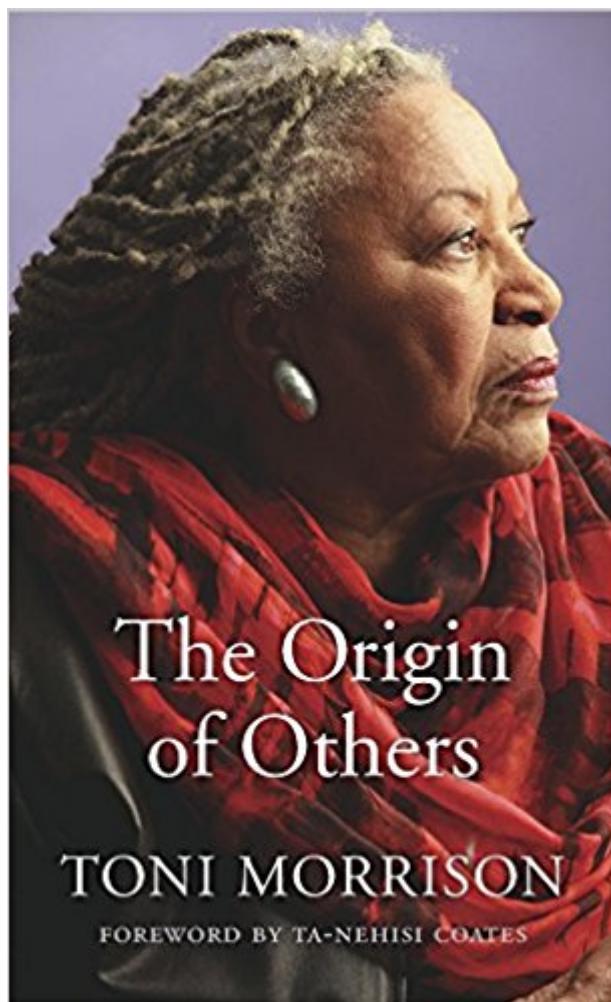


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The Origin Of Others (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures)



Synopsis

America's foremost novelist reflects on the themes that preoccupy her work and increasingly dominate national and world politics: race, fear, borders, the mass movement of peoples, the desire for belonging. What is race and why does it matter? What motivates the human tendency to construct Others? Why does the presence of Others make us so afraid? Drawing on her Norton Lectures, Toni Morrison takes up these and other vital questions bearing on identity in *The Origin of Others*. In her search for answers, the novelist considers her own memories as well as history, politics, and especially literature. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and Camara Laye are among the authors she examines. Readers of Morrison's fiction will welcome her discussions of some of her most celebrated books—*Beloved*, *Paradise*, and *A Mercy*. If we learn racism by example, then literature plays an important part in the history of race in America, both negatively and positively. Morrison writes about nineteenth-century literary efforts to romance slavery, contrasting them with the scientific racism of Samuel Cartwright and the banal diaries of the plantation overseer and slaveholder Thomas Thistlewood. She looks at configurations of blackness, notions of racial purity, and the ways in which literature employs skin color to reveal character or drive narrative. Expanding the scope of her concern, she also addresses globalization and the mass movement of peoples in this century. National Book Award winner Ta-Nehisi Coates provides a foreword to Morrison's most personal work of nonfiction to date.

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Customer Reviews

Melding memoir, history, and trenchant literary analysis, Nobel Prize laureate Morrison offers perceptive reflections on the configuration of Otherness. As sharp and insightful as one would expect from this acclaimed author. (Kirkus Reviews 2017-06-15) Pulitzer- and Nobel Prize-winning novelist Morrison analyzes the language of race and racism and the classification of people into dehumanizing racial categories in American culture. Lyrically written and intelligently argued, this book is on par with Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* and *The Black Book*. (Publishers Weekly (starred review) 2017-07-24) This volume collects the great novelist's Norton lectures at Harvard University, giving those of us who didn't get to attend a glimpse at Morrison's thoughts on race and otherness, and how these things affect literature and lives around the world. (The Millions 2017-07-11)

Toni Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, a National Book Critics Circle Award, and a Pulitzer Prize. She is the Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Humanities, Emeritus, at Princeton University. Ta-Nehisi Coates is the author of *The Beautiful Struggle* and *Between the World and Me*.

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