

Introducing Morrison: Digital Exhibit
Dr. Elizabeth Cali
ENG 477 - Spring 2023

Assignment Description: Imagine a museum exhibit, one that has a central focus or theme and utilizes artifacts (photographs, objects, written documents, audio samples) to illuminate that focus for visitors. For this project, imagine that you have been tasked with creating an exhibit focused on enriching viewers' reading of one of Toni Morrison's novels. Select one of Toni Morrison's novels that we read this semester, and curate a digital exhibit that provides primary source materials that will involve viewers in deeper contemplation, study, and understanding of that specific novel and its relationship to Morrison's larger ideas about literature, writing, and language that we've covered in her nonfiction. As you plan this project, consider what relevant cultural, historical, social and/or political touchstones and resources would be illuminating and would create an expansive or multi-layered reading of Morrison's novel. You will curate and produce a digital exhibit with at least 6 primary sources and a brief critical introduction, with the purpose of creating an expanded and illuminating interaction with Morrison's fiction for your viewers.

Step 1: Select one of the three novels we read in this class around which you want to build your exhibit.

Step 2: Your exhibit should engage your audience in relating Morrison's nonfiction discussions of public life and language, writing, and literature to her fiction writing specifically. Focus your curation and conception of the Digital Exhibit on an idea or ideas Morrison presents in her nonfiction work. Use Morrison's nonfiction ideas to help build your exhibit and those ideas will anchor your critical introduction to the exhibit and selections you make for inclusion. To get started, go back through Morrison's nonfiction that we covered, and feel free to explore more of her writings in *What Moves at the Margin*. You might focus on one key idea or concept you see in Morrison's nonfiction or perhaps you want to highlight a few related ideas from her nonfiction that influence your curation of the exhibit. Considering what key insights Morrison offers in her nonfiction works that impacted or deepened how you thought about her literary works. Which of these do you find most significant for guiding an audience through the novel your exhibit focuses on?

Step 3: Use the ideas you've decided to focus on from Morrison's nonfiction to determine how you research and select the artifacts/primary sources you will include in your exhibit. What kinds of primary sources related to the novel's contents will assist new readers of your novel in seeing how Morrison's key ideas from her nonfiction inform her novelistic works?

Provide 6 primary sources (these are photographs, letters, newspaper clippings/ reports, audio recordings, creative works, historical documents or other cultural productions) that will enrich your viewers' engagement with Morrison's novel and compel them to think about the *work* her novel does. This part *takes time*. In order to locate artifacts that help to illustrate the key ideas from Morrison's nonfiction that you want to emphasize, you will need to dig through quite a bit of archival material. I have provided digitized archives to get you started. You may also use *The Black Book* to locate sources and of course your own independent research. Consider two connected questions your project should address: 1) What information, references, contexts, and allusions were absolutely indispensable to you in better understanding, navigating, and appreciating the work you think Morrison's novel accomplishes? 2) What information, references, contexts, and allusions assist in illuminating the bridge between Morrison's fiction writing and the idea(s) you want to highlight from her nonfiction?

Step 4: Each artifact/ exhibit piece will also include a brief annotation, just like what you would see next to museum exhibit pieces/artifacts.

Step 5: Write a critical introduction to your exhibit, explicating your vision as exhibit curator. The introduction should offer your explicit insight into the key idea(s) you want to draw out from Morrison's nonfiction and asserting how you see those ideas manifesting in Morrison's novel. That introduction should deeply engage at least one of Morrison's nonfiction works from which you pull these ideas and discuss how you've illuminated that vision in your exhibit selections and curation.

Step 6: Determine the platform you would like to deliver your exhibit on (Prezi, PowerPoint, Google Slides, Padlet, etc). Students typically like to add their work to their platform as they go so they can make changes and see how it's developing. Don't leave adding everything onto the platform until the end. Knowing that you have a working platform that you are comfortable using *as you go* will ward off last minute technology surprises.

Practicalities & Details

Critical Introduction: The exhibits should begin/open with a written introduction (500-700 words) from you, the curator, introducing readers to your exhibit. The introduction should bring together your personal response to Morrison's novel and a critical inclusion of Morrison's nonfiction in your discussion of how this exhibit creates more meaningful access to understanding Morrison's fiction. The introduction should offer a lens through which your viewers can enter into the exhibit. What aspects of Morrison's nonfiction expression helped you to frame this exhibit and how? What do you want your viewers to experience or gain clarity on as they view your exhibit? If you've made chronological or thematic decisions in compiling your exhibit, this information should be included in your introduction. **This is not the place to systematically explain each of your primary source selections.** This is where you tell viewers why you built the exhibit the way you did, explaining what you want viewers of the exhibit to better understand about:

- the relationship between the novel and a key idea/ideas Morrison offers in her nonfiction works
- the relationship between the novel and your experience of Morrison's writing
- the conceptual, thematic, and/or cultural work of the novel

Artifacts & Annotations: You should research and select 6 primary sources that you think specifically inform and enhance the way readers understand Morrison's novelization of African American experiences, identities, and history.

Just as one would see in a museum setting, each artifact must be visually accompanied by a formal 200-300 word description. Your annotations **must**:

- Explain clearly what the artifact is and what it represents
- Identify the artifact's direct connection with the novel. If Morrison alludes to the primary source specifically in some way, give the quote in which she does so. Is the artifact representative of a particular historical event addressed in the novel or forming the novel's setting/ environment/ context? If it is, clarify what that moment is in the novel or how it is referenced.
- Offer an analysis that addresses how the artifact helps to illustrate the presence of Morrison's ideas from her nonfiction in her fiction writing. For example, let's say the concept from Morrison's nonfiction that informs your exhibit is her insistence on the distinction between facts and truth. Your annotations should engage your audience in thinking about the way the novel adopts certain "factual" information and uses creativity/ fiction to do more than simply reference "real life" people, events, and cultural products, giving new meaning and perspective on African American experience, creative and cultural expression through these references.

Citations: A clear MLA style works cited should appear at the end of your exhibit documenting the source material for each artifact, your novel, and your nonfiction references. A link to a website is not sufficient documentation of an artifact's source.

Important Dates and Deadlines:

Tues, April 18: Constructing Exhibits, Researching, Drafting in Class – bring materials, laptops, any devices

Thurs, April 20: Come to class with 2 primary sources and annotation drafts for workshop and conference (12.5 pts)

Tues, April 25: Come to class with draft of critical introduction for workshop and conference (12.5 pts)

Thurs, April 27: Display in class a full draft of your Digital Exhibit on its platform -bring laptops, devices (25 pts)

Mon, May 1: Complete Digital Exhibit project due via Blackboard by 11:59pm. For a successful submission, place the link to your project in the textbox provided through the submission link titled "Digital Exhibit Project Assignment Submission Link" on Blackboard. **You are not done with your project until you have heard from me via SIUE email.** (150 pts)