

Morrison, Toni. (2017). *The Origin of Others*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

This book is a compilation of Toni Morrison's, Charles Eliot Norton lectures. Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his searing introduction, describes Morrison's view of American racism as the story of "the creation of aliens and the erection of fences...and why we have come to associate those fences with pigment."

Morrison focuses on "othering," the psychological work that maintains power of one group over another. "Othering" is a mental process that delineates people by assigning characteristics that are repugnant and taboo. Morrison hones in on depictions of racial superiority and inferiority, in works that are considered the canon of great American literature. She illustrates how our literature deploys images and language that constrict our view of what constitutes a human being. She shows how "othering" dehumanizes and estranges in order to instill beliefs of white racial superiority. She explains how the invention of the "Other" has been embraced by European ethnic groups to buy into the illusion of power.

How this book would work in groups

Our large group identities influence how we relate in small interpersonal groups. We have absorbed many toxic values and devaluations as products of our large groups. It is important to become more conscious of this process.

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