

People of color**Aufgaben**

Der vorliegende Vorschlag enthält in Aufgabe 3 alternative Arbeitsanweisungen.

- 1 Sum up the information about Sweetness (the narrator) and her family. (Material) **(30 BE)**

- 2 Analyze how the narrator's attitude towards her daughter is conveyed, taking narrative perspective and language into account. **(35 BE)**

- 3 Choose one of the following tasks:

- 3.1 Later in the novel, Sweetness reflects upon how she raised Lula Ann:
"There was no point in being tough or sassy even when you were right. Not in a world where you could be sent to juvenile lockup for talking back or fighting in school, a world where you'd be the last one hired and the first one fired."

Taking the quote as a starting point, discuss whether submissiveness can be an appropriate strategy when dealing with discrimination.

or

- 3.2 In an article about the Black Lives Matter movement, author Adam Serwer claims that "The United States has its best opportunity in 150 years to belatedly fulfill its promise as a multiracial democracy."

Write a letter to the editor of The Atlantic – the magazine in which Serwer's article was published – assessing his statement, taking African American history into account.

(35 BE)

Material

Toni Morrison: Sweetness (excerpt from a novel, 2015)

It's not my fault. So you can't blame me. I didn't do it and have no idea how it happened. It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Really wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father. Ain't nobody in my family anywhere near that color. Tar is the closest I can think of yet her hair don't go with the skin. It's different – straight but curly like those naked tribes in Australia. You might think she's a throwback, but throwback to what? You should have seen my grandmother; she passed for white and never said another word to any one of her children. Any letter she got from my mother or my aunts she sent right back, unopened. Finally they got the message of no message and let her be. Almost all mulatto types and quadroons¹ did that back in the day – if they had the right kind of hair, that is. [...] My own mother, Lula Mae, could have passed² easy, but she chose not to. She told me the price she paid for that decision. When she and my father went to the courthouse to get married there were two Bibles and they had to put their hands on the one reserved for Negroes. The other one was for white people's hands. The Bible! Can you beat it? My mother was housekeeper for a rich white couple. They ate every meal she cooked and insisted she scrub their backs while they sat in the tub and God knows what other intimate things they made her do, but no touching of the same Bible.

Some of you probably think it's a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin color – the lighter, the better – in social clubs, neighborhoods, churches, sororities, even colored schools. But how else can we hold on to a little dignity? How else can you avoid being spit on in a drugstore, shoving elbows at the bus stop, walking in the gutter to let whites have the whole sidewalk, charged a nickel at the grocer's for a paper bag that's free to white shoppers? Let alone all the name-calling. I heard about all of that and much, much more. But because of my mother's skin color, she wasn't stopped from trying on hats in the department stores or using their ladies' room. And my father could try on shoes in the front part of the shoestore, not in a back room. Neither one would let themselves drink from a "colored only" fountain even if they were dying of thirst.

I hate to say it, but from the very beginning in the maternity ward the baby, Lula Ann, embarrassed me. Her birth skin was pale like all babies', even African ones, but it changed fast. I thought I was going crazy when she turned blue-black right before my eyes. I know I went crazy for a minute because once – just for a few seconds – I held a blanket over her face and pressed. But I couldn't do that, no matter how much I wished she hadn't been born with that terrible color. I even thought of giving her away to an orphanage someplace. And I was scared to be one of those mothers who put their babies on church steps. Recently I heard about a couple in Germany, white as snow, who had a dark-skinned baby nobody could explain. Twins, I believe – one white, one colored. But I don't know if it's true. All I know is that for me, nursing her was like having a pickaninny³ sucking my teat. I went to bottle-feeding soon as I got home.

My husband, Louis, is a porter⁴ and when he got back off the rails he looked at me like I really was crazy and looked at her like she was from the planet Jupiter. [...] That's what did it – what caused the fights between me and him. It broke our marriage to pieces. We had three good years together but when she was born he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like she was a stranger – more than that, an

¹ quadroon – person that is one-quarter black

² passed – *here*: durchgehen als weiß

³ pickaninny – offensive term used for a black baby

⁴ porter – der Schaffner

40 enemy. He never touched her. I never did convince him that I ain't never, ever fooled around with another man. [...]

I had to be strict, very strict. Lula Ann needed to learn how to behave, how to keep her head down and not to make trouble. [...] Her color is a cross she will always carry. But it's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not.

(784 Wörter)

Toni Morrison: *God Help the Child*, London 2015, S. 3–7.