Toni Morrison, an American novelist, known for her powerful novels, the *Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*, takes us on an intriguing expedition through her latest novel *Home*, which reflects the interdisciplinary and multi-faceted nature of an American Studies classroom.

Morrison purposely addresses the political, social, racial, economic and religious history of the United States during the 1950’s. She demystifies the "Leave it to Beaver, post-war"-painted picture of American society and instead reveals the harshness of the ’50’s during this time by eloquently relating the journey of Frank Money.

Money, paradoxically, does not have any money, nor does he come from a wealthy family. He is a poor, black man from Lotus, Georgia, who is on a mission to reach his sister after receiving a note during his stay in the mental hospital which reads, “Come fast, she be dead if you tarry.”

Despite this warning, Money dreads the idea of returning home, as home “is the worst place in the world, worse than any battlefield.” While he does not want others to paint him as “some enthusiastic hero,” he expresses his selfless, yet selfish need to help his sister. His sister Ce is the first person he takes responsibility for and in her, “down deep inside of her lives [his] secret picture of himself- a strong good [him]. “

Throughout this novel Morrison weaves together many issues, from the role of the African American church in helping members of the community survive against racism, the ramifications of racism in the lives of African Americans in the 20th century, and the unjust medical experiments white doctors conducted on countless innocent people of color, to black feminism and the lack of spirituality and community in broken homes. Morrison also describes the effects of the “glass
ceiling” for young African American women and men living in the United States during the 1950s, the effects of poverty, and the overall treatment of Veterans in our country at this time. Yet the most striking piece of the novel is the concept of home and the specific struggle that Money faces as a MAN living in the United States of America during the 1950’s.

Money cannot base his worth or his identity as a man on materialistic items or his experience as a soldier. While Money is a veteran, who eventually gets treated for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder triggered from his harsh experience in the Korean War, it is in fact a war that is “misunderstood” and never given the respect it deserves. His service holds no value in his shaping as a man; when he returns the public treats him and the other veterans of color “like dogs.” Even more disturbing are the major incidents during his time spent in Korea that make Money question his own manhood. His journey “home” not only forces money to address his identity as a man, but his idea of a man.

Money first leaves Lotus as a child to escape the lack of opportunity in a town that offered the bare minimum of “safety and the peace of sleeping through the night and not waking up with a rifle in [his] face”, yet ends in the same place where the only warming memory is having seen horses stand like men, “so beautiful” and yet “so brutal”. The novel ends with Money creating a burial for a black individual, which he and his sister witnessed being buried alive by (what is assumed to be) white men as young children. On his memorial, Money writes, “Here stands a Man.” This beautiful black man whom was brutally buried alive reminds Money of the horses. Through dealing with his demons, Money himself realizes he is brutal yet beautiful; he is a man.¹