



Toni Morrison

Video Lesson 2 April 27th- May 1st

Understanding Cause and Effect

- It is important to read carefully all of the time.
- Why? If you really understand the material, you will be able to recognize relationships between events and comprehend causes and effects.
- How? This requires the reader to make logical connections between pieces of information in the passage and evaluate that one thing happens *because of* another event or situation. Sometimes the cause is stated. The writer tells why it happened, but sometimes the cause is only implied and the reader must analyze and infer the cause.

Understanding Cause and Effect

Cause

- The cause tells what makes something happen.
- The cause is first
- The cause is why something happened

Effect

- The effect is what happened and will sometimes begin with phrases like *as a result...*, or *therefore*, or *so*.
- The effect is second
- The effect is what happened.

Toni Morrison Writer, Teacher, Editor

Before Toni Morrison was Toni Morrison, she was Chloe Anthony Wofford. She switched to Toni, short for her middle name, Anthony, while she was in college because everyone mispronounced her first name. The change from Wofford to Morrison came a few years later when she was teaching English at Howard University. There she met and married an architect, Harold Morrison. They had two sons but divorced seven years later.

As a young mother and college professor, Toni Morrison was proving she was an intelligent person and a hard worker, but the achievements that have made her loved by millions of fans were still years away. Although she is known to Americans today primarily as an author, she did not publish her first novel until she was 40 years old. Seven years later she published her second novel, and it received the National Book Award. Her third and fourth novels became best sellers. Her fifth novel, *Beloved*, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and was later made into a movie starring Oprah Winfrey. Six years later (1993) she earned the Nobel Prize for Literature. At that time, only seven women had ever been awarded this honor, and an African-American had never been named Nobel laureate. Morrison published her seventh novel in 1998, and in 1999 she collaborated with her son to publish her first book of children's literature, *The Big Box*.

Morrison grew up in Ohio during the Great Depression, a financially difficult time in our country when most Americans were struggling to make enough money to get by. Morrison's father was a shipyard welder and often held three jobs in order to take care of his family. Her parents may not have had much money, but they gave their daughter two rich gifts – pride in her African-American heritage and culture, and the love of reading and good books. From her family she heard many stories of Southern black folklore. This legacy had a major effect on Morrison's adult life, career and fame.

In first grade, Morrison was the only African-American in her class and the only child who could already read. She loved school and did well. She graduated with honors from high school and went on to college for an English degree from Howard University and a master's degree from Cornell University. She took a job as an English professor at Texas Southern University and then moved back to Howard University to teach there. While a professor at Howard, she joined a writer's club. One meeting she brought a story she had written herself to share with the group. Everyone liked it.

A few years later, when Morrison was a single mom of two small boys and was working in New York as an editor with a textbook publisher, she pulled that story out again and added to it to create her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*. She found that she loved to write and had a gift for mixing her own experiences, her imagination, her love for reading and her talent for words to create emotional and sensitive stories of African-American life and culture. Over the next several years, working as senior editor with a publishing house and teaching at the State University of New York (SUNY), she made time to write in the evenings, writing several more novels, essays and a play.

Twenty-five years after they were written, three of her books, *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* became best sellers as a result of being featured as book club selections by her biggest fan, Oprah Winfrey. Morrison, who had already been honored for her literary talent, became popular with a new generation of readers. Today her popularity is still growing.

Dear Students,

You have now reached the end of the lesson so please complete the worksheet titled “Toni Morrison worksheet April 27th-May 1st.”

Remember if you have any questions I can be reached at mheberle@the watsoninstitute-fa.org. You are doing a great job and I am so proud of you all.

I can't wait to see you soon,

Ms. Heberle