

The Bluest Eye: Notes on the Dick and Jane Primer

- all caps: childlike, conveys angst, “dumb” state of mind
- repetition/no spacing: faster pace, no differentiation or subtlety of thought, stream of consciousness, obsession, shock, “roboticness”
- immediately, the presence of the primer at the beginning suggests irony: this simplistic, childish picture of reality is what we are NOT supposed to take seriously, does not reflect the truth
 - the story contradicts the primer in every respect: white vs. black, innocence vs. trauma and ugliness, happiness vs. anger and sadness, fantasy vs. reality, harmony vs. conflict
 - every aspect of the story in the primer is *perverted* in the novel
 - happy, harmonious images are immediately contradicted in the first paragraph of the actual story: Pecola having her father’s baby
- primer most obviously reflects Pecola’s state of mind: her innocence; the things she longs for; her obsessiveness and trauma evolving into madness
- green and white: green symbolizes life (natural life), white symbolizes not only Caucasian culture, but also that this is a whitewashed version of reality
- superficially happy images undercut by cat’s refusal to play with Jane, mother and father laughing and smiling, dog running away—this makes us question the meaning of other things in the primer: the redness of Jane’s dress, the fact that the father is “big and strong”
- the words “pretty” (33), “happy” (38), “play” (81), and “laugh” (110) are cut off: the house is *not* pretty; the family is *not* happy; Pecola is unable to get the attention she wants; Polly is unable to laugh
- because the novel is in some respects loosely structured, the presence of the primer indicates the *thematic* unity of the novel—it highlights the ugliness of the story and its contrast with the myths of childhood and family life that we are all taught, and it alerts the reader that the story is not just the story of an individual, but a commentary on society