



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2020 Volume I: American History through American Lives

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## **The History within Toni Morrison's *Sula***

Guide for Curriculum Unit 20.01.07, published September 2020

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Toni Morrison's *Sula* is a novel that has enough rich literary craft to stand on its own in a classroom, but it also lends itself to exploration of an additional context—that of the influence of history on setting, theme, and especially character. We will study the novel in the context of its historical background, focusing on all-black towns, black soldiers in World War I, and black labor issues between the two world wars. For each of these events or issues we'll look at primary and/or secondary documents such as personal narratives, essays, videos, cartoons, and images, to give more perspective and some historical accuracy. Strategies will include historical inquiry and close reading activities. This mature novel is best for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and is intended for an English Language Arts classroom. The unit and the novel could also be taught in a 20<sup>th</sup> century history class with an emphasis on African American history and with room for the literary element.

Key Words: Literature, African-American literature, Toni Morrison, African-American history, Primary sources, Secondary sources, 11th and 12th grades

(Developed for English and Language Arts, grades 11-12; recommended for American History, grades 11-12)

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