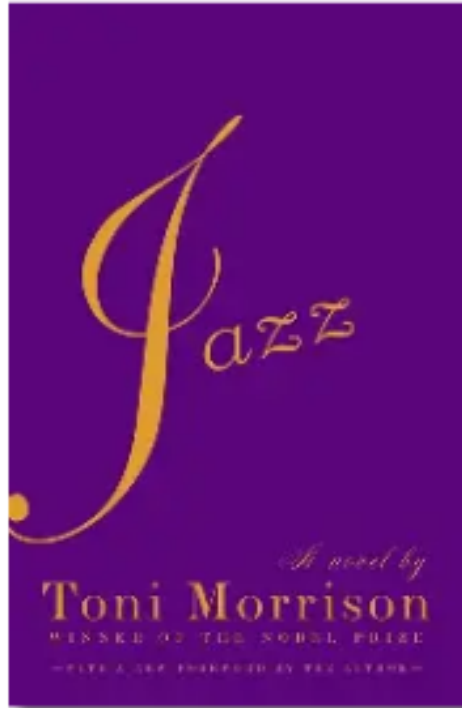


JAZZ

Toni Morrison



RESOURCE GUIDE

Reading + Writing + Analysis

NO PREP

PRINT & GO

HIGH SCHOOL ELA

About the Text

Jazz is set in 1920s Harlem and follows Joe Trace, his wife Violet, and a young woman named Dorcas. After a tragic event, the story unfolds through shifting perspectives that reveal the characters' pasts, choices, and emotions.

The novel explores how love, memory, and identity are shaped by personal history and environment. Through its layered storytelling, Jazz shows how the past continues to influence the present and how individuals search for meaning and connection.

KEY THEMES

- Love and betrayal
- Memory and storytelling
- Identity and self-understanding
- Community and change
- The impact of the past

BEFORE YOU READ

- How do past experiences shape present choices?
- Can love exist alongside pain or betrayal?
- How does storytelling influence understanding?
- What role does community play in identity?

Section Breakdown

Section 1: Chapters 1–3

Introduction to characters, setting, and central conflict

Section 2: Chapters 4–6

Backstories, relationships, and motivations

Section 3: Chapters 7–9

Revealed truths, emotional tension, and consequences

Section 4: Chapters 10–12

Reflection, understanding, and resolution

Comprehension Questions:

SECTION 1

1. What event introduces the main conflict?
2. Who are the key characters introduced?
3. How is the setting of Harlem described?
4. What is revealed about Joe and Violet?
5. How does the narration shape the story?

Quick Discussion

Time to Reflect

How does perspective influence understanding?

Comprehension Questions

SECTION 2

1. What backstory is revealed about the characters?
2. How do relationships begin to develop or change?
3. What motivates Joe's actions?
4. How does Violet respond to events?
5. What themes begin to emerge?

Quick Discussion

Time to Reflect

How do past experiences influence present behavior?

Comprehension Questions

SECTION 3

1. What truths are revealed about Dorcas?
2. How do the characters respond to conflict?
3. How does the narrative structure affect the story?
4. What emotional tensions increase?
5. How are themes of love and loss explored?

Quick Discussion

Time to Reflect

Why can relationships be both meaningful and complicated?

Comprehension Questions

SECTION 4

1. How do the characters reflect on their actions?

2. What changes occur in their understanding?

3. How does the story move toward resolution?

4. What message does the ending suggest?

5. How have the characters changed?

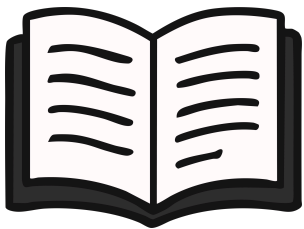
Quick Discussion

Time to Reflect

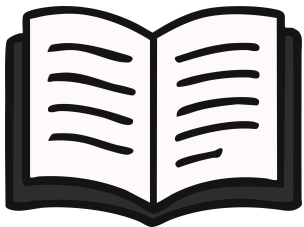
How can reflection lead to growth?

Extension Activity

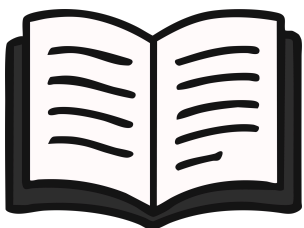
Choose one activity to complete.



- Analyze the role of narration in the novel



- Create a timeline of events and memories



- Compare relationships and motivations

Understanding the Big Ideas

This story explores:

- **The past shapes identity**
- **Love can be complex and conflicting**
- **Storytelling influences meaning**
- **Growth comes through reflection**

How does Toni Morrison use memory and storytelling to shape the characters' identities in Jazz? Use specific examples from the text to support your response.

Final Project

- Character Analysis Essay: Explain how Joe, Violet, or Dorcas develops throughout the novel
- Theme Analysis Presentation:
Analyze a major theme such as love, memory, or identity
- Narrative Structure Project:
Explain how the storytelling style affects meaning

Character Notes