

"Sixo Character Analysis"

Chapter 2:

"His choice he called Brother, and sat under it, alone sometimes, sometimes with Halle or the other Pauls, but more often with Sixo, who was gentle then and still speaking English. Indigo with a flame-red tongue, Sixo experimented with night-cooked potatoes, trying to pin down exactly when to put smoking-hot rocks in a hole potatoes on top, and cover the whole thing with twigs so that the time they broke for the meal, hitched the animals, left the field and got to Brother, the potatoes would be at the peak of perfection. He might get up in the middle of the night, go all the way out there, start the earth over by starlight; or he would make the stones less hot, and put the next day's potatoes on them right after the meal. He never got it right, but they ate those undercooked, overcooked, dried-out or raw potatoes anyway, laughing, spitting, and giving him advice."

"Time never worked the way Sixo thought, so of course he never got it right. Once he plotted down to the minute a thirty-mile trip to see a woman. He left on a Saturday when the moon was in the place he wanted it to be, arrived at her cabin before church on Sunday, and had just enough time to say good morning before he had to start back again, so he'd make the field call on time Monday morning. He had walked for seventeen hours, sat down for one, turned around and walked some more. Halle and the Pauls spent the whole day covering Sixo's fatigue from Mr. Garner. They ate no potatoes that day, sweet or white."

"Sprawled near Brother, his flame-red tongue hidden from them, his indigo face closed, Sixo slept through dinner like a corpse. Now *there* was a man, and *that* was a tree. Himself lying in the bed, and the 'tree' lying next to him didn't compare."

This is the first time in *Beloved* when Sixo was introduced. To say that Sixo was still "gentle and English speaking then" alludes to his change later on in the story. It describes him "Indigo with a flame-red tongue". The description of his flame-red tongue foreshadows his fiery demise. His skin color was described to be indigo, which contrasts with his tongue significantly. Later on in the story, we find out that Sixo also talks very uniquely, and this unusual description of his tongue foreshadows that his future will involve his speech. The color red is also an archetype for passion, which will be shown through his passion for a woman that he travels to lengths in order to see. The description of the potatoes describes Sixo's perseverance; he never got it right, but never stopped trying, and learned to enjoy what he had anyway. Also, it shows the loyalty of his friends, since they also ate it in good faith, "laughing, sitting, and giving him advice."

Sixo was motivated to see the woman because he was in love with her, so much in that he wouldn't mind traveling thirty miles just to say "good morning". He also has a lot of resolve going through so much without fear of getting caught by his owner, or other whites. His friends even cover for him when he is fatigued from every journey, which shows the loyalty and intimacy of his friends Halle and the Pauls. At the end of this paragraph, it describes that Sixo and his friends did not eat any potatoes the day he went to visit the woman, and he was too tired to cook his potatoes. It shows that he wants to get into a close relationship with this woman, with the possibility of starting a family, which is one of the major themes of this novel. It may be because Sixo recognizes the value of family more than the other characters.

The description of his "flame-red tongue" is mentioned again, emphasizes his unique way of speaking while further suggesting his fiery demise. An additional foreshadow of his death later in the story is the comparison of him sleeping like a corpse through dinner. The Chokecherry tree on Sethe's back does not compare to the tree Sixo sits under. Sixo's tree, Brother, embodies all the good memories of Paul D, Sixo, and the other slaves at Sweet Home, while the Chokecherry tree on Sethe's back represents her suffering at Sweet Home. These trees are the opposite of each other: one is of happiness, the other of suffering.

"The kind of thing Sixo would do—like the time when he arranged a meeting with Patsy the Thirty-Mile Woman. It took three months and two thirty-four-mile round trips to do it... Its driver, wide-eyed, raised a whip while the woman seated beside him covered her face. But Sixo had already melted into the woods before the lash could unfurl itself on his indigo behind."

Chapter 19:

"You stole that shoat, didn't you?"

"No. Sir." said Sixo, but he had the decency to keep his eyes on the meat.

"You telling me you didn't steal it, and I'm looking right at you?"

"No, sir. I didn't steal it."

Schoolteacher smiled. "Did you kill it?"

"Yes. sir."

"Did you cook it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then. Did you eat it?"

"Yes, sir. I sure did."

"And you tell me that's not stealing?"

"No. sir. It ain't."

"What is it then?"

"Improving your property, sir."

"What?"

"Sixo plant rye to give the high piece a better chance. Sixo take and feed the soil, give you more crop. Sixo take and feed Sixo give you more work."

Chapter 24:

"Sixo, hitching up the horses, is speaking English again and tells Halle what his Thirty-Mile Woman told him. That seven Negroes on her place were joining two others going North. That the two others had done it before and knew the way. That one of the two, a woman, would wait for them in the corn when it was high—one night and half of the next day she would wait, and if they came she would take them to the caravan, where the others would be hidden."

"Only Sixo, who has been stealing away to see his woman, and Halle, who has been hired away for years, know what lies outside Sweet Home and how to get there."

This is actually a description of one of his visits to the Thirty-Mile Woman, and showed what he had to go through in order to see the woman. He had to painstakingly tell her directions to rendezvous at a certain point, which she failed to do. He ended finding her anyway. After they made love, they were discovered by whites, and were about to get whipped, but got away. Sixo and the Thirty-Mile Woman go through so much in order to see each other, but through this, we can see that their love for each other is so strong that they will be risking their lives just to see each other. Also, at the end of this quote, it mentions his "indigo behind". This is the third time the book describes him with this color. Indigo is a similar to blue, and blue is an archetype for truth and purity, which goes along with his character as well.

Schoolteacher is asking Sixo if he stole the shoat (young pig) and ate it. We can clearly see that Sixo is beating around the bush in confessing that he actually stole it and ate it, and while doing this, he comes up with a ridiculous excuse, according to Schoolteacher. This is very eye-opening to the reader, because we are able to see Sixo's logic. He is trying to justify his stealing of the shoat, but the Schoolteacher is not convinced and beat him anyway. We also see how he talks, which is very basic, and he refers to himself in third person. We get to see that Sixo's speech is very odd through this, and helps us understand more of where he comes from. He is probably uneducated, along with the many other blacks at the time were.

Sixo is planning to escape Sweet Home, along with other slaves, and plans to rendezvous with the Thirty-Mile Woman. He is still in love with the woman, and it just shows the loyalty and passion Sixo has for the woman, which started from the beginning of the book until chapter 24, which is towards the end of the book. He is still willing to even risk his life just to see this woman free, along with their future child.

Sixo takes somewhat of a position of leadership, since he is only one of the two people that know the land outside of Sweet Home. It also shows his purpose of living. The only reason why he knows the land outside of Sweet Home is because of his love for the Thirty-Mile Woman, nothing else. If it had not been for her, he probably would not have left the land, and not lead the escape plan at all.

“Sixo turns, then, to the woman and they clutch each other and whisper. She is lit now with some glowing, some shining that comes from inside her.”

“Sixo turns and grabs the mouth of the nearest pointing rifle. He begins to sing. Two others shove Paul D and tie him to a tree. Schoolteacher is saying, ‘Alive. Alive. I want him alive.’ Sixo swings and cracks the ribs of one, but with bound hands cannot get the weapon in position to use it in any other way. All the whitemen have to do is wait. For his song, perhaps, to end? Five guns are trained on him while they listen. Paul D cannot see them when they step away from lamplight. Finally one of them hits Sixo in the head with his rifle, and when he comes to, a hickory fire is in front of him and he is tied at the waist to a tree. School teacher has changed his mind: ‘This one will never be suitable.’ The song must have convinced him.”

“His feet are cooking; the cloth of his trousers smokes. He laughs. Something is funny. Paul D guesses what it is when Sixo interrupts his laughter to call out, ‘Seven-O! Seven-O!’ Smoky, stubborn fire. They shoot him to shut him up. Have to.”

This is the last time Sixo is with his love, and the “shiny” thing that comes from inside her is their future child

Sixo is caught, and uses himself as a diversion for the Thirty-Mile Woman and his future child to run away down the creek. As illustrated, Sixo does not really put up a fight, although he does injure one of the whitemen. Sixo starts to sing a song while being held at gunpoint by five people, but does not seem to be threatened at all with the guns pointed at him. Sixo actually wanted to convince Schoolteacher and the other men that he was genuinely crazy, and that they have to more use of him since he is too crazy, which does in fact work when Schoolteacher says “This one will never be suitable”, and the book saying “The song must have convinced him.”

The whitemen try to burn Sixo, and while Sixo’s feet and trousers are burning, Sixo is laughing, and cries out, “Seven-O!” twice. He is laughing not because he is crazy, but genuinely happy for the escape of the Thirty-Mile Woman, but more importantly, his child, which he calls Seven-O. The number seven comes after six, and with this name, he wants to carry his legacy on to his child, and for his child to serve as a continuation of himself.

Sixo does not show up much in *Beloved*, but nevertheless plays an important role in illustrating the theme of violence, and also love in this book. He is first mentioned in the second chapter, when Paul D and Sethe are together in bed, and Paul D has a rememory of Sixo. He remembers Sixo cooking potatoes, sitting by the tree, and importantly, his visits with a woman that lived thirty miles away from Sweet Home. The next significant scene of Sixo is in chapter 19, when he tries to justify himself stealing a shoat from Sweet Home. Under the ownership of Mr. Garner, Sixo and the other slaves were treated very well, and were even called "men", which at that time were only white people. The transition between management styles, and from a logic of property to a logic of properties, is marked by Sixo's justification for stealing the shoat. Sixo has stolen and eaten a pig when Schoolteacher begins to restrict the diets of the slaves. He argues with Schoolteacher that, because he is Schoolteacher's property, eating the pig is improving that property, making it work the fields and the farm better. This answer is acknowledged as "clever," but its authority is denied: ". . . Schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers-not the defined" (Jesser 328). In chapter 24, his death, he is still with the Thirty-Mile Woman, which demonstrates the "ideal" love between the couple. They have stayed loyal throughout most of the book, until his death. He gets caught escaping, but makes sure the Thirty Mile Woman gets away with his future child by acting insane, in singing songs. Schoolteacher believes that he is too crazy to keep, and decides to burn him. Sixo literally dies for his lover and his future child, and even while he is burning, he is laughing out of happiness from his escape of his child, and does not even care about his death. He values the life of his lover and child over his. The only "selfish" part about him is illustrated when he shouts "Seven-O! Seven-O!", which would be the name of his future child, which will be a continuation of himself/legacy.

Sixo in the context of the book, whose very name recalls the "Sixty Million and More" to whom Morrison dedicates her novel, is representative of what the slaves had to go through. More telling, however, are the details with which Morrison describes Sixo's difference from the other Sweet Home men. His color, language, and ways suggest his undiluted African ancestry and set him apart from the rest. His color is darker: "indigo with a flame-red tongue" His language and ways are singular: At one point "he stopped speaking English-because there was no future in it"; he danced among the trees at night "to keep his bloodlines open" and he walked for thirty-four hours in two days just to spend an hour with his chosen woman. Sixo is drawn on an heroic scale and seems to function as Paul D's spiritual guide. That Paul D is meditating not on trees but on manhood in Sethe's bedroom is revealed in the concluding words of his reverie: "Now therew as a man, and that was a tree. Himself lying in the bed and the 'tree' lying next to him didn't compare". By accentuating Sixo's "Africanness" and by establishing him as a primary example of manliness, Morrison suggests he represents an African ideal of manhood (Sitter 23).

