

The Color Purple Book Notes

The Color Purple by Alice Walker

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Author/Context

Alice Walker (1944 - ?)

Born on February 4, 1944 to two sharecroppers in Eatonton, Georgia, Alice Walker was the youngest of eight children. Her parents, Willie Lee and Minnie Lou Grant Walker, filled her with stories about their hardships and those of their families as a black family in the south. As part of a large family, Walker was constantly physical with her brothers and sisters, playing and fighting in the fields. One accident turned nearly fatal when her one of brothers' BB guns went off in her direction, causing her to lose sight in one eye. Despite her partial loss of eyesight, Walker was a diligent student, finishing her classes with top grades. She graduated as the valedictorian of her high school class, securing a space at Spelman, the all black women's college in Atlanta. After two years of study, Walker transferred to Sarah Lawrence College and took full advantage of its opportunities. She participated in an exchange program in Africa and traveled around New York until graduation in 1965. She worked for several years in New York before returning to the south.

She began writing about black women living in America, seeing first hand the difficulties faced as a people. Because her youth was so filled with persecution and separation, Walker found herself involved heavily in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. She wrote articles, went to speeches, and even marched on Washington with Martin Luther King, Jr. As one of the earliest and most celebrated contemporary African-American writers, Walker found inspiration in Zora Neal Hurston and served as a source of inspiration for writers such as Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou. Since *The Color Purple*, she has continued a prolific career in writing novels, poetry, and essays. Her wide body of work includes: *Once (Poems)*, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women*, *Langston Hughes: American Poet (editor)*, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down: Stories*, *The Color Purple*, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, *To Hell With Dying*, *Living by the Word*, *The Temple of My Familiar*, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, *Warrior Marks*, *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult*, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism*, *By the Light of My Father's Smile*, and *The Way Forward Is With a Broken Heart*.

The Color Purple was published in 1982 to instant critical acclaim and popular success. It won, among numerous awards, the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1983, and was quickly made into an Oscar-winning film in 1985 by Steven Spielberg. According to *Publisher's Weekly*, the novel is "a saga filled with joy and pain, humor and bitterness, and an array of characters who live, breathe and illuminate the world."

In addition to the Pulitzer, Walker is the recipient of numerous other prestigious awards and honors. They include the Lillian Smith Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rosenthal Award from the National Institute of Arts & Letters, a nomination for the National Book Award, a Radcliffe Institute Fellowship, a Merrill Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Front Page Award for Best Magazine Criticism from the Newswoman's Club of New York.



One critic claims that "Alice Walker's best writing is like balm: soothing, restorative, and earthy...Walker's lovely prose rarely falters. Her gifts are evident on almost every page." She lives in Northern California and continues to write and lecture.

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Plot Summary

The book opens as young Celie address God with her fears about the future. She is raped numerous times by who she believes to be her father, sees her mother beaten, and fears for her sister Nettie's life. She and her mother give birth on the same day to "His" children; "He" immediately kills the mother's baby and sells her own crying newborn. Soon enough, "He" sells her into marriage with an older widow with four children named Mr. Albert _____. Mr. _____ beats her, taunts her, and forces her to clean, cook, and look after his dirty and ungrateful children. Meanwhile, Mr. _____ lusts after Nettie until she runs away to the Reverend Mr. _____'s home (with Celie's protective orders).

As her life with Mr. _____ progresses, the children grow. Harpo, the eldest son, falls in love with a young girl named Sofia, and introduces her to the family already swelling and pregnant. She speaks her mind and flees to live with her sister Odessa. The two eventually marry and move in next door to Celie and Mr. _____. Celie and Sofia develop a strong friendship, as one accepts her beatings and the other beats her husband.

Celie continues to write to God and Nettie, explaining her miserable life with Mr. _____ and hoping to reunite as soon as possible. Suddenly, Mr. _____ brings his mistress, Shug Avery, home with him, for she is ill with venereal disease, and has no other salvation. Celie immediately finds herself attracted to the celebrated singer, speaking with her, bathing her, and worshipping her. After an initial introduction of terror, the two become close friends.

Eventually, Sofia becomes bored with her marriage and leaves Harpo and their four children alone to stay with her sister, Odessa. Harpo learns how to live alone, and builds a juke joint in their old home. Shug Avery sings there and brings it big business. Celie and Shug continue to discuss sexuality, life, love, and family. One evening at Harpo's, Sofia returns with a new boyfriend. Harpo brings his new girlfriend, Squeak, to the joint, and everyone is reunited. However, when the dancing begins, Sofia punches Squeak in the mouth, knocking out her front teeth, and flees town again. The family learns that later that week, Sofia found herself in an argument with the mayor's wife, punched the mayor, and was thrown in jail after a brutal beating by the police. She is left there for years, while the family tries to help. Squeak discovers that she is related to the warden and tries to help Sofia by visiting him. When he sees her, he rapes her and leaves the family helpless.

Shug and Celie fall in love, as she teaches Celie about her own body, femininity, and sexuality. They discover that Mr. _____ has been hiding all of the letters that Nettie has sent to Celie. She is so angry that she develops violent feelings towards him. They begin to read the letters and learn all about Nettie's new and adventurous life. When she ran away from Mr. _____ years ago, she found Corrine and Samuel, two Christian missionaries who took her in. Their two adopted children, Adam and Olivia, are in fact Celie's biological children taken at birth. They travel to England and Africa to teach and help the youth of Africa. In Africa, they live in the village of Olinka, where they find a new



home, the children grow and learn, and they discover new theories on life and religion. Corrine falls ill with the African fever and eventually dies. Years later, Nettie and Samuel fall in love, marry, and are forced to leave their post in Africa. At this point, they decide to return home to Nettie's family. Adam and Olivia have become young adults, and Adam falls in love with an African girl named Tashi, whom he marries and brings to America.

Shug takes Celie, her new husband Grady, and Squeak to Memphis with her to escape the violent and cruel wrath of Albert. Celie is in heaven as she lives in a beautiful house with her beloved Shug, and discovers a method of making pants. Her pants become a runaway success and she opens Folkspants, Unlimited. Furthermore, she learns that her cruel father (who she learns is not her biological father) has died, leaving her the old house.

Unfortunately, Mr. _____ hands Celie a letter stating that the ship on which Nettie and her family sailed has sunk. Celie is miserable, for she feels completely alone. While at home fixing her new house, Shug informs her that she is in love with someone else and just wants a six-month affair with the young man. Celie is brokenhearted for both grave losses, and spends the remainder of her time with Mr. _____. He has grown, changed, and found religion, making him a bearable companion.

Eventually, Shug returns to Celie's home wanting her love forever and Nettie arrives on their doorstep with their children. Celie's life is now complete, as the two families join as one, despite blood relations and years of separation.



Major Characters

Celie: Celie begins as a young girl, raped by her father, forced to give away her babies (born from incest). She is told that she is dumb, useless, and ugly. Her father forces her to marry Mr. _____, a man much older than she, with four children from a previous marriage. He lusts after Celie's sister Nettie and Celie hopes Mr. _____ will allow Nettie to live with them since he's so taken with her. Celie marries Mr. _____ and raises his children, who soon become her friends and kin. Throughout her life, she writes letters to God and her sister Nettie, who she prays will return to her one day. Celie falls in love with Shug Avery, Mr. _____'s singing mistress and learns how to love herself. Shug teaches her about her own body, sensuality, singing, living, and loving. After moving to Memphis with Shug, abandoning Mr. _____, and starting her own clothing company (Folkspants), Celie learns that she has inherited her old home. She returns to it, waiting for Shug, Nettie, and her children to return to her, so that they may live as one family.

Nettie: Nettie is Celie's younger sister, bright, attractive, and strong. She gets kicked out of her home for refusing Mr. _____'s advances and discovers an entirely new life. With her missionary friends, Corrine and Samuel, she leaves for England and Africa, where they live, teach, and learn. Corrine and Samuel's adoptive children are Celie's biological children, Olivia and Adam. Nettie writes to Celie throughout her entire travel abroad and looks forward to a reunion as well. She falls in love with Samuel and marries him in a small ceremony in England before saying goodbye to the Olinka tribal community in Africa.

He (Pa): Nettie and Celie's father is continually referred to as 'He' throughout the first part of the book. He beats and rapes his children, threatening them with everything from insults to death. Through brute force, he impregnates Celie twice and takes the babies away in the forest where he plans to kill them. Instead, he gives them away. He later marries a young woman named Daisy, whom he also mistreats. Towards the end of the book, Celie learns that He is not her true father, but rather her stepfather, and her children are not born out of incest.

Mr. _____ (Albert): Mr. _____ is given no surname throughout the book and is only called by his first name, Albert, by Shug Avery. Initially a cruel man, Mr. _____ beats Celie and forces her to do nothing but work, while he plays with his mistress, Shug Avery. However, as he grows older and loses people in his life, he discovers the importance of religion and kindness.

Shug Avery: Shug Avery is the exotic singer and entertainer who steals both Mr. _____ and Celie's heart instantly. She performs a famous nightclub act, known as the 'Queen Bee', develops a reputation for sinning and drinking, falls ill with the woman's disease, moves in with her lover, Mr. _____, and eventually falls in love with Celie. She teaches Celie the beauty of femininity of love of relationships and kindness. Even though she moves around the country and sleeps with many men, she ultimately loves Celie with all her heart.



Harpo: Harpo is Mr. _____'s eldest son and the one child with whom Celie associates the most. He is not as strong, independent, and 'manly' as other boys, thinks and acts with his heart, and falls in love young with a girl named Sofia. He marries her and they live nearby with their four children until Sofia leaves him to find her own wild life. He grows with her, with his girlfriend Squeak, and eventually opens up a nightspot in his old house called, Harpo's.

Sofia Butler: Sofia is a robust youthful pregnant fifteen year old girl when Harpo introduces her to his family. Outspoken, independent, and strong, she speaks out to Mr. _____ and Celie, lives with her sister Odessa, and loves Harpo. After four children and a mundane life together, she leaves Harpo after he beats her. She eventually returns home with her new beau, the prizefighter, punches Harpo's new girlfriend in the mouth and leaves town again. After a violent fight in the park with Miss Millie, the mayor's wife, Sofia is thrown in jail for nearly eight years. She develops a murderous streak and expresses her hatred towards white people. Miss Millie eventually pardons her and allows her to come to her home to raise her children and live as her maid. She spends a majority of the rest of her life raising young Eleanor Jane and running the household. Eventually she returns home to Celie and Harpo's after years of growing, learning, and changing into a kindhearted person.

Squeak (Mary Agnes): Squeak is Harpo's girlfriend after Sofia leaves him. She is quiet and obedient, doing anything he asks of her. She is the complete opposite of Sofia. After Sofia punches her in the mouth at Harpo's jukejoint, she starts to develop a backbone, standing up to her man and his family. When Shug Avery comes home, she teaches Squeak how to sing in public. As the family tries to help Sofia break out of prison, Sofia realizes that she is cousins with the white warden and tells everyone that her real name is Mary Agnes. She travels to Memphis with Grady, Celie, and Shug to escape Mr. _____ and live a glamorous life, until she and Grady escape to Panama together to live on a plantation. Squeak ultimately returns home in her old age to live with her daughter, Suzie Q.

Minor Characters

Miss Addie Beasley: Miss Addie Beasley is the girls' grade school teacher in their rural town. She praises both Celie and Nettie. She pleads for Celie to be allowed to return to school, but ultimately gives up when she sees Celie is "big" (with child).

Carrie : Carrie is one of Mr. _____'s two sisters.

Kate: Kate is the other of Mr. _____'s two sisters. She visits Celie alone and takes her shopping to buy a purple dress. She also gives her advice on how to survive in the masculine world.

Annie Julia: Annie Julia is Mr. _____'s first wife. He maltreated her and constantly ran off with Shug Avery, while married to her. She, therefore, found her own lover, who soon killed her, leaving Mr. _____ to raise their four children.



Old Mr. _____: Old Mr. _____ is Albert's obstinate father. He shows no emotion and constantly puts down his son. He never approved of Shug Avery and thinks Mr. _____ has done well by marrying Celie. He complains that his money and houses are going to bad people - his own son and grandson.

Tobias: Mr. _____'s obstinate brother who visits once with his father in order to show Mr. _____ up. He visits to see the famous Shug Avery, for he believed she died. When he sees her laying sick in Mr. _____'s house, he reprimands his brother for allowing such a dirty woman in his house.

The prizefighter: The prizefighter is Sofia's new boyfriend with whom she has Henrietta. He arrives with her at Harpo's night joint, shocking everyone. After punching Squeak in the mouth, Sofia flees with him away again.

Miss Millie: Miss Millie is the mayor's wife who Sofia attacks after provocation. Because of the incident with Miss Millie, Sofia is beaten to the point of near-death and placed in prison for nearly eight years. Miss Millie brings Sofia home to work as her maid. From that point on, Sofia raises her children and cleans her house - she does exactly what she hates - work in a kitchen for white people.

Odessa: Odessa is one of Sofia's amazon sisters. She takes Sofia in when she is alone and running away from her father and later when she runs away from Harpo. She helps raise Sofia's children with her loving husband, Jack, while Sofia is in prison.

Hodges: Hodges is the warden in Sofia's prison. The family attempts to contact him so that they can help Sofia and calm her of her murderous desires. Squeak realizes that she is his niece, through a biracial union, and therefore visits him. When Hodges recognizes her, he rapes her and keeps Sofia in prison longer.

Billy: Miss Millie and the mayor's little boy who plays ball outside near Sofia and Celie. On the playground, Sofia is indifferent to his bloody foot injured by a rusty nail.

Eleanor Jane: Eleanor Jane is the mayor's little girl who Celie believes is beautiful on the playground. Sofia practically raises her, when let out of prison, and Eleanor develops a strong attachment to Sofia. However, Sofia does not feel the same way. Eventually, Eleanor begins to understand the mistreatment and injustice that blacks have suffered and attempts to make up for it, at least to Sofia, by caring for Henrietta, Sofia's daughter.

Grady: Grady is Shug Avery's husband. Shug leaves him to go back work, but nobody is hurt because Grady is a boring, unattractive man, who eventually moves to Panama with Squeak to open a plantation and smoke marijuana.

Corrine: Celie tells Nettie to find Corrine. Corrine is a missionary who takes Nettie into her home as an equal. With her two adoptive children, Olivia and Adam, they travel to England and Africa, teaching English and Christianity. While in Africa, Corrine becomes ill with African fever and dies. Her love for her family never ceased, even during her times of doubt and confusion.



Samuel: Samuel is Corrine's missionary colored husband, who travels to England and Africa. Corrine wonders if her children belong to Nettie and Samuel. After Corrine passes away, Samuel and Nettie fall in love and marry. They leave Africa for economic reasons and because Olinka is no more. Samuel loves Nettie deeply and tries to help her and Celie as much as possible, as soon as he discovers who she is.

Joseph: The baptized African man who helps show Nettie, Corrine, and Samuel around the village of Olinka.

Tashi: Tashi is a young African girl with whom Olivia and Adam play and learn. She is a traditional follower of the Olinka culture and painfully undergoes the traditional facial scarring and ceremonial entrance into womanhood, much to Adam's dismay. She eventually marries Adam and moves to America with the rest of the family.

Daisy: Daisy is the young new wife of Celie and Nettie's father. She is pregnant, uneducated, and unkempt.

Jack: Odessa's loving and doting husband who helps raise Sofia's children on their farm. He is the initial inspiration for Celie's pants.

Henrietta: Sofia's youngest child with the prizefighter, not Harpo. Harpo loves her the most.

Jerene and Darlene: The twins in Memphis who help Celie sew pants and learn how to speak correct English.

Doris: Doris is the elderly, white British woman who sails back to England with Nettie and Samuel. She comes from aristocratic blood and old money, yet fled to Africa to live the exciting life of a single missionary. She writes successful adventure novels under the pen name Jared _____ and adopts numerous children, including Harold, the child of one of her adopted children.

Harold: Harold is the young African boy who travels to England with Doris as her adoptive grandchild.

Stanley Earl: Stanley Earl is the charming white man with whom Sofia has a relationship. However, he impregnates and marries Eleanor Jane.

Reynolds Stanley Earl: Reynolds Stanley Earl is the child of Eleanor Jane and Stanley Earl, who loves to play with Henrietta and cause trouble.

Germaine: Germaine is the nineteen year old man with whom Shug Avery has an affair. She travels around the country with him for more than the six months she originally promised, leaving Celie brokenhearted.

James: James is Shug Avery's only child who is willing to see her. He lives on an Indian Reservation in an adobe hut and is thrilled to learn about his mother.



Olivia: Olivia is Celie's biological daughter from the rape of her stepfather who is taken away at birth. She is adopted by the Christian missionaries Corrine and Samuel, who raise her in Africa. Nettie also helps raise Olivia, and considers her one of her children, as well.

Adam: Adam is the second of Celie's biological children from another rape of her stepfather who is also taken away at birth and adopted by Corrine and Samuel. Also raised in Africa, Adam grows into a strong and healthy boy who falls in love with the African woman, Tashi. Confused and angry by some African ceremonial traditions of scarring and female circumcision, Adam reprimands Tashi and then chases her into the forest. In order to prove his love for her, he undergoes the same facial scarring so that they will look alike as a married couple in America.



Objects/Places

Harpo's: Harpo's is Harpo and Sofia's old house transformed into a night jukejoint. It becomes a successful business when Shug Avery sings there and a permanent fixture in the rural town.

Olinka: Olinka is the small African village in which Corrine, Samuel, Nettie, Adam, and Olivia live for the majority of the children's youth. They learn much from these people, and vice versa. Unfortunately, the village of Olinka is destroyed when the contractors build a road through it, forcing the people to pay for everything they have previously owned.

Memphis: Shug Avery hails from Memphis, Tennessee. She owns a large and lavish home there, and takes Celie, Grady, and Squeak to it for several months. While in Memphis, Celie finds her true voice, strength, and calling – she learns how to make pants.

England: Corrine, Samuel, and Nettie stop over in England before they go to Africa to learn about missionary work and collect money. Samuel and Nettie return to England years later to marry and speak with their leader about the station in Africa.

Africa: Africa is the 'dark country' in which Samuel, Corrine, and Nettie work as missionaries. They learn about their history and from whence they came, while in Africa, and are frustrated with the people at the same time. It is the most phenomenal and enlightening experience for Nettie, and she tells Celie every thought during her venture.

Celie's Pants (Folkspants): Celie spends hours perfecting the perfect set of pants while living with Shug in Memphis. She sends them to Jack and Harpo and everyone else in her family. They become a huge success and she begins Folkspants, a clothing company.

Prison: Sofia must live in the local prison for nearly eight years until Miss Millie takes her away to work in her home. While in prison, Sofia becomes a hardened, murderous person.

Celie's House: When her step-father dies, Celie learns that her true father left her the house in which she grew up. Initially she does not want it, but soon realizes that she can fix it up to be the home for her and Nettie's families when she returns. It is a source of hope and unity for both sisters.



Quotes

Part 1

Quote 1: "He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don't never git used to it. And now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook." Part 1, pg. 11

Quote 2: "But me, never again. A girl at church say you git big if you bleed every month. I don't bleed no more." Part 1, pg. 15

Quote 3: "Well, next time you come you can look at her. She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She aint smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give away everything you own. But she can work like a man." Part 1, pg. 18

Quote 4: "I don't say nothing. I think bout Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive." Part 1, pg. 29

Quote 5: "Well how you spect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating." Part 1, pg. 42

Part 2

Quote 6: "What the world got to do with anything, I think. Then I see myself sitting there quilting tween Shug Avery and Mr. _____. Us three set together gainst Tobias and his fly speck box of chocolate. For the first time in my life, I feel just right." Part 2, pg. 61

Quote 7: "First time somebody made something and name it after me." Part 2, pg. 75

Quote 8: "All the men got they eyes glued to Shug's bosom. I got my eyes glued there too. I feel my nipples harden under my dress. My little button sort of perk up too. Shug, I say to her in my mind, Girl, you looks like a real good time, the Good Lord knows you do." Part 2, pg. 82

Quote 9: "When I see Sofia I don't know why she still alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out tween her teef like a piece of rubber. She can't talk. And she just about the color of a eggplant." Part 2, pg. 87

Quote 10: "They calls me yellow
like yellow be my name
They calls me yellow
Like yellow be my name
But if yellow is a name
Why aint black the same



Well, if I say Hey black girl
Lord, she try to ruin my game" Part 2, pg. 97

Part 3

Quote 11: "White folks is a miracle of affliction, say Sofia." Part 3, pg. 103

Quote 12: "And when I come here, say Shug, I treated you so mean. Like you was a servant. And all because Albert married you. And I didn't even want him for a husband, she say. I never really wanted Albert for a husband. But just to choose me, you know, cause nature had already done it. Nature said, You two folks, hook up, cause you a good example of how it sposed to go. I didn't want nothing to be able to go against that. But what was good tween us must have been nothing but bodies, she say. Cause I don't know the Albert that don't dance, can't hardly laugh, never talk bout nothing, beat you and hid your sister Nettie's letters. Who he? I don't know nothing, I think. And glad of it." Part 3, pg. 117

Quote 13: "Oh, Celie, there are colored people in the world who want us to know! Want us to grow and see the light! They are not all mean like Pa and Albert, or beaten down like ma was. Corrine and Samuel have a wonderful marriage. Their only sorrow in the beginning was that they could not have children. And then, they say, 'God' sent them Olivia and Adam. Part 3, pg. 124

Part 4

Quote 14: "The boys now accept Olivia and Tashi in class and more mothers are sending their daughters to school. The men do not like it: who wants a wife who knows everything her husband knows? they fume. But the women have their ways, and they love their children, even their girls." Part 4, pg. 157

Quote 15: "Oh Celie, unbelief is a terrible thing. And so is the hurt we cause others unknowingly. Pray for us." Part 4, pg. 169

Quote 16: "Yeah, I say, and he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown *dog* of a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown." Part 4, pg. 175

Quote 17: "Man corrupt everything, say Shug. He on your box of grits in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plop himself on the other end of it, tell him to git lost, say Shug. Conjure up flowers, wind, water, a big rock. / But this hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long, he don't want to budge. He threaten lightening, floods and earth-quakes. Us fight. I hardly pray at all. Every time I conjure up a rock, I throw it." Part 4, pg. 179



Quote 18: "I am making some pants for you to beat the heat in Africa. Soft, white, thin. Drawstring waist. You won't ever have to feel too hot and overdress again. I plan to make them by hand. Every stitch I sew will be a kiss." Part 4, pg. 192

Part 5

Quote 19: "Samuel and I are truly happy, Celie. And so grateful to God that we are! We still keep a school for the littlest children; those eight and over are already workers in the fields. In order to pay rent for the barracks, taxes on the land, and to buy water and wood and food, everyone must work. So, we teach the young ones, babysit the babies, look after the old and sick, and attend birthing mothers. Our days are fuller than ever, our sojourn in England already a dream. But all things look brighter because I have a loving soul to share them with." Part 5, pg. 214

Quote 20: "Celie, she say, Do you love me? She down on her knees by now, tears falling all over the place. My heart hurt so much I can't believe it. How can it keep beating, feeling like this? But I'm a woman. I love you, I say. Whatever happen, whatever you do, I love you." Part 5, pg. 221

Quote 21: "Took me long enough to notice you such good company, he say. And he laugh. / He ain't Shug, but he begin to be somebody I can talk to." Part 5, pg. 241

Quote 22: "I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ast. And that in wondering bout the big things and asting bout the big things you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know noting more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, he say, the more I love." Part 5, pg. 247

Quote 23: "I feel a little peculiar round the children. For one thing they grown. And I see they think me and Nettie and Shug and Albert and Samuel and Harpo and Sofia and Jack and Odessa real old and don't know much what going on. But I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I think this the youngest us ever felt." Part 5, pg. 251



Topic Tracking: Family

Family 1: Celie comes from a large, poor family. Her mother is perpetually pregnant and frustrated with her numerous siblings. Because of this large family, Celie is often left alone and with her terrifyingly violent father.

Family 2: Celie worries about her sister, Nettie, when their father appears to be attracted to her. She promises to look after her beloved sister no matter what happens and vows never to let Nettie marry the wrong person and turn out miserable like their mother.

Family 3: When Celie marries Mr. _____, she finds herself in a new family, for better or worse. Her new stepchildren are unkempt, unkind, and violent, as they beat and taunt her with constant insults. She worries about this new family, realizing that they are not her real children, no matter how much time she will spend with them.

Family 4: Celie becomes obsessed with the kind white woman with the baby in town, thinking it to be her own child, Olivia. She follows them into a store, hoping to discover information on their whereabouts. Her desire to find her true biological family takes Celie on many ventures that connect her to this woman.

Family 5: Harpo begins to express emotion for a girl he meets in church and asks Celie for advice. She informs him that she and her father are not in love, but they are married for other reasons. Harpo intends to marry this girl and make her part of his family permanently.

Family 6: Harpo and Sofia spend much of their time in violent battles with one another. Harpo feels unmanly (un-family-like) for not beating his wife. However, when he begins to beat her with Celie and Mr. _____'s advice, they fight physically all the time. Sofia ultimately leaves Harpo to visit her sister Odessa, where she always finds refuge.

Family 7: When Mr. _____'s father and brother come to visit, they reprimand him for housing both his whore and his wife in the same home. Old Mr. _____ cannot believe that his own family is living in such squalor and immorality. Meanwhile, brother Tobias enjoys insulting Mr. _____ about the sinful Shug Avery. They look down upon Mr. _____'s family values and unusual family set-up.

Family 8: When Sofia lands in jail, the family pulls together to help her. They brainstorm ideas to cure her violent streak and save her soul from murderous tendencies. They realize that jail is killing her physically and spiritually and are prepared to do anything to help her. They are all one family now, regardless of blood ties.

Family 9: Shug returns to town with an additional family member. She is married to a man named Grady and introduces him to everyone as such. Both Albert and Celie are shocked and surprised, for Shug vowed never to marry.



Family 10: The Olinka structure of family relations is different from that in the United States. Men are allowed to have more than one wife, yet the wives are not allowed to be alone with another man - friend or husband. The wives become friends with one another, as they can relate to each other, yet have no other companions. The women serve a role in the family that is purely nurturing: raising the children, cleaning, cooking, and serving the husband.

Family 11: Corrine is hurt and upset when she falls ill with African fever. She has always seen the attraction between Nettie and Samuel and confronts them when she believes her children to belong biologically to the two of them. Nettie explains the truth behind her family. Olivia and Adam are not her children, but rather they belong to her sister. They are her niece and nephew - her true kinfolk by blood. Nonetheless, they are one family together, regardless of white or black or white blood.

Family 12: Samuel tells Nettie the story behind her family's true heritage. Her father is not her true biological father. Rather, her father was lynched and killed years ago. Her mother married another man briefly before she went crazy and died. Her family is now turned upside down by this new information, and the only truth Nettie knows is that Celie is her sister and Olivia and Adam are her niece and nephew. The family she believed was her family is not her family, and this new family of Corrine and Samuel has become her own, despite the lack of biological connection.

Family 13: When Shug and Celie visit Celie's "father," he introduces his new family member - Daisy - a new wife. After seeking her biological parents' grave, they realize that they are each other's family now. They have little else but each other.

Family 14: Eleanor Jane marries Stanley Earl when she becomes pregnant with his baby. Sofia is livid, but understands their relationship. Another new family is created by their marriage, while the friendship (and family structure) breaks down between Sofia and Eleanor Jane.

Family 15: Shug eventually decides to discover her own family. She has not spoken to her children in years and now wants to meet them. All but one wants nothing to do with her. However, one son named James is thrilled to learn more about his infamous mother. They realize the importance of the bonds of family. The others do not see any reason to meet a strange woman, just because she gave birth to them. The significance behind true family ties is in conflict.

Family 16: Tashi officially becomes a part of the family when she marries Adam in an Olinka ceremony. She agrees to follow him to America and become part of his extended family with Celie and her kinfolk.

Family 17: When Nettie and her family return home, Celie falls down in shock. The two sisters embrace, introduce both sets of kinfolk, and cry tears of joy. The two families, throughout over thirty years of separation and growth, are now one. They can now live together, grow together, and share their lives; and whether they are family by blood or time, they are all one family.



Topic Tracking: Religion

Religion 1: The book is written in a series of addresses to God. Celie writes to God when she is feeling down or happy, insecure or confused. She wonders what her life will be like in her first letter to God. She believes she is a good girl and wants God to know that.

Religion 2: Celie tells Nettie that she is never alone or hopeless as long as she has God in her life. She writes to God all the time, an act that gives her hope and companionship. She also tells Nettie that she will find help at the home of Reverend Mr. _____, the husband of the only nice white woman she has ever met. While Celie finds sanity in writing to God, Nettie finds safety in the home of a man of God.

Religion 3: Celie has trouble sleeping and asks God why she feels so terrible. She thinks she has sinned against someone else, and realizes that it is Sofia against whom she has sinned. She feels horrible for telling Harpo to beat her. After the two women laugh and talk, she feels better. She tells God that after she apologized for her sins, she can sleep again.

Religion 4: The preacher speaks about Shug Avery during his sermons as the object of sin and sexuality. She comes back to town, suffering from venereal disease and becomes the subject of gossip. Meanwhile, Celie becomes a regular church-attende, pleasing the preacher and helping him with anything necessary to make religion an important presence in town.

Religion 5: Celie addresses God once again in reference to Nettie. She admits that she finally has a letter in her hands from Nettie that has been hidden for years. She is still alive and living well with the Reverend and his wife.

Religion 6: When Nettie runs away from Mr. _____ and her father, she finds solace and refuge with a man of religion and a family of God. Samuel and Corrine are Christian missionaries who have devoted their life to God. They welcome Nettie into their family and help teach her about religion and history. She learns about the bible and hears religious stories that somehow seem different now. Furthermore, Samuel and Corrine tell Nettie that their children, Olivia and Adam are gifts from God. They see everything as holy and religious.

Religion 7: Shug and Celie discuss their visions and images of God. Shug claims to be a sinner who does not care about sinning, therefore living a happier life. Celie's image of God is like an old white man, older more exaggerated. However, when Shug speaks about religion, Celie listens and realizes that God may just be something out there to scare everyone. They realize that God is not white; he only just seems that way because of their culture.

Religion 8: At Sofia's mother's funeral, the entire family returns to mourn. Celie notices how Mr. _____ has changed into a cleaner, kinder man. He has discovered religion and



is trying to become more devout and respectful of God and his family. Although he discovers religion late in life, it still helps him cope with his problems and become closer to his family.

Religion 9: Nettie informs Celie of her plans to open a new church together when they return home. They worship a God without an image, so that they can concentrate on God's presence, as opposed to his invisible spirit.

Religion 10: Celie tries to teach Mr. _____ about Nettie's new take on the bible and the story of Adam and Eve. She informs him of whiteness and blackness and the Olinka version of religion. He is intrigued to learn of an entirely new thought process.

Religion 11: Celie returns her thoughts to God by thanking him with all her heart and soul. She is so happy, for her family has returned to her. After years of praying and thinking and wondering, God has helped Celie find true happiness: a family.



Topic Tracking: Sexuality

Sexuality 1: The book opens with a painful sexual crime. Young Celie is raped by who she believes to be her father, while her mother is at the doctor's office. This physical act of violence is Celie's first experience and introduction to sexuality.

Sexuality 2: Celie marries Mr. _____ in a loveless, rapid ceremony. The first evening of their marriage is spent with Celie working and Mr. _____ pleasuring himself on top of her. Celie thinks to herself that if the famous Shug Avery enjoyed herself sexually with Mr. _____, so can she.

Sexuality 3: When Sofia first meets Harpo's family, she is pregnant. Mr. _____ thinks negatively of her because of her unwed pregnancy, thinking her an immoral, loose woman with poor sexual morals. He also believes her to be an attractive woman who can betray Harpo with any man. He thinks women can use their sexuality as a weapon, and sees Sofia as practically a commander of the sexual army.

Sexuality 4: When Shug Avery decides to sing at Harpo's, the juke joint becomes an instant success. Her sexuality sells his product, brining crowds to the place. Celie attends opening night to see Shug onstage. She finds herself attracted to this woman, yet realizes that Shug is only attracted sexually to her husband, Mr. _____.

Sexuality 5: When Shug questions Celie about her relationship with Mr. _____, she realizes that Celie is practically a virgin. She has never had sex with someone she loves, and furthermore, has never had physical pleasure. Shug teaches Celie about her female body and tells her to examine her 'button' and breasts. Celie beams with excitement upon learning of such great aspects of sexuality and her own body.

Sexuality 6: Celie looks around at all the men gazing at Shug's tight dress and beautiful bosom. She thinks the same way they do and wants to tell Shug that she is a real good time. She becomes sexually attracted to Shug as she sees her sing in front of the crowd at Harpo's.

Sexuality 7: Hodges the warden sees Squeak and rapes her. He uses sexuality as his method of forcefulness and violence. Rape is repeatedly used in the novel as a form of violence and aggression, making lovemaking and sensuality an idea of legendary proportion.

Sexuality 8: Shug reveals her sexual attraction to Celie when she claims she would cover her with kisses and licks if they were married. She continues investigate Celie's sexual identity and attempts at lovemaking with Mr. _____. After Celie admits to failure in the bedroom, Shug claims she is still a virgin.

Sexuality 9: Shug reminisces of her early courtship with Albert. She remembers always wanting to make love to him, never caring about anyone else. She adds to the conversation how little to nothing she cares about him now.



Sexuality 10: When Celie sleeps next to Shug, she is no longer sexually excited, and is consequently worried about her sexual identity and excitability. Shug calms her by simply explaining that her anger is overtaking her sexual urges. She knows Celie will get them back soon enough.

Sexuality 11: Nettie and Samuel's relationship changes from platonic to romantic/sexual. They fall in love, marry, and are therefore forced to leave their position in Olinka. Meanwhile, Adam develops the same romantic/sexual feelings for Tashi that Nettie and Samuel have developed, and is terrified about her decision to destroy part of her sexual identity through ceremonial female circumcision.

Sexuality 12: Celie is miserable when Shug decides to leave her for a young man named Germaine. Shug tries to express her desire to sleep with a man after so many years of sleeping with Celie alone. Shug's sexuality travels far beyond simply men or women - she loves both.



Topic Tracking: Violence

Violence 1: The book opens as Celie describes her family. Her father beats her mother and proceeds to rape her. She lives in constant fear of "Him" and hopes to protect her sister, Nettie from his violent wrath.

Violence 2: Celie's father impregnates her and when Celie gives birth to her first baby, her father takes the infant out into the woods and kills it, or so she thinks. Celie fears he'll do this to her second newborn baby, as well. Instead, he takes the baby to Monticello and sells it. He takes both babies from Celie, allowing her to believe he's killed them, and sells them in town.

Violence 3: Mr. _____'s first wife was violently killed by her boyfriend in front of their children. Murder seems to be just another act in the town, regardless of its method and intent. And although she was killed instantaneously by a bullet, the very act of murder is pure violence. This violence follows her son Harpo in his own pursuits of marriage.

Violence 4: On a day that should be celebrated with love and passion, Mr. _____ beats his new wife, Celie, on their wedding day. Furthermore, his violent streak has been passed onto his children, for they also taunt and beat her. One child throws a stone at her head, causing her to bleed.

Violence 5: When Harpo wonders why his father beats Celie, Mr. _____ informs him that beating a wife is a manly and husbandly duty. He beats her because she is his wife, and furthermore because he believes she is lazy. In his mind, these are proper and reasonable reasons for such brute violence.

Violence 6: Harpo admits to his father and Celie that he does not beat his wife Sofia. He is embarrassed by his meager actions and wants to know how to make her do everything he asks and be the subservient wife he wants. Sofia even recommends that he beat her so that she listens to his orders. Unfortunately, he returns home with bruises of his own (from her). One day, Celie finds them fighting like two savage men on the porch of her house. The violence has spread to both of them, as they both want control over the other.

Violence 7: Celie admits to Shug that Mr. _____ beats her. Shug is shocked and terrified, promising her that she will not leave the house until he promises not to hurt her. Shug is able to control Mr. _____'s violent streak.

Violence 8: One evening at Harpo's, Sofia returns with her new boyfriend. Her violent tendencies return when Harpo's new girlfriend, Squeak tries to dance with him. The two women start to fight and Sofia punches Squeak in the mouth, knocking out two teeth.

Violence 9: Sofia continues on her violent rampage when she attacks the mayor in town. She will never be a white woman's maidservant and is livid when approached about such a position for the mayor's family. Before she could hurt him, all of the guards



pounce on her, beating her to a pulp. Her small violence does not match their overwhelming violent attack, which leads to prison time.

Violence 10: Again, violence takes the form of rape, when Mary Agnes visits Hodges the warden to help Sofia. When he recognizes her, he forces her to undress and have sex.

Violence 11: For the first time in her life, Celie finds her own violent tendencies. When she discovers Nettie's letters hidden by Mr. _____, she wants to kill him. She knows that she will never do such an un-Christ-like act, but she thinks of doing so nonetheless.

Violence 12: Although considered to be beautiful and ceremonial traditions within the Olinka tribe of Africa, Nettie, Adam, Olivia, and Samuel see facial scarring and female circumcision as negative aspects of their life. These violent traditions involve severe cutting, bleeding, and possible death. The Olinka use these violent acts as significant milestones in their people's lives.



Part 1: pg. 11-50

The book is written as a series of narrations to God, and opens as a fourteen-year-old Celie tells God that she is a good girl and always has been. She wants a sign from God letting her know what will happen to her in the future. As a child, her mother has too many ill children, and therefore leaves her alone with her father to visit the doctor. One day while her mother is away, her father ("He") grabs hold of her and rapes her. "He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don't never git used to it. And now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook" Part I, pg. 11.

Topic Tracking: Religion 1

Topic Tracking: Family 1

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 1

Topic Tracking: Violence 1

Celie's mother dies painfully on the bed giving birth to another child. Her lover holds her hand, trying to keep her alive, yet angry about the child's questionable paternity. Simultaneously, Celie gives birth to a screaming baby, born out of incest and rape. "He" takes her mother's newborn out into the woods and kills it and then steals Celie's little boy and sells him to a couple in Monticello. Celie does not know what to do anymore, for she knows "He" hates her and treats her as if she is pure evil. Celie secretly hopes Mr. _____ will find another woman to marry and worries when he sees her look at her little sister. Celie promises, with God's help, that she will take care of her siblings.

Topic Tracking Family 2

Topic Tracking: Violence 2

"He" finds a new woman named Gray and marries her. They are constantly touching one another in front of Celie and her sisters. Celie's little sister, Nettie, has a new boyfriend who resembles their father named Mr. _____. He has children from a previous relationship. Celie warns her that it is harsh and difficult to take care of someone else's children - just look at what happened to their mother.

Celie's father continues to beat her after church. One day he beats her especially hard when he thinks she winked at a boy. Celie certainly never even looks at women, let alone men, and claims to have done nothing of the kind. She feels sorry for her mother for having to live with such a man for so long. "He" still looks to Nettie often with lustful desires, despite Celie's constant warnings. However, after this day, Celie never rubs her eyes in church again. "But me, never again. A girl at church say you git big if you bleed every month. I don't bleed no more" Part 1, pg. 15.

Nettie's boyfriend, Mr. _____ asks for her hand in marriage, despite the rumors about Shug Avery and a bad reputation he holds from his wife's murder. Her boyfriend killed her in front of him and the children. Shug Avery is a passionate, sexual, feminine lounge singer, with a reputation for sinful behavior with whom _____ has been in love for years. He cheated on his late wife with her.



Topic Tracking: Violence 3

Celie hopes the "He" continues to play with her instead of Nettie, so she dresses up nicely, putting on make-up and high heels. Because of her attire, "He" screams at her for dressing like a tramp and proceeds to rape her nonetheless. Mr. _____ comes over that evening and sees Celie crying hysterically in her room, comforted by Nettie and the new mammy. Mr. _____ tries to speak with "Him" about marrying one of his daughters. He offers Celie, even though he divulges the information that she is spoiled goods. "He" claims nobody needs a fresh woman. He talks her up, through insults and desperation, claiming "He" needs to get rid of her because she is too old to be living at home with the others. He also tells Mr. _____ that she is twenty years old and tells lies.

"Well, next time you come you can look at her. She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She aint smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give away everything you own. But she can work like a man."
Part 1, pg. 18

Mr. _____ takes the entire Spring season to decide whether or not he wants to marry Celie. The family concentrates on Nettie's studies and learning the history behind Columbus and the discovery of America. Their Pa pulls Celie out of school early, claiming she is dumb and has no need for education. Nettie supports Celie by telling him that she is smart, according to their teacher Miss Beasley. Celie accepts that she is dumb and fat and that Nettie has surpassed her in their learning. And although Nettie persists in complimenting her older sister, Pa ignores her beneficial comments about Celie, and plans to prepare her for marriage.

On Celie's wedding day, she is taunted and beaten by Mr. _____'s four children from his previous marriage. The two girls and two boys accuse Celie of murdering their mother and throw a stone at her head. The girls' hair has not been combed since their mother's death, and although she wants to shave their heads to start anew, Mr. _____ does not allow it, claiming it bad luck. Celie cooks dinner and thinks of Shug Avery while her new husband lay on top of her in bed that evening. If Shug Avery liked Mr. _____, then maybe she can, too.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 2

Topic Tracking: Family 3

Topic Tracking: Violence 4

One day while Celie and Mr. _____ go to town, Celie thinks she sees her baby girl who was taken away six years ago. She had named her Olivia. While Mr. _____ is in the dry goods store and Celie waits in the wagon, she begins to speak to the woman and the young child nearby. She continually asks them questions, following them into a nearby cloth store. They exchange stories, curious as to the paternity of young Olivia, who the mother calls Pauline. The wealthy, kind woman is married to Reverend Mr. _____ in town. She knows of Celie's husband by reputation, claiming he is an attractive man. Celie cannot remember which month she gave birth to her baby and thanks the woman for her hospitality before she leaves to go back home on the wagon.



Topic Tracking: Family 4

Nettie comes to live with Celie and Mr. _____ after running away from home. Celie is thrilled to have her sister around, helping with the studying and cleaning. Mr. _____ perpetually compliments Nettie on her skin, hair, and teeth, which she transfers over to Celie. His children are mean and nasty, forcing Celie into perpetual manual labor. However, Mr. _____ eventually asks Nettie to leave, regardless of whether or not she has a place. Celie is sad to see Nettie go, and Nettie tells Celie how miserable she feels for her sister, seemingly buried in this new life. Celie thinks that being buried would be better, for she would not have to work all the time. However, none of it matters, for as long as she can spell G-O-D, she is not alone. Celie tells Nettie to find the wife of Reverend Mr. _____ for help.

Topic Tracking: Religion 2

Two of Mr. _____'s sisters come to visit, Carrie and Kate. They speak poorly of his late wife, Annie Julia, calling her a nasty woman who never cared for the house or children. They were always ill and dirty, spreading scandal in the neighborhood. He apparently brought her to his home and never spent any time with her, chasing after Shug Avery all day long. The sisters claim that Shug is too black and cannot bear to speak of her any more. Celie, however, desperately wants to hear more about this fantasy woman. They compliment Celie on her housework and cooking, claiming their brother could not have done better in the marriage department.

Kate comes to visit Celie alone another day, hoping to bring her shopping for a new dress. They look for a purple dress, but find nothing, eventually deciding upon the color blue. Kate tells Celie she deserves more than what she has with Mr. _____. At home, the oldest boy, Harpo, refuses to help Celie with the housework, especially bringing water in from the well, for he claims it is all women's work. Kate reprimands him and advises Celie to fight in order to survive. "I don't say nothing. I think bout Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" Part 1, pg. 29.

Harpo asks Mr. _____ why he beats Celie. He claims that he does so because she is his wife and she is stubborn. Mr. _____ reminds Celie of her father. Harpo proceeds to ask Celie why she is stubborn, but does not inquire why she is his father's wife. Harpo tells Celie he loves a girl and plans to marry her, despite her tender age of fifteen and his of seventeen. He has not spoken with the girl's mother or father and has only winked at her in church.

Topic Tracking: Family 5

Topic Tracking: Violence 5

Celie is thrilled, for she learns that Shug Avery is coming back to town with her orchestra. Mr. _____ spends hours shaving and primping, while Celie hopes to go to her show not even to hear her sing or dance, but simply to lay eyes upon this glorious woman. Mr. _____ is gone the entire weekend with Shug Avery, leaving Celie and his



children to work on the chores and wonder about his whereabouts. Celie questions him about his love affair with Shug with curiosity, yet he simply sits on the porch and stares out at the fields. Harpo is the same physical size as his father and is frustrated from the perpetual work in the fields. Mr. _____ claims he no longer needs to work because Harpo is around to do all the work for him.

Harpo spends his time thinking of Sofia Butler, the girl he wants to marry. He tells Celie that she is beautiful and bright (light-skinned), and may be smart, too. Unfortunately, her father does not approve of Harpo, because Harpo's mother was killed years ago, leaving him seemingly helpless. She comes to meet Celie and Mr. _____ one day, some seven to eight months pregnant and not too light-skinned. Mr. _____ does not approve of the marriage because a pretty girl like Sofia can control Harpo and open her legs to any man in sight. She does not care what he thinks and tells Harpo that she is living with her sister and brother-in-law and will be waiting with the baby for him when he is ready.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 3

Harpo marries Sofia in a small ceremony with her sisters as the witnesses and the newborn baby crying and nursing throughout. They set up a small home near Mr. _____ and Celie and work all the time. Mr. _____ is just waiting - in his mind - for Sofia to change the established family rules and take control of Harpo. Harpo speaks to his father about his wife's back talking, headstrong mind. His father says nothing and continues to smoke on the porch. Harpo is embarrassed when he tells his father that he never beats his wife. Mr. _____ stops smoking to tell him a bit of advice: "Well how you spect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" Part 1, pg. 42. Harpo is happy for three years, yet comes home with bruises and scars from, what he says, are beatings from his mule in the field. Yet, he still cannot figure out how to make his wife mind and be quiet and controlled.

One day while she is in the fields, Celie hears a loud crash from the porch of her house. She runs to see what it is and finds Harpo and Sofia fighting like two men, destroying everything around them. She has no idea how long this violence has been occurring. The following Saturday morning, Sofia and their two babies pack up to visit Sofia's sister, Odessa.

Topic Tracking: Violence 6

Celie tells God that she has trouble sleeping. She wonders if it is because she has sinned against someone else, and realizes that she has, in fact, sinned against Sofia for telling Harpo to beat her. Sofia visits Celie soon enough angry with her for betraying her female bond of trust. She has had to fight her entire life against her entire family of men and never thought she would at home. Celie admits that she was jealous of her for being happy and safe and feels terrible for anything she has done. Sofia tells Celie that she should bash Mr. _____'s head in. The two women share stories and laugh together, and soon enough, Celie sleeps with no trouble.



Topic Tracking: Family 6
Topic Tracking: Religion 3

Shug Avery falls sick with a terrible illness that becomes the gossip around town. Even the preacher speaks about loose women and short skirts, knowing full well that everyone believes his subject to be Shug. The preacher adores Celie for her hard work and devotion to the church and her family. One day, Mr. _____ visits Harpo and tells him to get the wagon ready. He returns with Shug inside, extremely ill, yet still well dressed. He tells Celie to prepare a room, for Shug will stay with them until she is healthy. Celie looks inside the wagon at this infamous woman. When they meet, Shug tells Celie that she sure is ugly, as if she had been told it before and just now believes it.

Topic Tracking: Religion 4



Part 2: pg. 51-99

Shug Avery seems to be pure evil. She is rude, mean, and demanding of everyone around her, namely Mr. _____. When she calls him Albert, Celie vaguely recalls that Albert is her husband's first name, for she has always called him Mr. _____. Celie realizes that Shug Avery is sicker than anyone, sicker ever than her mother upon death; however, her evil is the only thing keeping her alive. When Celie expresses her feelings to Mr. _____, he wonders if she wants Shug to go. Celie claims she does not; she wants her to stay. Mr. _____ is upset and hurt that nobody in town fought for Shug during her time of need.

Although he had three children with her, Mr. _____ cannot bear to touch Shug now or even bathe her in her emaciated state. Celie is left to wash this goddess of a woman and is shocked to see her naked. Celie wonders where Shug's children are and she responds that they are with their grandma, thank goodness. She does not miss them at all. Celie longs for her own lost babies. Afterwards, Celie tries to feed Shug, for Mr. _____ has failed on numerous occasions. Finally, she cooks a home cured ham, with the rich smell resonating throughout the house. Shug eats this meat, smokes her cigarettes and drinks, like normal. Mr. _____ expresses his fear to Celie about Shug's ailing health.

Celie continues to care for Shug Avery, washing and combing her short, knotty hair, swooning over her thin long limbs and dark black skin. She plays with Shug Avery as if she were a doll or her baby Olivia. Simultaneously Shug Avery reads magazines with white women in the pictures, and listens to and hums along to songs that are sinful, according to the preacher.

Mr. _____'s father, Old Mr. _____ comes to visit after hearing that his son is housing his whore, Shug Avery, in the same house as his wife, Celie. He cannot believe what is occurring, especially with such a woman as Shug; a woman with the nasty woman disease. Tobias, Mr. _____'s brother comes to visit next, to see for sure if the famous Shug Avery is still alive, according to the rumors. He is rude and cruel to Mr. _____, wondering how he could put up with Shug and frustrated that Old Mr. _____'s money is going to such a family. He reminds Mr. _____ that he owns the house in which he lives and the house in which Harpo and Sofia live. It is them against the rest of the world.

"What the world got to do with anything, I think. Then I see myself sitting there quilting tween Shug Avery and Mr. _____. Us three set together gainst Tobias and his fly speck box of chocolate. For the first time in my life, I feel just right." Part 2, pg. 61

Topic Tracking: Family 7

Sofia and Celie continue to work on their quilt called "Sister's Choice." Shug donates her yellow dress to the cause, which Celie tries to work in often in the form of stars. One day while they are quilting, Sofia asks Celie why people eat, for she is worried about Harpo. He is constantly eating, even when full. And although his body is still skinny, about half the size of plump Sofia, his belly is growing wider and fuller. Sofia also



wonders what is wrong with him, for he loves to cook and clean, but suddenly stops because he claims his father never did anything in the house. He comes over to Celie's house, eats a superfluous amount of food, belches, and continues to eat. They tease him by asking him when his baby is due.

One evening after everyone has gone to bed, Celie hears Harpo awake in bed crying. He had been visiting them for the weekend. Harpo has a black eye from Sofia and wonders why she doesn't listen to him or do what he asks, like he believes a wife should. Celie tells him that some women cannot be beaten. She gets beaten by Mr. _____, but does not love him. She married him because her father wanted her to and he married her to take care of his children. However, Sofia and Harpo love one another and have a different relationship. When they begin to speak of food and weight, Harpo leans over, vomits and falls back asleep.

Sofia confides in Celie that she is bored with her marriage. She doesn't want Harpo to touch her anymore and is exhausted all the time. Celie tells her to sleep on it and that the love will come back. She thinks about escaping to her sister's place on a farm. When Sofia mentions her sister, Celie thinks back to Nettie and feels a sharp pain in her heart. Sofia claims she just wants a vacation from life, and then continues to work. Soon, Sofia's sisters, all strong and robust women, come to pick her up. She kisses her children goodbye and leaves Harpo with the house and three babies.

Six months pass and Sofia does not return. Meanwhile, Harpo discovers an entire new self. He is constantly on the road, building things in the house, and realizes that he is smart and cute, according to everyone in town. Celie asks Harpo what he will do when Sofia comes home. Harpo tells her that he knows she's never coming home again, and continues to build a juke joint in the house.

When Harpo opens his new juke joint, unfortunately nobody comes. He just waits behind the counter advertising bread and chicken and other goods. When Celie comes to the store, they both realize that if they got Shug Avery to perform, business would begin and boom. After finding her old fliers, Shug opens at Harpo's of _____ Plantation, to huge crowds. As Celie helps Shug prepare for her comeback concert, Mr. _____ states that no wife of his is going to the show that evening. Shug blurts that it's a good thing she is not his wife. Although both Mr. _____ and Celie love to look at Shug and adore her, she only looks back at one of them: Mr. _____. Celie doesn't care and attends Shug's show that evening to hear Shug dedicate a song to her. Celie is thrilled. "First time somebody made something and name it after me" Part 2, pg. 75.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 4

Shug Avery continues to sing at Harpo's and regain her strength until she is prepared to head back on the road. Celie is speechless, for it feels just like when Nettie left her years ago. Shug comforts Celie until Celie confesses that Mr. _____ beats her when Shug is not around. Shug wonders why? Celie tells her that it is because she is Celie and not Shug. Shug promises not to leave until she is sure that Albert (Mr._____) will never beat her again.



Topic Tracking: Violence 7

Days pass, Shug continues to sing at Harpo's, yet everyone knows she is planning to leave town soon. Shug and Mr. _____ sleep together almost every night. Shug wonders if it bothers Celie that she is always in her husband's bed. Celie responds that she does not care at all. Shug tells Celie of her passion for Albert and how much she *loves* to sleep with him. She wonders if Celie has felt that way about anyone. Celie claims that she has not; she has not even seen herself or Albert naked. Shug is shocked at Celie's "virginal" mindset, gives her a mirror, and tells her to go into the bathroom to find her button and look at her titties. Celie does so and is in heaven. Shug warns her that the men are coming back to the house, so Celie pulls her clothing back on and comes back into the room. Again, Celie gives her well wishes to Shug, despite the fact that she covers her ears and plays with her button at night when she hears them making love.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 5

One evening at Harpo's, Sofia returns. She brings her prizefighter boyfriend to the joint. Everyone is shocked and surprised to see her after so long an absence, especially with a new man on her arm. However, Harpo also has a new girlfriend named Squeak; a woman like Celie who obeys her man's every command. Celie wonders what Sofia is doing in a joint like Harpo's when she has five children at home. She corrects her by saying that now she has six children. A daughter named Henrietta with the prizefighter. Everyone looks at Shug in her tight dress.

"All the men got they eyes glued to Shug's bosom. I got my eyes glued there too. I feel my nipples harden under my dress. My little button sort of perk up too. Shug, I say to her in my mind, Girl, you looks like a real good time, the Good Lord knows you do." Part 2, pg. 82

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 6

Harpo wants to dance with Sofia, much to both of their new sweethearts' dismay. Squeak tries to cut in, finding strength and attitude and possession over her man. However, it is not enough compared to Sofia who punches her in the mouth, losing two teeth. Before anyone realizes it, Sofia and the prizefighter leave Harpo's with a mad rush of an engine.

Topic Tracking: Violence 8

Harpo spends his time moping around, worrying both Squeak and Celie. Celie tells Squeak that Harpo is so sad because Sofia is in jail for punching the mayor. After she and the prizefighter left Harpo's that evening, they went into town. The mayor spotted them, telling his wife, Millie, to go over and speak to them. She does so, complimenting Sofia on her children's cleanliness and asking her if she would like to be her maid. Sofia says that she will not be her maid and proceeds to pick a fight and mouth off on the mayor and his wife. She then punches the mayor, causing all of the surrounding police to pounce on her, beat her to a pulp, and throw her in jail. Squeak cannot take this story without wincing, while Celie recalls her visit to jail to clean and care for a torn Sofia.



"When I see Sofia I don't know why she still alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out tween her teef like a piece of rubber. She can't talk. And she just about the color of a eggplant." Part 2, pg. 87

Topic Tracking: Violence 9

Shug comes up from Memphis to visit Sofia in jail with Harpo and Celie. They can see her only twice a month for thirty minutes. Sofia tells them about the horrid and rancid conditions in which she lives, with fleas, vermin, roaches, and about her job cleaning the dirty sheets. She tells them that she dreams of murder when they speak to her. Celie wonders how she survives, to which Sofia responds that she thinks about her. She just looks at them and does what she is told, just like Celie. They inform Sofia that her children are fine and healthy and cared for, between the help of Harpo, Squeak, and Odessa.

The family sits around trying to discover a solution to Sofia's predicament, for they all fear for her life, sanity, and violent desires. Celie daydreams about white people and white Gods rescuing Sofia from prison. Suddenly, they wonder about the warden and realize that he has Negro blood running through his veins. Squeak realizes that she is related to him; they are cousins. The prizefighter and Mr. _____ and Harpo tell her to go speak with him immediately. They clean, pamper, and dress Squeak as a white woman and prepare her for her conversation with Hodges the warden. They say that she must continue to remind him that she is living with Sofia's husband and must tell him that Sofia is happy where she is. The goal is not to let Sofia work as a white woman's maid, for they fear her violent streak will turn drastic and fatal. The prizefighter feels as if they are playing Uncle Toms.

Topic Tracking: Family 8

Squeak returns home beat up, disheveled, and raped by Hodges the warden. As soon as he recognized who she is, he forced her to undress and fornicate. He believes that as her uncle, he is justified in his vicious actions. Harpo is miserable, with his wife beat up and in jail and his woman raped. Squeak asks Harpo if he loves her because of her light color. He tells her he loves her for her, regardless of her color. She tells everyone that her real name is Mary Agnes.

Topic Tracking: Violence 10

Six months after the Squeak incident at jail, she begins to sing in a high pitched voice that everyone grows to love. The children love her, for she allows them to do anything they want, and she seems to have forgiven Sofia for knocking out her teeth. Squeak understands that Sofia's life is difficult, and continues to sing:

*"They calls me yellow
like yellow be my name
They calls me yellow
Like yellow be my name*



*But if yellow is a name
Why aint black the same
Well, if I say Hey black girl
Lord, she try to ruin my game" Part 2, pg. 97*

Three years after Sofia leaves the washhouse in prison, she gains her weight and color back to her normal physical self. Millie requested her release, with the condition that Sofia will become her housemaid. However, Sofia still wonders about murder and asks Celie why they haven't killed off all the white people yet. They are playing in a playground one day near Miss Millie's yard and see her children play ball. It falls near Sofia's feet. Billy, the little boy asks her to throw it back, and she responds harshly that she will do no such thing. He looks down at his foot and there is a rusty nail stabbed into it. Millie gathers her little boy and girl and brings them away back to the house. Celie comments that the girl, Eleanor Jane, is beautiful and cute. Sofia ignores those comments and returns to her images of disgust and hatred, despite a little giggle that she allows through the staunch and obstinate nature.



Part 3: pg. 100-151

When Millie comments that colored people can drive and she doesn't even own a car, the mayor buys her a new car. Sofia's children come to visit and reprimand her for calling herself a slave. She doesn't see how anything has changed, for she still just irons and cleans all day long - only she still does not get to see her children. Miss Millie feels badly for Sofia, since it has been five years since she has been home to see her family. So, she offers to take her there for a full day. However, after a day of racist problems and engine breakdowns, Sofia only results in fifteen minutes alone with her children. Afterwards Sofia claims that Miss Millie cannot stop complaining about how ungrateful Sofia is. "White folks is a miracle of affliction, say Sofia" Part 3, pg. 103.

Shug writes to the family saying she has a big surprise for them. Mr. _____ thinks it's probably a new car, since she is making so much money now. However, when Shug arrives, she brings with her Grady, her new husband - not the surprise everyone expected. Both Mr. _____ and Celie are shocked and unsettled. She proceeds to give them her old car, as a gift. Mr. _____ and Grady spend time together, while Shug and Celie act like sisters together. Shug calls them family and talks about her enormous singing career, which has spread all over the country. She buys anything she wants and has sung with numerous musicians, including Duke Ellington. She has no more feelings of lust for Mr. _____ after learning that he beats Celie. Meanwhile, she tells Celie that she would cover her with licks and kisses if she were her wife. Celie explains that they have tried to make love more, but have not found much success. Therefore, she thinks she's probably still a virgin.

Topic Tracking: Family 9

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 8

Shug and Celie cut hair and talk about their past lovers. Shug wonders what it was like for Celie with her own father. She has trouble recalling, but knows that she does not know how it feels to be loved. Shug tells her she loves her and then kisses her hard on the mouth. They kiss for a long time, touch themselves, and feel wonderful and complete, like lost babies.

Shug and Celie sleep in the same bed, holding one another peacefully until Grady and Mr. _____ return drunk. Celie tries to find good qualities about Grady, despite his spendthrift nature and red suspenders and bow ties. She does not like how he calls Shug "mama," and she hates how he's always looking at Squeak. Shug likes Squeak and wants to help her with her singing.

Celie tells God that she has a letter in her hand that she has kept secret. It is from Nettie. In Nettie's letter, she tells Celie that she is not dead. That she writes to her at Christmas and Easter, but knows that Albert will not allow her to read the letters. Shug asks Celie about Nettie, wanting to know every detail about her life. Celie realizes that Mr. _____ desired Nettie in the past, but when Nettie wouldn't give in, he made her



leave and never return in any form: body or letter. Shug wants to know so much about Nettie because she is the only other person Celie ever loved.

Topic Tracking: Religion 5

Shug becomes close with Mr. _____ again, hurting and frustrating both Celie and Grady, who pass the time together. Shug informs Celie that Albert has been hiding Nettie's letters all these years. She can hardly believe that Albert is such a horrible man to Celie and his children. Celie becomes so angry with Mr. _____ that she wishes him ill will. After Celie finds her husband's razors, Shug takes care of Celie, puts her to bed, and tells everyone she has a fever. Then, she talks and talks about her past and her family and her relationship with Albert. Her real name is Lillie and she recalls her courtship and beginnings with Albert. Even though she gave birth to three children with him, his father would never approve of a marriage between them. He believed she was trash, just as her mother. Shug knew Mr. _____'s first wife, Annie Julia and feels terrible for the evil way she treated her. She feels even worse for the way she treated Celie - as a servant - when she first moved in. However, she thinks about the glorious sexual relations she had with Albert now differently:

"And when I come here, say Shug, I treated you so mean. Like you was a servant. And all because Albert married you. And I didn't even want him for a husband, she say. I never really wanted Albert for a husband. But just to choose me, you know, cause nature had already done it. Nature said, You two folks, hook up, cause you a good example of how it sposed to go. I didn't want nothing to be able to go against that. But what was good tween us must have been nothing but bodies, she say. Cause I don't know the Albert that don't dance, can't hardly laugh, never talk bout nothing, beat you and hid your sister Nettie's letters. Who he? I don't know nothing, I think. And glad of it."
Part 3, pg. 117

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 9

Now that Celie knows that Albert has all her letters, she wants to see them all. Shug knows how to get the key to Albert's trunk, the place in which he keeps everything important to him. They find the letters, remove them from the envelopes, and steam them flat. Shug plans to place them in chronological order for Celie, organized by postmark date.

The first letter is about Nettie's escape from Mr. _____'s house. She ran away fast with all her bundles, from their father and Mr. _____, but could not escape the latter. Nettie warns Celie in her letter to leave if she can. Albert drags Nettie into the woods and rapes her. Then, Nettie pulls herself together and goes to the Reverend Mr. _____'s house, and finds none other than a white woman and a little girl with the same eyes and face as Celie. The next letter talks about Nettie's new home with the religious family. The woman's name is Corrine, her reverend husband is Samuel, and the little children are Olivia and Adam. However, despite their kindness and hospitality, Nettie misses Celie so much every moment, thinks about her, and feels her heart tug every time she realizes that Celie laid her own life down for Nettie's. In the following letter, Nettie



realizes that Albert is not giving Celie her letters. She asked Samuel to visit Mr. _____ to see if Celie was okay, but he did not want to get in the middle of man and wife, which Nettie understood completely. Nettie realizes that she will have to leave town because there is no work for her, and is sad to leave Corrine and Samuel, because they have been like family to her. They are missionaries and have worked out west, teaching Indians and poor people, and desperately want to go to Africa for missionary work.

Nettie's next letter is dated two months later and is much thicker than the rest. She stopped writing for a while, because of Mr. _____, but realizes that it is terrible to heed his command. She tells Nettie that she miraculously got to travel with Corrine and Samuel to Africa because of a last minute drop-out. While in Africa, Nettie reads about history and the bible and cannot believe how ignorant she used to be. She realizes that Egypt is in Africa and that the Egyptians were colored people who enslaved the Israelites. She learns how the land is beautiful and grand and that the natives are not savages, as everyone used to think. Before this experience, she didn't even know where Africa was. Now, she wants to learn and teach and defeat her ignorance.

"Oh, Celie, there are colored people in the world who want us to know! Want us to grow and see the light! They are not all mean like Pa and Albert, or beaten down like ma was. Corrine and Samuel have a wonderful marriage. Their only sorrow in the beginning was that they could not have children. And then, they say, 'God' sent them Olivia and Adam."
Part 3, pg. 124

Topic Tracking: Religion 6

Nettie tells Celie that she can believe in anything, especially if Nettie is in Africa. In her series of letters, Nettie tells of her tales in Africa and New York, working as a missionary. She doesn't feel as if she is Corrine and Samuel's maidservant, for they teach her and she teaches the children. They travel to New York, the most beautiful city in Nettie's opinion, with an entire wealthy section owned exclusively, it seems, by colored people. It is called Harlem, and in it there are hundreds of churches, all visited by the missionaries. Everyone gives them money for the children of Africa. They plan to work for the uplift of black people everywhere. They travel first to England, where Nettie learns about the history of slavery. She meets other missionary and anti-slavery groups, and has difficulty understanding why these people would sell people like her as slaves. She tells Celie about the different cultures of Africa and Europe, and how the African countries were bigger and stronger centuries ago, and now are poor and ill. They travel from England, to Portugal, Senegal, Liberia, and Monrovia. Nettie wishes Celie could be with her and misses her terribly. Her first glimpse of Africa is Senegal. She visits a plantation and eats cacao. She, Corrine, and Samuel see the coast of Africa and bend down to thank God for such beauty. With burgeoning excitement, Nettie wonders if she will ever be able to tell Celie everything she is learning and experiencing.

After crying and reading so many of Nettie's letters, Celie doesn't know what to do or how to respond. She wants to kill Albert for keeping such information from her. Shug stops her by saying that it is un-Christ-like to want to do such things. Thou shalt not kill, she reminds her. And she doesn't want Celie changing her aura while Nettie is on her



way home to see her. Shug teases Celie by saying that she cannot kill Albert, because then all Shug will have left is Grady and his big teeth. They laugh and Shug makes plans to have the two of them sleep together from then on, instead of with their respective husbands.

Topic Tracking: Violence 11

They sleep together like sisters, without any sexual relations. Celie thinks she is dead because her button is no longer rising from sleeping next to Shug. Shug calms her by saying it is just immobile because she is angry. Shug excites Celie and states that they will make her pants; she believes it is silly to be in the fields all day working in a dress. Celie doesn't think that Mr. _____ will allow any wife of his to wear pants. Shug lets Celie in on a little secret. When they were courting years ago, Shug tried on Albert's pants, and he tried on her skirt. Shug remembers that he used to be a lot of fun. The women plan to sew and read Nettie's letters together from then on.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 10

Celie tells God that she is excited for Nettie's return and plans to leave home with her and their children as soon as possible. Unfortunately, Shug informs her that incest is the devil's plan and she worries that her children will become dunces.

Nettie's next letter details her exploration of a small village in Africa, led by Joseph, an African with a Christian name. She is part of a massive welcome ceremony and learns the history of the legends of the people of Olinka and the superstitions of the villagers. She asks Celie what to make of such adventures. Her next letter discusses the education. Nettie wakes up at 5am and works all day, teaching English to only the boys of the village. The Olinka women are not allowed to become educated, so Olivia is the only girl with a myriad men. She tells Olivia not to worry, because she will grow up to become more than the chief's wife, which is what every woman in Olinka aspires to be. She hopes Olivia will become a nurse or teacher and travel all over the world with Christ in her heart. Nettie desperately wants a picture of Celie to hang in her trunk with her other religious icons.

The family meets Tashi, a little Olinka girl who plays with Olivia after classes, but does not participate in the classes. Her parents cannot understand what is wrong with her, because she finishes her tasks so quickly so that she may play with Olivia in the afternoons. They confront Nettie, wondering why Tashi is learning so much when all she needs to do is stay at home with her mother and learn womanly duties. Nettie realizes that Tashi is learning information and tasks that she will never use. Tashi's parents forbid her from going to Olivia's in the afternoon, and instead allow Olivia to see her infrequently. Nettie sees this as a good opportunity to learn a valuable lesson about life, and teaches Olivia about the cultural differences between Africa and America, and the gender differences between men and women.



Part 4: pg. 152-201

White road builders begin to construct a road in Olinka, excited at the prospect of cultivating civilization. The dynamics between the villagers and the road-builders is amorous and respectful. Nettie can hardly believe that she has been in Africa for nearly five years. The children are grown to her height and are on the cusp of surpassing their parents' education. Samuel and Corrine think of sending them back to the Western World to continue their educational growth, but Nettie cannot bear to think of Africa without them. Besides they love living in huts and playing with the villagers. They do, however, find problems with male and female friendships. Since one man may have several wives, the wives become close friends - almost like sisters, and are not allowed to have any male companions aside from their husbands. Corrine, therefore, asks Nettie not to be alone with Samuel without Corrine present, so that the villagers do not misunderstand her intentions. The women are not respected in Olinka and can be killed instantly if believed to be unfaithful or unscrupulous. Nettie wishes Celie a Merry Christmas, as they celebrate the holiday on the "dark" continent.

Topic Tracking: Family 10

Nettie writes to Celie a year after the road construction begins. She has waited so long because things have been difficult in Olinka. After the road was completed, villagers celebrate with picnics and walking to and from the road. However, the road builders announce that they will continue construction thirty miles past Olinka. Unfortunately, they build it straight through Tashi's mother's garden and the rest of the village. Nettie's school and home are leveled and the white men move in and claim to own the land. They charge the Olinka rent to live on it, even though the Olinka have lived there forever. Nettie is frustrated with the Olinka, for when she explains the history of slavery to them they are saddened, but refuse to take any responsibility for it. Meanwhile, Corrine falls ill with African fever, a disease that has taken the lives of many previous missionaries, and things have changed a bit with schooling.

"The boys now accept Olivia and Tashi in class and more mothers are sending their daughters to school. The men do not like it: who wants a wife who knows everything her husband knows? they fume. But the women have their ways, and they love their children, even their girls." Part 4, pg. 157

Unfortunately, Corrine's illness worsens, and Nettie is forced to take on all her duties, as well as tend to her. Corrine resents Nettie and wonders why her children look like her. She finally asks Nettie if when she met Samuel, secretly thinking that they are her children with her husband. They all swear on the bible that Nettie met Samuel the same day she met Corrine. Olivia and Adam don't even know that they are adopted, but wonder why their mother never wants to be near them. Nettie informs Celie that everyone is sad in Africa and hopes that things are better for her in America.

Topic Tracking: Family 11



Nettie's next letter brings new and valuable information to Celie about their heritage. Apparently Samuel also believed Nettie to be his children's biological mother. Before he became a preacher and born-again-Christian, he ran with some bad company who knew of a devastating local story. Years ago, a colored farmer was run out of town, lynched, beaten, and burned. After his death, his wife became crazy, despite their young children, and gave birth to a baby when she learned of her husband's death. Eventually, she married a strange man who chased her for years, went crazy, and eventually died. The babies were Celie and Nettie. Nettie realizes that she and Celie are not who they believe. Their pa is not their pa. Instead, their true parents were killed and crazy years earlier. Nettie prays that this letter, above all others, reaches Celie's hands safely.

Topic Tracking: Family 12

Celie addresses God in shock, terrified of her past and confused as to her future. Her father was lynched and mother went crazy; her entire world a façade. Shug and Celie visit Pa together to confront him and learn the whereabouts of her parents' burial. He can barely remember Celie, and upon recollection with Shug's help, he introduces his new fifteen year-old wife, Daisy. Celie looks at him and remembers that he is only the father of her children, not her own father. She asks where her biological father is buried. He informs her that he is buried next to Celie's mother; however, because he was lynched, there is no marker. Shug and Celie visit the cemetery seeking her parents, but find nothing but old horseshoes and weeds. Shug tells Celie that they are each other's people now, and kisses her.

Topic Tracking: Family 13

Nettie writes to Celie about Corrine and Samuel. She desperately wants to tell them the truth, especially after learning the truth about her parents. Corrine's health is fading quickly and she is weak and unhappy. Corrine still does not believe Nettie, and Samuel has seen her belly, with the stretch marks of a mother. Nettie admits to being the children's aunt and how Celie and her are the children of the parents lynched and murdered. Samuel is shocked and Corrine lies in disbelief...still. "Oh Celie, unbelief is a terrible thing. And so is the hurt we cause others unknowingly. Pray for us" Part 4, pg. 169. Nettie continues to try and convince Corrine that she is the children's aunt and tries to help her remember meeting Celie in the cloth store that day years ago. Nettie even goes through Corrine's trunk of quilts to find the one she made when she met Celie. Finally Corrine realizes the truth and admits tearfully that she was terrified that Celie would want her daughter back. She immediately saw the resemblance and told nobody about the meeting that day. She had forced herself to forget and cried herself to sleep. Later that night, Corrine wakes up to tell Samuel she believes him, and then dies.

Nettie is in excruciating physical pain because of her monthly friend - menstruation - that arrives shortly after Corrine's death. Olivia gets her period for the first time after her mother's death as well, and Nettie assumes that she goes to Tashi for help. Menstruation and bleeding is frowned upon and hushed in the Olinka culture, so Nettie tries to continue work as if nothing has changed. Samuel seems lost, for he had never spent one night alone since his marriage to Corrine. He also feels terrible for not helping



Celie earlier in America. If he had known who she was, he would have done something when Nettie asked for help. Nettie tells him not to worry, for nothing is ever truly known and there is so much that they do not understand. Nettie wishes Celie a happy holiday and Merry Christmas.

Celie now writes to Nettie, for she can no longer bear to address God. Shug is shocked to learn of Celie's doubt; she believes Celie has a good life, good health, and a woman who desperately loves her. "Yeah, I say, and he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown *dog* of a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown" Part 4, pg. 175. Shug tries to calm Celie down so that God doesn't hear her ranting; but she does not care. Shug claims to be a sinner - a sinner who has more fun because she is not thinking and worrying about God all the time. She explains to Celie that God created all people and wants them to be happy, even while making love. Shug convinces Celie that sex is a Godly act and nothing sinful.

Shug continues speaking to Celie about God and her vision of God. She asks Celie what her image of God is, and responds that her own image is not a man or a woman - God is an "it" and wants nothing more than to be appreciated. Therefore, when she walks by a field and notices the color purple in it, she sees that it is God in the field. Furthermore, she tells Celie that somewhere in the bible it is written that Jesus had kinky hair. She knows that no white person would want to think or believe that, so they ignore it and picture a white man. Celie's image of God is the same as that of the white man - only bigger and with more hair. Shug tells Celie that even though she hardly prays, she always knows that God is there.

"Man corrupt everything, say Shug. He on your box of grits in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plop himself on the other end of it, tell him to git lost, say Shug. Conjure up flowers, wind, water, a big rock. / But this hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long, he don't want to budge. He threaten lightening, floods and earth-quakes. Us fight. I hardly pray at all. Every time I conjure up a rock, I throw it." Part 4, pg. 179

Topic Tracking: Religion 7

Celie addresses Nettie in her letters now instead of God. She tells her all about her plans to move to Memphis with Shug and escape with her and the children when they return from Africa. She informs Nettie about the mayor's maid - how it is Sofia - Mr. _____'s son's wife. Sofia has been working for the white couple for eleven and a half years by now and has practically raised their children. She is out on parole and visits the family. Half of her children are married and moved away, while the others don't recognize or like her. The youngest child, Henrietta, is Harpo's favorite, even though she does not belong to him. Between Squeak, Celie, and Harpo, the children have been raised well. Mr. _____ erupts when Shug and Celie announce their departure together to Memphis, claiming he will not allow it or even give her a single penny. She didn't even



want to marry him, why would she want to take his money. Squeak also wants to leave with them, for she wants to be Mary Agnes again and sing in front of large crowds. Sofia tells Squeak to go ahead with the others and she will look after things for her.

As they prepare to leave for Memphis, Grady continues to try and seduce Squeak, finding himself near her at all times. Mr. _____ grows increasingly hostile towards Celie, telling her that she is poor, ugly, useless and cannot sing. Therefore, he thinks she'll return home immediately, for she is not prepared to do anything but live as Shug's maid. After fighting constantly, Celie bursts, realizing that Mr. _____ is right. Shug holds her and loves her as they arrive in Memphis, forcing her to forget all the cruel comments made by Albert.

Shug's Memphis home is grand, large, and comfortable. Her bed is round and silky and she gives Squeak and Grady as much space as they want. On tour, Shug sings all the time, drinks, and eats much junk food. Celie starts to sew pants. She works over and over again to perfect the art of pant making and spending Shug's money. She finally makes an ideal pair for Jack, who finds them the most comfortable and useful drawstring pants ever worn. Celie sends some home to Odessa and Jack, makes new ones for Shug, and becomes the treasure of seamstresses around the region. Soon everywhere Shug sings, people want to order the pants. Shug turns her kitchen room into a factory and Celie starts her own business, Folkspants, Unlimited. She writes to Nettie: "I am making some pants for you to beat the heat in Africa. Soft, white, thin. Drawstring waist. You won't ever have to feel too hot and overdress again. I plan to make them by hand. Every stitch I sew will be a kiss" Part 4, pg. 192.

In her letter to Nettie, Celie expresses her extreme happiness and elation to be living in Memphis with Shug. She has money, friends, love, and work. Jerene and Darlene are twins who work for Celie's company as seamstresses. During the sewing day, Darlene teases Celie about being a hick from the country because she speaks English incorrectly, saying "us" instead of "we" and so on and so forth. She tries to bring her books to read so people don't look down upon her; she does so also so that Shug isn't embarrassed to take her anywhere. Shug responds that Celie can speak any way she wants so long as she's happy and drinks tea and gets anything she wants. She is not embarrassed in the least.

Celie comes home to visit, looking different - sophisticate and attractive - wearing pants and flowers. Mr. _____ does not even recognize her. Harpo and Sofia are arguing over her sisters serving as the pallbearers for her mother's funeral. Harpo thinks women should stay at home and cook, while Sofia cannot understand any problem with her amazon sisters carrying their beloved mother to her grave. The talk about Grady and Squeak constantly together on drugs. Harpo wonders if Celie ever tried smoking the weed about which they speak. She says that she has smoked when she speaks to God and when she makes love and during important times like that. The family then lights a joint, smoking and laughing together.

Celie returns home for the funeral alone, for Shug has to work. Celie starts to notice how Mr. _____ is clean now. At the funeral, he seems to be trying to find religion, as he



is solemn and worshipful. With twelve children and countless more grandchildren, Sofia's mother's funeral filled the entire church. Afterwards, she notices how sick Henrietta is, for she suffers from a blood-clotting disease. Celie tries to recall Nettie's letters, in which she details remedies for blood clots. After she leaves, Sofia tells Celie that Mr. _____ grew increasingly dirty and smelly, living like a pig. Harpo also grew into a fat stout man who sleeps next to his daddy every night. The father and son team become inseparable.

Topic Tracking: Religion 8



Part 5: pg. 202-251

Nettie writes to Celie that she is so excited to see her, not realizing it has been nearly thirty years. She wonders what she looks like, if she has gray hair and is fat, like herself. Nettie also tells Celie that she and Samuel were married in England recently and are working desperately for the Olinka people, who have no money and are now forced to pay for everything around them. They begin to acknowledge temporary defeat. On the trip back to England, Samuel and Nettie meet an elderly white woman named Doris who introduces a small African boy to everyone as her grandson Harold. She speaks garrulously about her youth as a wealthy English-girl and how she hates aristocracy and never wanted to marry. She realizes that she fooled everyone by working as a missionary and secretly writing novels (penned under the name Jared Hunt) that are a miraculous success in both England and America. She dispels her desire to help others and discusses her large family of adopted grandchildren.

Topic Tracking: Family 14

When Nettie and Samuel meet with the bishop in England about their post in Olinka, he comments on their relationship together, worried that since they had been platonic and brotherly while Corrine was alive, the natives might look poorly upon their new romantic and sexual union. They will have one month left to stay in Africa. Samuel storms out and tells the Olinka that they have no choice but to join the forest savages. Samuel begins to speak about his youth and courtship with Corrine. They both came from the north in America, where their aunts were missionaries. Corrine attended Spelman Seminary, a locale for many mixed races. Samuel thinks about his older family and dreams for his new one, and looks around at Olinka for the last month he is there. He loves and respects all of them, except for the female initiation ceremony at puberty. However, the natives do not understand him and the other African Americans. They don't understand racism or the difficulty with the language or why anyone would want to continue moving. He breaks down in Nettie's arms, when they embrace passionately and make love. Nettie admits to her deep and sincere love for Samuel, as a person, friend, and lover. They inform the children of their plan to marry and tell them all about Corrine, Aunt Nettie, and Celie. They are excited to return and meet her. However, despite the news, Adam and Olivia miss their friends in Olinka - namely Tashi. Adam thinks he loves her, while Tashi is lost in the Olinka culture, preparing for her female circumcision and ceremonial facial scarring. Olivia and Adam pray that she does not participate in it, fearing for her health and sanity. Nettie and Celie's new brother, Samuel, send Celie their love in this letter, prepared to see them face-to-face soon enough.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 11

Topic Tracking: Violence 12

Upon their return to Olinka, the villages welcome Nettie, Samuel, Olivia, and Adam with great joy, until they learn of their impending permanent departure. Olivia and Adam seek Tashi, who hides in her hut with new facial ceremonial scarring and female circumcision. She looks ill, weak, and ashamed to have participated in an aging ceremony that she



realized is unsanitary and life threatening. Adam will not even take her hand and spends the remainder of the month desperate to leave Olinka. It is not only that he has gotten used to the Western way of living, but he cannot bear to deal with his conflicting feelings for Tashi, a woman he loves, but who has chosen a different path. Nettie continues her work in anticipation of a return home:

"Samuel and I are truly happy, Celie. And so grateful to God that we are! We still keep a school for the littlest children; those eight and over are already workers in the fields. In order to pay rent for the barracks, taxes on the land, and to buy water and wood and food, everyone must work. So, we teach the young ones, babysit the babies, look after the old and sick, and attend birthing mothers. Our days are fuller than ever, our sojourn in England already a dream. But all things look brighter because I have a loving soul to share them with." Part 5, pg. 214

Celie tells Nettie that the man they knew as their pa is now dead. His name was Alphonso and his young, pregnant wife, Daisy called Celie to inform her that her real father owned the house and left it to her and to her sister. Initially, Celie does not want it, for it is tainted with Pa's evil aura. However, Shug urges her to take the house. When she does so, she realizes she has her own home (even larger than Shug's) and a store in which she can sell her pants. She and Shug light sweet smelling candles all over the house to chase away the evil spirits and await Nettie and her family. Now, they all have a place in which they can live together independently.

Celie is brokenhearted because she believes Shug loves someone else. While Celie was away from Memphis working on the house, Shug started a fling with a nineteen year old boy in her band. At nearly sixty, a chubby Shug could hardly believe that sex with a man is still good. At a Chinese food restaurant, Shug tells Celie the news through a fortune in a fortune cookie. Celie's heart breaks instantly and refuses to speak until Shug begs her, with tears in her eyes, not to leave. She loves her so much, but just needs this short fling for no more than six months. "Celie, she say, Do you love me? She down on her knees by now, tears falling all over the place. My heart hurt so much I can't believe it. How can it keep beating, feeling like this? But I'm a woman. I love you, I say. Whatever happen, whatever you do, I love you" Part 5, pg. 221. Then, the boy arrives and Shug leaves with him in his car.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 12

Celie tries to pass the time back home. She helps Henrietta with her blood clots, using the methods Nettie told her about from Africa. She also spends time with Mr. _____, peacefully and honestly. He tells her that she looks great now and Celie replies that Shug takes good care of her. She tells him that she makes her money making pants - the pants the entire family wears and loves. As they spend more time together, Mr. _____ wonders if Celie doesn't like him because he is a man. Celie tells him that she believes all men are like frogs, and continues to make more and more maternity pants.

Suddenly Celie writes to Nettie in horror. The only letter Mr. _____ physically places in her hand is a telegram from the government stating that the ship on which she sailed



from Africa with her family had been sunk by the Germans outside a place called Gibraltar. The government believes them to have drowned. The same day, all of Celie's letters are returned to her - unopened. Celie now believes there is no happiness left in the world; life is nothing more than a strain.

Nettie wonders what Celie is like, after nearly thirty years of separation. She tells of her plans to find a church with Samuel in the neighborhood without idols, for they have no specific image of God anymore. This invisible image frees them, and consequently they worship a spirit instead of a white man. Tashi and her mother have run away to join the Mbeles, the forest savages, and will never be seen from again. She worries about Adam and Olivia's naivety back in the states, after living their entire lives in Africa. In the middle of her sentence, Nettie stops writing, only to return a day later stating that Adam is missing. Nettie believes that has probably gone looking for Tashi.

Topic Tracking: Religion 9

Celie wonders if Shug ever truly loved her. She looks at herself in the mirror, with her short and kinky hair, and doubts her self-worth and attractiveness. Celie receives postcards from Shug and Germaine every once in a while from all over the United States and even Panama (where Mary Agnes and Grady have moved). Celie spends most of her time with Mr. _____, who blames no longer for the pain in her life. He thinks she must hate him for hiding Nettie's letters so long and for lying to her for so many years. He is even more shocked to learn about Celie's children, unable to believe that they are being raised in Africa, and that they come from Celie's stepfather. Celie cannot hate Mr. _____ for two reasons: He loves Shug and Shug used to love him. Celie realizes that her job in life is to love Shug no matter what she does. Therefore she cannot blame Shug for leaving her to travel and have an affair with a younger man. It is not Shug's fault that Celie loves her so much. She simply misses her friendship.

Sofia and Harpo perpetually try to set Celie up with men, wondering if Celie even likes them anymore. Sofia tells Celie that she cannot stop thinking about a particular man named Stanley Earl. Unfortunately, Eleanor Jane becomes pregnant with his baby, Reynolds Stanley Earl, and marries him under Sofia's eyes. Reynolds Stanley Earl is a boisterous little baby who loves to play with Henrietta and the rest of Celie's family. Eleanor Jane and Sofia fall into a terrible fight and must work out their problems, especially now that she is a new mother. Eleanor Jane is the only white person Sofia loves, and although she is no replacement for her own children, Eleanor Jane's presence and friendship made living in the white people's house for so many years bearable. On the contrary, Eleanor Jane loves Sofia as a mother, for she realizes that her own parents don't love her as much as her brother, Junior. However, when Eleanor Jane marries Stanley Earl, their beautiful union is broken. Sofia breaks the harsh news to Eleanor Jane about Reynolds' future life. She admits that she cannot possibly love the baby for reasons of living as a colored person in America and he must be prepared for the harsh realities of prejudice and privilege.

Topic Tracking: Family 14



The six months promised by Shug have come and gone and Celie is still left alone with Mr._____. She is miserable, for she believes she has lost everyone she loved. Germaine is Shug's companion with whom she travels to New York and around the country. Shug writes to Celie telling her that she is visiting her children - the ones who want to see her. James, the only one who cares is living on an Indian Reservation as the "white black man," with his wife Cora.

Topic Tracking: Family 15

Mr.____ wonders what Celie loves so much about Shug. They continue talking and Celie realizes that he is not that terrible a person and furthermore, not so terribly unattractive, now that he's grooming himself and trying to better his life spiritually. They think of Shug and Sofia as manly women; or at least as women who don't seem or act like women. They speak their minds and are honest and strong. Mr.____ and Harpo, however, are more timid and unlike the typical man.

Celie begins to tell Mr.____ all about Nettie's life in Africa with the Olinka. She brings him an entirely new perspective on life, the bible, and the story of Adam and Eve. The Africans see Adam as the first white man, and everyone who came before him as black. Black is white and white is black and nakedness is whiteness. Mr.____ enjoys learning from Celie's stories. "Took me long enough to notice you such good company, he say. And he laugh. / He ain't Shug, but he begin to be somebody I can talk to" Part 5, pg. 241. Celie still receives letters from Nettie, even though she is believed dead.

Topic Tracking: Religion 10

Nettie reports in her next letter that Adam and Tashi have returned from the Mbeles looking like savage beasts. They are wild with excitement and information about the mini-societies these people run. Adam plans to take Tashi back to America with him as his wife, no matter how much she fears nobody will like or understand her. Tashi admits to her fears for marriage in America, for the black people do not like dark-skinned black people like her and will look down upon her for her facial scarring. She fears Adam will want to be with someone else and leave her alone with no family, no country, and no husband. The following day, Adam arrives with the same facial scarring as Tashi, and they marry in a beautiful Olinka ceremony. The next day, the family leaves for the dock to come home to America.

Topic Tracking: Family 16

Celie writes to Nettie about her mundane days at home, in which Mr.____ speaks with Shug about her attempts to contact the State Department to inquire about Nettie's sunken ship. Celie simply writes more and more letters to Nettie and awaits her return. Alphonso, a white clerk, and Sofia work in her Folkspants store, while Eleanor Jane looks after Henrietta for Sofia. They have found a way to make up and help one another when necessary. Furthermore, Harpo and Sofia have found each other's love again, and he is thrilled that Sofia is working. He kisses her on her stitched nose with love. Celie spends much of her time talking with Mr.____ about her past and present. She realizes



how much he has changed; he still loves Shug desperately and recalls their time together. He also realizes that many people love her, while she is the only person who loves him (or loved him), and becomes melancholy at such a lonely thought.

"I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ast. And that in wondering bout the big things and asting bout the big things you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know noting more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, he say, the more I love." Part 5, pg. 247

Just as Celie believes Mr. ____ is about to ask her to marry him again, she receives word that Shug is returning to her. Celie cannot contain her excitement, but reminds herself that her world will still be content if Shug does not come home to her. Soon enough, Shug arrives and hugs Celie with all her strength, declaring her everlasting love and expressing her emotions. Germaine, the boy, is now in college and seems almost like a son or grandson to Shug now. As Celie shows Shug the house, Shug becomes slightly jealous of her and Mr.____ spending so much time together. Secretly happy, Celie forgets about it and they embrace once again.

One day, Celie thanks God and the trees and the sky and everything around her for bringing her family home together. A car pulls up with an elderly Samuel, Nettie, and three sturdy adults: Olivia, Adam, and Tashi. They embrace, with tears falling down their cheeks, and introduce each other's families to one another - now to be one. Mary Agnes has returned from Panama and left Grady and on this July 4th, the re-united family celebrates their own independence.

"I feel a little peculiar round the children. For one thing they grown. And I see they think me and Nettie and Shug and Albert and Samuel and Harpo and Sofia and Jack and Odessa real old and don't know much what going on. But I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I think this the youngest us ever felt." Part 5, pg. 251

Topic Tracking: Family 17

Topic Tracking: Religion 11