**THE BLUEST EYE**

**BY**

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**CHARACTERS**

**"The Bluest Eye"** is a novel written by Toni Morrison, **first published in 1970.** It tells the story of a young African American girl named Pecola Breedlove and her experiences growing up in a racially divided society. The novel features several significant characters, including:

1. **Pecola Breedlove:** The protagonist of the story, a young African American girl who longs for blue eyes and believes that having them would make her beautiful and accepted by society.
2. **Claudia MacTeer:** The narrator of the story and one of Pecola's childhood friends. Claudia is a strong-willed and perceptive young girl who provides insight into the novel's themes and events.
3. **Frieda MacTeer:** Claudia's older sister and another of Pecola's friends. Frieda is protective of her sister and has a more developed understanding of the world's injustices.
4. **Cholly Breedlove:** Pecola's father, a troubled and abusive man who has experienced a difficult life, which contributes to his struggles with alcoholism and violent behavior.
5. **Pauline "Polly" Breedlove:** Pecola's mother, who works as a housekeeper for a white family and becomes consumed by her obsession with cleanliness and white ideals of beauty.
6. **Geraldine:** A light-skinned African American woman who lives in the same neighborhood as Pecola and the MacTeer sisters. She represents a standard of beauty and respectability in the novel, reinforcing the idea of white beauty standards.
7. **Maureen Peal:** A new girl at school who is light-skinned and considered beautiful by the other children. Her presence highlights the impact of racial self-hatred and colorism on Pecola's self-esteem.
8. **Soaphead Church:** A charlatan mystic and fraud who exploits Pecola's desire for blue eyes and represents the corrupting influence of white beauty standards on the African American community.

These are some of the central characters in "The Bluest Eye." The novel explores themes of racial identity, beauty, self-esteem, and the devastating effects of racism on individuals and communities.

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## Summary

Pecola’s story is told through the eyes of multiple narrators. The main narrator is Claudia MacTeer, a childhood friend with whom Pecola once lived. Claudia narrates from two different perspectives: the adult Claudia, who reflects on the events of 1940–41, and the nine-year-old Claudia, who observes the events as they happen.

**In the first section of the novel (“Autumn”),** nine-year-old Claudia introduces Pecola and explains why she is living with the MacTeers. Claudia tells the reader what her mother, Mrs. MacTeer, told her: Pecola is a “case…a girl who had no place to go.” The Breedloves are currently “outdoors,” or homeless, because Pecola’s father, Cholly, burned the family house down. The county placed Pecola with the MacTeer family until “they could decide what to do, or, more precisely, until the [Breedlove] family was reunited.”

Despite the tragic circumstances of their friendship, Claudia and her 11-year-old sister, Frieda, enjoy playing with Pecola. Frieda and Pecola bond over their shared love of [Shirley Temple](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Shirley-Temple), a famous American child star known for her blonde curls, babyish singing, and tap-dancing with Bill (“Bojangles”) Robinson. Claudia, however, “couldn’t join them in their adoration because [she] hated Shirley.” In fact, she hated “all the Shirley Temples of the world.” The adult Claudia recalls being given a blue-eyed baby [doll](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/doll) for Christmas:

Claudia remembers dismembering the doll “to see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me.” Finding nothing special at its core, Claudia discarded the doll and continued on her path of destruction, her hatred of little white girls unabated.

**The second section (“Winter”)** consists of two short [vignettes](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vignettes). The first of these is narrated by Claudia, and in it she documents Pecola’s fascination with a light-skinned Black girl by the name of Maureen Peal. Friendly at first, Maureen ultimately humiliates Pecola and her friends by declaring herself “cute” and Pecola “ugly.” The second [vignette](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vignette), narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator, focuses on Geraldine and Louis Junior, a young mother and son in Lorain, Ohio. Geraldine and Junior’s connection to Pecola is not immediately obvious; she does not appear until the end of the vignette. On a particularly boring afternoon, Junior entices Pecola into his house. After she comes inside, he throws his mother’s beloved cat at her face. Scratched and verging on tears, Pecola attempts to leave. Junior stops her, claiming she is his “prisoner.” Junior then picks up his mother’s cat and begins swinging it around his head. In an effort to save it, Pecola grabs his arm, causing them both to fall to the ground. The cat, released in mid-motion, is thrown full-force at the window. At this point Geraldine appears, and Junior promptly tells her that Pecola has killed the cat. Geraldine calls Pecola a “nasty little black bitch” and orders her to leave.

**The third section of the novel (“Spring”)** is by far the longest, [comprising](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/comprising) four vignettes. In the first vignette, Claudia and Frieda talk about how Mr. Henry—a guest staying with the MacTeers—“picked at” Frieda, inappropriately touching her while her parents were outside. After Frieda told her mother, her father “threw our old tricycle at [Mr. Henry’s] head and knocked him off the porch.” Frieda tells Claudia she fears she might be “ruined,” and they set off to find Pecola. In the second and third vignettes, the reader learns about Pecola’s parents, Pauline (Polly) and Cholly Breedlove. According to the omniscient narrator, Polly and Cholly once loved each other. They were married at a relatively young age and [migrated](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/migrated) together from Kentucky to Lorain. Over the years, their relationship steadily deteriorated. One disappointment followed another, and sustained poverty, ignorance, and fear took steep tolls on their well-being. At the end of the third vignette—just before the events of the first section begin—Cholly drunkenly stumbles into his kitchen, where he finds Pecola washing dishes. Overwhelmed by conflicting feelings of tenderness and rage, Cholly rapes Pecola and leaves her unconscious body on the floor for Polly to find.

The fourth vignette picks up not long after the rape. It begins by delving into the personal history of Soaphead Church, a misanthropic Anglophile and self-proclaimed spiritual healer. Soaphead is a [deceptive](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/deceptive) and conniving man; as the narrator observes, he comes from a long line of similarly ambitious and corrupt West Indians. His latest scheme involves interpreting dreams and performing so-called “miracles” for the Black [community](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community) in Lorain. When Pecola goes to him asking for blue eyes, Soaphead initially sympathizes with her:

Soaphead forms a plan to trick Pecola. He gives her a piece of raw meat and demands that she give it to his property owner’s dog. If the dog “behaves strangely,” he tells her, her “wish will be granted on the day following this one.” [Unbeknownst](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/Unbeknownst) to Pecola, the meat is poisoned. After the dog eats the meat, gags, and dies, Pecola believes her wish has been granted. Thus begins her sharp descent into madness.

**The fourth and final section (“Summer”)** takes place after Pecola loses her mind. In the beginning, Claudia and Frieda learn that Pecola has been impregnated by her father. The sisters hope that the baby will not die; they pray for it and even offer a sacrifice (a bicycle) to God. Meanwhile, Pecola converses with an unidentified person—presumably, herself—about her new blue eyes, which she still thinks “aren’t blue enough.” In the final moments of the novel, the adult Claudia tells the reader that Pecola gave birth prematurely and the baby did not survive.