for 25 weeks. *The New York Times* book reviewer Michiko Kakutani wrote that the scene of the mother killing her baby is "so brutal and disturbing that it appears to warp time before and after into a single unwavering line of fate".^[43] Canadian writer Margaret Atwood wrote in a review for *The New York Times*, "Ms. Morrison's versatility and technical and emotional range appear to know no bounds. If there were any doubts about her stature as a pre-eminent American novelist, of her own or any other generation, *Beloved* will put them to rest."^[44]

Some critics panned *Beloved*. African-American conservative social critic Stanley Crouch, for instance, complained in his review in *The New Republic*^[45] that the novel "reads largely like a melodrama lashed to the structural conceits of the miniseries", and that Morrison "perpetually interrupts her narrative with maudlin ideological commercials".^{[46][47]}

Despite overall high acclaim, *Beloved* failed to win the prestigious National Book Award or the National Book Critics Circle Award. Forty-eight Black critics and writers,^{[48][49]} among them Maya Angelou, protested the omission in a statement that *The New York Times* published on January 24, 1988.^{[20][50][51]} "Despite the international stature of Toni Morrison, she has yet to receive the national recognition that her five major works of fiction entirely deserve", they wrote.^[5] Two months later, *Beloved* won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.^[43] It also won an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award.^[52]

Beloved is the first of three novels about love and African-American history, sometimes called the *Beloved* Trilogy.^[53] Morrison said they are intended to be read together, explaining: "The conceptual connection is the search for the beloved – the part of the self that is you, and loves you, and is always there for you."^[7] The second novel in the trilogy, *Jazz*, came out in 1992. Told in language that imitates the rhythms of jazz music, the novel is about a love triangle during the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. According to Lyn Innes, "Morrison sought to change not just the content and audience for her fiction; her desire was to create stories which could be lingered over and relished, not 'consumed and gobbled as fast food', and at the same time to ensure that these stories and their characters had a strong historical and cultural base."^[54]

In 1992, Morrison also published her first book of literary criticism, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), an examination of the African-American presence in White American literature.^[52] (In 2016, *Time* magazine noted that *Playing in the Dark* was among Morrison's most-assigned texts on U.S. college campuses, together with several of her novels and her 1993 Nobel Prize lecture.)^[55] Lyn Innes wrote in the *Guardian* obituary of Morrison, "Her 1990 series of Massey lectures at Harvard were published as *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

(1992), and explore the construction of a 'non-white Africanist presence and personae' in the works of [Poe](#), [Hawthorne](#), [Melville](#), [Cather](#) and [Hemingway](#), arguing that 'all of us are bereft when criticism remains too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes'.^[54]

Before the third novel of the *Beloved* Trilogy was published, Morrison was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#) in 1993. The citation praised her as an author "who in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality".^[56] She was the first Black woman of any nationality to win the prize.^[57] In her acceptance speech, Morrison said: "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives."^[58]

In her Nobel lecture, Morrison talked about the power of storytelling. To make her point, she told a story. She spoke about a blind, old, Black woman who is approached by a group of young people. They demand of her, "Is there no context for our lives? No song, no literature, no poem full of vitamins, no history connected to experience that you can pass along to help us start strong? ... Think of our lives and tell us your particularized world. Make up a story."^[59]

Morrison received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Howard University during its Charter Day celebration in 1995.^[60] After the ceremony, she delivered the speech "[The First Solution](#)",^[61] excerpts of which were later published as an essay titled "Racism and Fascism". The speech discussed the ongoing threat of fascism to democracy, which she said makes inroads through a series of ten steps. Scholar [Dana A. Williams](#) writes that Morrison lays out the argument that racism "is as much a strategy used to invoke fear and to uphold fabricated hierarchies as fascism".^[62]

In 1996, the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) selected Morrison for the [Jefferson Lecture](#), the U.S. federal government's highest honor for "distinguished intellectual achievement in the humanities".^[63] Morrison's lecture, entitled "The Future of Time: Literature and Diminished Expectations",^[64] began with the aphorism: "Time, it seems, has no future." She cautioned against the misuse of history to diminish expectations of the future.^[65] Morrison was also honored with the 1996 [National Book Foundation's Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters](#), which is awarded to a writer "who has enriched our literary heritage over a life of service, or a corpus of work".^[66]

The third novel of her *Beloved* Trilogy, *Paradise*, about citizens of an all-Black town, came out in 1997. The following year, Morrison was on the cover of *Time* magazine, making her only the second female writer of fiction and second Black writer of fiction to appear on what was perhaps the most significant U.S. magazine cover of the era.^[67]

***Beloved* onscreen and "the Oprah effect"**

Also in 1998, the movie adaptation of *Beloved* was released, directed by [Jonathan Demme](#) and co-produced by [Oprah Winfrey](#), who had spent ten years bringing it to the screen. Winfrey also stars as the main character, Sethe, alongside [Danny Glover](#) as Sethe's lover, Paul D, and [Thandiwe Newton](#) as Beloved.^[68]

The movie flopped at the box office. A review in *The Economist* opined that "most audiences are not eager to endure nearly three hours of a cerebral film with an original storyline featuring supernatural themes, murder, rape, and slavery".^[69] Film critic [Janet Maslin](#), in her *New York Times* review "No Peace from a Brutal Legacy", called it a "transfixing, deeply felt adaptation of Toni Morrison's novel. ... Its linchpin is of course Oprah Winfrey, who had the clout and foresight to bring 'Beloved' to the screen and has the dramatic presence to hold it together."^[70] Film critic [Roger Ebert](#) suggested that *Beloved* was not a genre ghost story but the supernatural was used to explore deeper issues and the non-linear structure of Morrison's story had a purpose.^[68]

In 1996, television talk-show host Oprah Winfrey selected *Song of Solomon* for her newly launched [Book Club](#), which became a popular feature on her *Oprah Winfrey Show*.^[71] An average of 13 million viewers watched the show's book club segments.^[72] As a result, when Winfrey selected Morrison's earliest novel *The Bluest Eye* in 2000, it sold another 800,000 paperback copies.^[4] John Young wrote in

the [African American Review](#) in 2001 that Morrison's career experienced the boost of "[The Oprah Effect](#), ... enabling Morrison to reach a broad, popular audience."^[73]

Winfrey selected a total of four of Morrison's novels over six years, giving Morrison's works a bigger sales boost than they received from her Nobel Prize win in 1993.^[74] The novelist also appeared three times on Winfrey's show. Winfrey said, "For all those who asked the question 'Toni Morrison again?'... I say with certainty there would have been no Oprah's Book Club if this woman had not chosen to share her love of words with the world."^[72] Morrison called the book club a "reading revolution".^[72]

Early 21st century

Morrison continued to explore different art forms, such as providing texts for original scores of classical music. She collaborated with [André Previn](#) on the song cycle *Honey and Rue*, which premiered with [Kathleen Battle](#) in January 1992, and on *Four Songs*, premiered at [Carnegie Hall](#) with [Sylvia McNair](#) in November 1994. Both *Sweet Talk: Four Songs on Text* and *Spirits In the Well* (1997) were written for [Jessye Norman](#) with music by [Richard Danielpour](#), and, alongside [Maya Angelou](#) and [Clarissa Pinkola Estés](#), Morrison provided the text for composer [Judith Weir](#)'s *woman.life.song* commissioned by Carnegie Hall for Jessye Norman, which premiered in April 2000.^{[75][76]}

Morrison returned to Margaret Garner's life story, the basis of her novel *Beloved*, to write the [libretto](#) for a new opera, *Margaret Garner*. Completed in 2002, with music by Richard Danielpour, the opera was premièred on May 7, 2005, at the [Detroit Opera House](#) with [Denyce Graves](#) in the title role.^[77] *Love*, Morrison's first novel since *Paradise*, came out in 2003. In 2004, she put together a children's book called *Remember* to mark the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954 that declared racially segregated public schools to be unconstitutional.^[78]

From 1997 to 2003, Morrison was an Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large at [Cornell University](#).^[79]

In 2004, Morrison was invited by [Wellesley College](#) to deliver the [commencement address](#), which has been described as "among the greatest commencement addresses of all time and a courageous counterpoint to the entire genre".^[80]

In June 2005, the [University of Oxford](#) awarded Morrison an [honorary Doctor of Letters](#) degree.^[81]

In the spring 2006, *The New York Times Book Review* named *Beloved* the best work of American fiction published in the previous 25 years, as chosen by a selection of prominent writers, literary critics, and editors.^[82] In his essay about the choice, "In Search of the Best", critic [A. O. Scott](#) said: "Any other outcome would have been startling since Morrison's novel has inserted itself into the American canon more completely than any of its potential rivals. With remarkable speed, 'Beloved' has, less than 20 years after its publication, become a staple of the college literary curriculum, which is to say a classic. This triumph is commensurate with its ambition since it was Morrison's intention in writing it precisely to expand the range of classic American literature, to enter, as a living Black woman, the company of dead White males like [Faulkner](#), [Melville](#), [Hawthorne](#) and [Twain](#)."^[83]

In November 2006, Morrison visited the [Louvre](#) museum in Paris as the second in its "Grand Invité" program to guest-curate a month-long series of events across the arts on the theme of "The Foreigner's Home", about which *The New York Times* said: "In tapping her own African-American culture, Ms. Morrison is eager to credit 'foreigners' with enriching the countries where they settle."^{[84][85][86]}

Morrison's novel *A Mercy*, released in 2008, is set in the Virginia colonies of 1682. [Diane Johnson](#), in her review in *Vanity Fair*, called *A Mercy* "a poetic, visionary, mesmerizing tale that captures, in the cradle of our present problems and strains, the natal curse put on us back then by the Indian tribes, Africans, Dutch, Portuguese, and English competing to get their footing in the New World against a hostile landscape and the essentially tragic nature of human experience."^[87]

Princeton years

From 1989 until her retirement in 2006, Morrison held the [Robert F. Goheen](#) Chair in the Humanities at [Princeton University](#).^[9] She said she did not think much of modern fiction writers who reference their own lives instead of inventing new material, and she used to tell her creative writing students, "I don't want to hear about your little life, OK?" Practicing what she preached, she chose not to write about her own life in a memoir or autobiography.^[12]

Though based in the Creative Writing Program at Princeton, Morrison did not regularly offer writing workshops to students after the late 1990s, a fact that earned her some criticism. Rather, she conceived and developed the Princeton Atelier, a program that brings together students with writers and performing artists. Together the students and the artists produce works of art that are presented to the public after a semester of collaboration.^[88]

Inspired by her curatorship at the Louvre Museum, Morrison returned to Princeton in the fall 2008 to lead a small seminar, also entitled "The Foreigner's Home".^[19]

On November 17, 2017, Princeton University dedicated Morrison Hall (a building previously called West College) in her honor.^[89]

Final years: 2010–2019

In May 2010, Morrison appeared at [PEN World Voices](#) for a conversation with [Marlene van Niekerk](#) and [Kwame Anthony Appiah](#) about [South African literature](#) and specifically van Niekerk's 2004 novel *Agaat*.^[90]

Morrison wrote books for children with her younger son, Slade Morrison, who was a painter and a musician. Slade died of [pancreatic cancer](#) on December 22, 2010, aged 45,^{[29][91]} when Morrison's novel *Home* (2012) was half-completed.^[29]

In May 2011, Morrison received an Honorary [Doctor of Letters](#) degree from [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). During the commencement ceremony,^[92] she delivered a speech on the "pursuit of life, liberty, meaningfulness, integrity, and truth".

In 2011, Morrison worked with opera director [Peter Sellars](#) and [Malian](#) singer-songwriter [Rokia Traoré](#) on *Desdemona*, taking a fresh look at [William Shakespeare](#)'s tragedy *Othello*. The trio focused on the relationship between *Othello*'s wife *Desdemona* and her African nursemaid, Barbary, who is only briefly referenced in Shakespeare. The play, a mix of words, music and song, premiered in [Vienna](#) in 2011.^{[19][12][93]}

Morrison had stopped working on her latest novel when her son died in 2010, later explaining, "I stopped writing until I began to think, He would be really put out if he thought that he had caused me to stop. 'Please, Mom, I'm dead, could you keep going ...?'"^[94]

She completed *Home* and dedicated it to her son Slade.^{[11][95][96]} Published in 2012, it is the story of a [Korean War](#) veteran in the segregated United States of the 1950s who tries to save his sister from brutal medical experiments at the hands of a white doctor.^[94]

In August 2012, [Oberlin College](#) became the home base of the Toni Morrison Society,^[97] an international literary society founded in 1993, dedicated to scholarly research of Morrison's work.^{[98][99][100]}

Morrison's eleventh novel, *God Help the Child*, was published in 2015. It follows Bride, an executive in the fashion and beauty industry whose mother tormented her as a child for being dark-skinned, a trauma that has continued to dog Bride.^[101]

Morrison was a member of the editorial advisory board of *The Nation*, a magazine started in 1865 by Northern abolitionists.^{[78][102]}

Personal life

While teaching at Howard University from 1957 to 1964, she met Harold Morrison, a Jamaican architect, whom she married in 1958. She took his last name, and became known as Toni Morrison. Their first son, Harold Ford, was born in 1961. She was pregnant when she and Harold divorced in 1964.^{[8][17][18]} Her second son, Slade Kevin Morrison, was born in 1965; he died of [pancreatic cancer](#) on December 22, 2010,^{[29][91]} when Morrison was halfway through writing her novel *Home*. She stopped work on the novel for a year or two before completing it; it was published in 2012.^[103]

Death

Morrison died at [Montefiore Medical Center](#) in [The Bronx](#), New York City, on August 5, 2019, at the age of 88, from complications of [pneumonia](#).^{[104][105][106]}

A memorial tribute was held on November 21, 2019, at the [Cathedral of St. John the Divine](#) in the [Morningside Heights](#) neighborhood of [Manhattan](#) in New York City. Morrison was eulogized by, among others, [Oprah Winfrey](#), [Angela Davis](#), [Michael Ondaatje](#), [David Remnick](#), [Fran Lebowitz](#), [TaNehisi Coates](#), and [Edwidge Danticat](#).^[107] The jazz saxophonist [David Murray](#) performed a musical tribute.^[108]

Politics, literary reception, and legacy

Politics

Morrison spoke openly about American politics and race relations.

In writing about the 1998 [impeachment of Bill Clinton](#), she claimed that since [Whitewater](#), [Bill Clinton](#) was being mistreated in the same way Black people often are:

Years ago, in the middle of the Whitewater investigation, one heard the first murmurs: white skin notwithstanding, this is our first black President. Blacker than any actual black person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime. After all, Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas.^[109]

The phrase "our first Black president" was adopted as a positive by Bill Clinton supporters. When the [Congressional Black Caucus](#) honored the former president at its dinner in Washington, D.C., on September 29, 2001, for instance, Rep. [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#) (D-TX), the chair, told the audience that Clinton "took so many initiatives he made us think for a while we had elected the first black president".^[110]

In the context of the [2008 Democratic Primary campaign](#), Morrison stated to *Time* magazine: "People misunderstood that phrase. I was deploring the way in which President Clinton was being treated, vis-à-vis the sex scandal that was surrounding him. I said he was being treated like a black on the street, already guilty, already a perp. I have no idea what his real instincts are, in terms of race."^[111] In the [Democratic](#) primary contest for the [2008 presidential race](#), Morrison endorsed Senator [Barack Obama](#) over Senator [Hillary Clinton](#),^[112] though expressing admiration and respect for the latter.^[113] When he won, Morrison said she felt like an American for the first time. She said, "I felt very powerfully patriotic when I went to the inauguration of Barack Obama. I felt like a kid."^[111]

In April 2015, speaking of the deaths of [Michael Brown](#), [Eric Garner](#) and [Walter Scott](#) – three unarmed Black men killed by white police officers – Morrison said: "People keep saying, 'We need to have a conversation about race.' This is the conversation. I want to see a cop shoot a white unarmed teenager in

the back. And I want to see a white man convicted for raping a Black woman. Then when you ask me, 'Is it over?', I will say yes."^[114]

After the 2016 election of [Donald Trump](#) as President of the United States, Morrison wrote an essay, "Mourning for Whiteness", published in the November 21, 2016, issue of *The New Yorker*. In it she argues that white Americans are so afraid of losing privileges afforded them by their race that white voters elected Trump, whom she described as being "endorsed by the [Ku Klux Klan](#)", in order to keep the idea of [white supremacy](#) alive."^{[115][116]}

Relationship to feminism

Although her novels typically concentrate on black women, Morrison did not identify her works as [feminist](#). When asked in a 1998 interview, "Why distance oneself from feminism?" she replied: "In order to be as free as I possibly can, in my own imagination, I can't take positions that are closed. Everything I've ever done, in the writing world, has been to expand articulation, rather than to close it, to open doors, sometimes, not even closing the book – leaving the endings open for reinterpretation, revisitation, a little ambiguity."^[117] She went on to state that she thought it "off-putting to some readers, who may feel that I'm involved in writing some kind of feminist tract. I don't subscribe to patriarchy, and I don't think it should be substituted with matriarchy. I think it's a question of equitable access, and opening doors to all sorts of things."^[117]

In 2012, she responded to a question about the difference between black and white feminists in the 1970s. "[Womanists](#) is what black feminists used to call themselves", she explained. "They were not the same thing. And also the relationship with men. Historically, black women have always sheltered their men because they were out there, and they were the ones that were most likely to be killed."^[94]

W. S. Kottiswari writes in *Postmodern Feminist Writers* (2008) that Morrison exemplifies characteristics of "[postmodern feminism](#)" by "altering Euro-American dichotomies by rewriting a history written by mainstream historians" and by her usage of shifting narration in *Beloved* and *Paradise*. Kottiswari states: "Instead of western logocentric abstractions, Morrison prefers the powerful vivid language of women of color ... She is essentially postmodern since her approach to myth and folklore is re-visionist."^[118]

Contributions to Black feminism

Many of Morrison's works have been cited by scholars as significant contributions to [Black feminism](#), reflecting themes of race, gender, and sexual identity within her narratives."^[119]

[Barbara Smith](#)'s 1977 essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" argues that Morrison's *Sula* is a work of Black feminism, as it presents a lesbian perspective that challenges heterosexual relationships and the conventional family unit. Smith states, "Consciously or not, Morrison's work poses both lesbian and feminist questions about Black women's autonomy and their impact upon each other's lives."^[120]

[Hilton Als](#)'s 2003 profile in *The New Yorker* notes that "Before the late sixties, there was no real Black Studies curriculum in the academy—let alone a post-colonial-studies program or a feminist one. As an editor and author, Morrison, backed by the institutional power of Random House, provided the material for those discussions to begin."^[121]

Morrison consistently advocated for feminist ideas that challenge the dominance of the white patriarchal system, frequently rejecting the notion of writing from the perspective of the "white male gaze".^[122] Feminist political activist [Angela Davis](#) notes that "Toni Morrison's project resides precisely in the effort to discredit the notion that this white male gaze must be omnipresent."^[123]

In a 1998 episode of *Charlie Rose*, Morrison responded to a review of *Sula*, stating, "I remember a review of *Sula* in which the reviewer said, 'One day, she', meaning me, 'will have to face up 'to the real responsibilities, and get mature, 'and write about the real confrontation 'for black people, which is white

people.' As though our lives have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze, and I have spent my entire writing life trying to make sure that the white gaze was not the dominant one in any of my books."^[124]

In a 2015 interview with [The New York Times Magazine](#), Morrison reiterated her intention to write without the white gaze, stating, "What I'm interested in is writing without the gaze, without the white gaze. In so many earlier books by African-American writers, particularly the men, I felt that they were not writing to me. But what interested me was the African-American experience throughout whichever time I spoke of. It was always about African-American culture and people – good, bad, indifferent, whatever – but that was, for me, the universe."^[5]

Regarding the racial environment in which she wrote, Morrison stated, "Navigating a white male world was not threatening. It wasn't even interesting. I was more interesting than they were. I knew more than they did. And I wasn't afraid to show it."^[122]

In a 1986 interview with [Sandi Russell](#), Morrison stated that she wrote primarily for Black women, explaining, "I write for black women. We are not addressing the men, as some white female writers do. We are not attacking each other, as both black and white men do. Black women writers look at things in an unforgiving/loving way. They are writing to repossess, re-name, re-own."^[125]

In a 2003 interview, when asked about the labels "black" and "female" being attached to her work, Morrison replied, "I can accept the labels because being a black woman writer is not a shallow place but a rich place to write from. It doesn't limit my imagination; it expands it. It's richer than being a white male writer because I know more and I've experienced more."^[121]

In a 1987 article in [The New York Times](#), Morrison argued for the greatness of being a Black woman, stating, "I really think the range of emotions and perceptions I have had access to as a black person and as a female person are greater than those of people who are neither. I really do. So it seems to me that my world did not shrink because I was a black female writer. It just got bigger."^[40]

[Zadie Smith](#), paying tribute to "this infinite terrain" that Morrison opened up to her as a young black woman, wrote in 2019: "Morrison rejected the very concept of the narrow door and claimed for herself the wide world. She enriched our literary inheritance, and now every school child, whatever their background, can inherit Morrison as a literary forebear, a great American writer, who is as available to them—as 'universal'—as any other writer in the canon. All readers and writers are indebted to her for the space she created."^[126]

National Memorial for Peace and Justice

in [Montgomery, Alabama](#)

[The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama](#), includes writing by Morrison.^[127] Visitors can see her quote after they have walked through the section commemorating individual victims of lynching.^[128]

Papers

The Toni Morrison Papers are part of the permanent library collections of Princeton University, where they are held in the Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.^{[129][130]} Morrison's decision to offer her papers to Princeton instead of to her alma mater Howard University was criticized by some within the [historically black colleges and universities](#) community.^[131]

Opening in February 2023, an exhibition titled *Toni Morrison: Sites of Memory*, which was curated from her archives at Princeton University, commemorated the 30th anniversary of her winning the Nobel Prize.^{[132][133][134]} Running from the week after her birthday until June 4, the exhibition featured rare manuscripts, correspondence between Morrison and others, and unfinished projects, taking its name from

a 1995 essay by Morrison in which she spoke of a "journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply".^[135]

Day, halls, and school

In 2007, Toni Morrison Elementary School opened in her hometown of Lorain, Ohio. In 2019, a resolution was passed in her hometown of [Lorain, Ohio](#), to designate February 18, her birthday, as Toni Morrison Day. Additional legislation was introduced to also proclaim that date throughout the [State of Ohio](#).^{[136][137][138]} The legislation, HB 325, was passed by the [Ohio House of Representatives](#) on December 2, 2020,^[139] and signed into law by Governor [Mike DeWine](#) on December 21.^[140]

In 2021, Cornell University opened Toni Morrison Hall, a 178,869 square-foot residence hall and Morrison Dining in 2022, an adjacent dining hall designed by ikon.5 Architects.^{[141][142]}

During December 2023, the Toni Morrison Collective at Cornell University to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Morrison's [Nobel](#) win partnered with Calvary Baptist Church to give away free copies of two of Morrison's books and hold book talks in various locations. As explained by Anne V. Adams, professor emerita of Africana studies and comparative literature and chair of the Toni Morrison Collective: "The fact that Toni Morrison, during her first year as a master's student, lodged at a house just a couple of doors up the street from historic Calvary Baptist Church created a perfect context for a collaboration."^[143]

Documentary films

Morrison was interviewed by [Margaret Busby](#) in [London](#) for a 1988 documentary film by Sindamani Bridglal, entitled *Identifiable Qualities*, shown on [Channel 4](#).^{[144][145]}

Morrison was the subject of a film titled *Imagine – Toni Morrison Remembers*, directed by [Jill Nicholls](#) and shown on [BBC One](#) television on July 15, 2015, in which Morrison talked to [Alan Yentob](#) about her life and work.^{[146][147][148]}

In 2016, Oberlin College received a grant to complete a documentary film begun in 2014, *The Foreigner's Home*, about Morrison's intellectual and artistic vision,^[149] explored in the context of the 2006 exhibition she guest-curated at the Louvre.^{[150][151]} The film's executive producer was [Jonathan Demme](#).^[152] It was directed by Oberlin College Cinema Studies faculty Geoff Pingree and Rian Brown,^[153] and incorporates footage shot by Morrison's first-born son Harold Ford Morrison, who also consulted on the film.^[154]

UNIT 3- Surfacing Summary

Surfacing follows the story of an unnamed narrator as she travels back to Quebec to search

for her father. Having not been there for a few years, she returns with her boyfriend, Joe, and her friends, Anna and David, who are married to each other. On the way, they encounter one of her father's friends, Paul, and he tells them that he has no information on her father's whereabouts and that he hasn't been seen in a long time. The group is introduced to [Evans](#), their guide, who takes them to the narrator's father's island; this is where she and her brother, who almost drowned, grew up. Once there, she searches for clues and becomes sure that he is still alive (if he is dead, then both her parents are gone, as her mother died from an illness years before).

During her time on the island, the narrator also works at her career as a freelance illustrator, currently creating artwork for a book of fairy tales, although she is too preoccupied with her father's disappearance to focus properly. As the novel progresses, we begin to uncover more about David and Anna, observing their tumultuous relationship. David is often insulting to Anna and tells her what to do, such as demanding she wears makeup. The narrator describes how he is a womanizer and how it makes her uncomfortable to see Anna treated in that way.

On a blueberry-picking trip, Joe surprisingly proposes to the narrator, but she turns him down and tells him about her previous relationship where she left her husband and child. He is upset and acts sullen and cold in the aftermath of her refusal.

Paul arrives with an American named Malstrom, who is a member of a Detroit wildlife agency. He wants to purchase the land, but the narrator turns down his offer. Believing that her father is still alive, she tells this to Paul, who is doubtful.

While searching through her father's belongings for clues of his whereabouts, the narrator comes across a map with marked locations where her father was planning on carrying out research on Indian wall paintings. The whole group goes on a camping trip to see the paintings, and as they set off, they find a dead heron hanging from a tree; David decides he has to film it because he is making a film called *Random Samples*. The heron has a haunting effect on the narrator, who cannot stop thinking about it.

On the trip, we begin to see the dark side of Anna and David's relationship as Anna reveals to the narrator that David will be angry she has forgotten her makeup. The group visits one of the sites on the map, but there are no wall paintings and the narrator is disappointed. As they travel to the next site they encounter a group of Americans with a boat brandishing the American flag. However, on closer inspection, the narrator discovers they are actually Canadians and the flag is only a sticker. We find out they are the ones who killed the heron, and because of this the narrator describes them as Americans.

The narrator discovers that the wall paintings are under the lake. David maliciously teases Anna, humiliating her by demanding she take her clothes off for his film project. Anna tells the narrator David is unfaithful to her and she is unhappy. The narrator later asks David why he is horrible to Anna, and he says he does it because *she* often cheats on him.

To see the paintings, the narrator dives down into the lake. On one dive, she sees something that causes her to scream and quickly come back to the surface. Joe had followed her to the lake and angrily demands to know what she was doing down there. She doesn't respond to him and is in a sort of trance, coming to the realization that what she saw floating below was in fact her aborted baby. The narrator admits to herself that she made up some of the earlier things in her life that she had asserted as true—she was never married to the man she claimed was her husband, and

she never had a baby because the man, with whom she was having an affair because he was already married, had her get an abortion. She had thought the images of drowning in her memory were of her brother, but in actuality they were of her unborn child.

The narrator starts believing that her father marked the sites on the map purposefully. She decides to find them all and thank the gods for giving her, what she believes is, “the power.” While in this mentally vulnerable state, Joe reaches out to her a number of times, but she completely disregards him. Joe’s belief that he has power over the narrator leads him to try to rape her. He stops when she insists it will make her pregnant.

Soon after, David approaches the narrator and tries to seduce her, stating that Anna and Joe are having an affair. The narrator does not give in to his advances. When Anna hears of the narrator’s rejection of David, it causes her to feel guilty and she is cruel to the narrator instead of her husband. The friends’ relationships remain frayed.

A police officer arrives and talks to David, Anna, and Joe while the narrator watches from a distance. David breaks the news that the narrator’s father is dead, and they have found his body. She refuses to believe this, as she is still certain he is alive. In her manic state, she decides that she has forgiven Joe for cheating on her and the two have sex. The narrator is certain she has conceived a child from this encounter.

With the news of her father’s death, the narrator and her friends decide to go home. Instead of going with them, the narrator abandons them. She takes David’s film and destroys it and leaves by boat. Now she is alone on the island and she begins to become more unhinged as she destroys her own artwork, the furnishings of the cabin, and envisions her dead parents. She abandons her clothes, begins eating plants, and lives in a burrow.

Eventually, the narrator begins to recover from her madness and realizes that she actually loves Joe and wants to have her child with him. Paul returns with Joe to look for her and the narrator plans to reunite with him. The novel ends with the narrator looking out at Joe, ready for him to find her.

Key Events and Discovery

Searching her father's papers, the narrator finds sketches she initially deems mad but realizes are tracings of ancient Indigenous rock paintings. They canoe to sites, failing at one before she dives underwater at another, blocked by a flooded level from a new American dam. On a later solo dive, she hallucinates a corpse—her aborted fetus—triggering repressed truths: no husband or child existed; instead, a married lover coerced her into an illegal abortion, which she disguised in memory as her drowned brother's death.

A diver finds her father's drowned body, confirming his death. In manic grief, she sleeps with Joe, believing she's conceived, then abandons the group, destroying David's film and fleeing by boat. Alone, she regresses—shedding clothes, eating plants, living in a burrow, envisioning her

parents as mythic figures (mother as bird, father as fish), rejecting mirrors, cans, and civilization as divine prohibitions.

Psychological Descent and Resolution

Her "surfacing" memories expose personal and cultural traumas: patriarchal control, lost innocence, Quebec's anglicized erosion under American capitalism. She processes grief over parents and fetus, emerging healed yet feral. When Joe returns searching, she observes from woods, feeling trust and potential love, choosing cautious reintegration over return.

Major Themes

Feminism and Power: Anna endures David's infidelity and filming humiliations; the narrator confronts abortion shame and male dominance.

Nature vs. Civilization: The lake symbolizes subconscious depths; dams and herons' slaughter critique exploitation.

Identity and Memory: Unnamed narrator "surfaces" fragmented truths, blurring real and imagined.

UNIT- 4 Intizar Hussain:

Intizar Hussain or **Intezar Hussain** (21 December 1925 – 2 February 2016) was a Pakistani writer of Urdu novels, short stories, poetry and nonfiction. He is widely recognised as a leading literary figure of Pakistan.^{[2][3][4][5]}

He was nominated for the [International Booker Prize](#) in 2013.^[6]

Early life

Intizar Hussain was born on 21 December 1925 in [Bulandshahr district, Uttar Pradesh](#) (at the time, the [United Provinces of Agra and Oudh](#)), British India.^[5] He received a degree in Urdu literature in [Meerut](#).^[7] As someone born in the Indian subcontinent who later migrated to Pakistan during 1947 Partition, a perennial theme in Hussain's works deals with the nostalgia linked with his life in the pre-partition era.^[8] Intizar Hussain was often described as possibly the greatest living Urdu writer.^[9]

He lived in the old [Anarkali Bazaar](#) of [Lahore](#), where he associated and socialized with the likes of [Nasir Kazmi](#), and [Muhammad Hasan Askari](#) and together they frequented Lahore's teahouses – [Pak Tea House](#), [Nagina Bakery](#), [Coffee House](#), [Lords](#) and [Arab Hotel](#).^[5]

Lahore's literary scene was divided between two groups, *Anjuman-e-Tarraqi-Pasand-Mussannifeen* ([Progressive Writers Movement](#)) (a leftwing group) and the rightwing [Halqa-e Arbab-e Zauq](#) in the 1950s. Intizar Hussain decided not to be closely associated with either group and managed to stay neutral and focus on his writing career.^[5]

Literary work

He wrote short stories, novels and poetry in Urdu, and also literary columns for newspapers such as *Dawn* and *Daily Express*.^{[2][3][4]} *The Seventh Door*, *Leaves* and *Basti* are among English translations of his books.

Among the five novels he wrote – *Chaand Gehan* (1952), *Din Aur Daastaan* (1959), *Basti* (1980), *Tazkira* (1987), and *Aage Samandar Hai* (1995) – received global praise.^[2]

His other writings include *Hindustan Se Aakhri Khat*, *Aagay Sumandar Hai*.^[2] *Shehr-e-Afsos*, *Jataka Tales*, *Janam Kahanian* and *Wo Jo Kho Gaye*. *Aagay Sumandar Hai* (Sea is facing you in the front) contrasts the spiraling urban violence of contemporary Karachi with a vision of the lost Islamic realm of al-Andalus in modern Spain.^{[2][10][4][11]}

His novel *Basti* is based on [Pakistani history](#).^[3]

Among his books, "Basti" and "Khali Pinjra" have been translated into Persian by Samira Gilani.

Intizar Hussain produced a vast body of lesser-known works beyond his famous novels like *Basti*. These include short story collections and essays blending myth, Partition memories, and cultural nostalgia.

Lesser-Known Short Stories

His early collection *Gali Kuche* (1952) captures Lahore's lanes, while *Khaali Pinjra*, *Boond Boond*, and *Janam Kahaniyan* explore everyday lives with subtle folklore. Stories like *An Unwritten Epic* feature motifs such as the neem tree symbolizing courage during Partition riots. Other gems: *Aakhri Aadmi*, *Shakista Sutoon Par Dhoop*, and *Saeed Ki Pur Asraar Zindagi*.

Essays and Columns

Hussain's Lahore Nama column in *Mashriq* evoked the city's soul, alongside radio pieces and books like *Dilli Tha Jis Ka Naam* and *Qatre Mein Darya*. *Justujoo Kya Hai* (2012) is his reflective autobiography. Later works include *Surakh Tamgha* (2007) and *Apni Danist Mein* (2014).

English Translations

Circle and Other Stories (2004), *The Death of Sheherzad*, *Leaves*, and *The Seventh Door* brought his tales to global readers. These highlight urban violence contrasting lost realms like al-Andalus in *Agay Sumandar Hai*.

Death

On 2 February 2016, he died at National Hospital, Defence Housing Authority at [Lahore](#) after contracting pneumonia.^{[10][7][5]} *The Indian Express* newspaper termed him the "best-known Pakistani writer in the world" after [Manto](#).^[12]

His wife, Aliya Begum, had died in 2004 and they had no children.^[13]

Influences

Hussain believed that two forces had risen in contemporary [Pakistan](#): women and the mullahs. He also acknowledged his study and the influence of Buddhist texts and the *Mahabharata*.^[14]

Legacy

In 2016, [Pakistan Academy of Letters](#) (PAL) announced the 'Intizar Hussain Award' which would be given to a literary figure every year.^[15]