

Song of Solomon

Magic Realism and Symbolism Homework Assignment

Goal: to understand elements of magic realism and symbolism as they relate to themes that develop in the novel, especially in relation to the culture and to Milkman; to analyze the specific passage in its context, but also to use it to understand, shed new light on, or connect to issues/characters from the novel.

For the topic from the list below that you have been assigned, analyze the passage for the following (your topic may lead you to discuss issues implied in another topic -- that's ok):

- a) What does the situation/symbol reveal about the characters directly involved?
- b) What do the unrealistic/supernatural/symbolic elements imply on a realistic level?
- c) What does the situation/symbol reveal about Milkman (if he is not directly involved in it already)? Consider his attitudes and consider if the situation could work as a foil or a parallel to some aspect of his character or development.
- d) What *issues* or *themes* from the novel does your topic illuminate?

All of the prompts occur in Part One (through ch.9); as you read on in the novel consider also how they relate to developments or conclusions in Part Two.

Text support is always relevant; if you include quotes be sure to cite page #s in parenthesis

TOPICS:

1. The white peacock in chapter 8
2. Birth stories: Pilate, Milkman, Freddie
3. Ruth's planting bulbs in chapter 4
4. Lena's tree in chapter 9
5. The ghost's appearances
6. Pilate's saving the falling man in chapter 2
7. Milkman and directions (walking the "wrong way," looking backwards, etc.)
8. Egg recipe in chapter 2
9. Graveyard loves in chapter 5

****Please bring two copies – one to turn in at the beginning of class and one to work off of during discussion****