

## Nobel laureate Toni Morrison no more

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New York: Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, a pioneer and reigning giant of modern literature whose imaginative power in “Beloved,” “Song of Solomon” and other works transformed American letters by dramatising the pursuit of freedom within the boundaries of race, has died at age 88.

Publisher Alfred A Knopf announced that Morrison died Monday night at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. Morrison’s family issued a statement through Knopf saying she died after a brief illness.

“Toni Morrison passed away peacefully last night surrounded by family and friends,” the family announced.

“She was an extremely devoted mother, grandmother, and aunt who revelled in being with her family and friends. The consummate writer who treasured the written word, whether her own, her students or others, she read voraciously and was most at home when writing.” Few authors rose in such rapid, spectacular style. She was nearly 40 when her first novel, “The Bluest Eye,” was published.

By her early 60s, after just six novels, she had become the first black woman to receive the Nobel literature prize, praised in 1993 by the Swedish academy for her “visionary force” and for her delving into “language itself, a language she wants to liberate” from categories of black and white.

In 2019 she was featured in an acclaimed documentary, “Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am.” Morrison helped raise American multiculturalism to the world stage and helped uncensor her country's past, unearthing the lives of the unknown and the unwanted, those she would call “the unfree at the heart of the democratic experiment.”

In her novels, history — black history — was a trove of poetry, tragedy, love, adventure and good old gossip, whether in small-town Ohio in “Sula” or big-city Harlem in “Jazz.”

She regarded race as a social construct and through language founded the better world her characters suffered to attain. Morrison wove everything from African literature and slave folklore to the Bible and Gabriel Garcia Marquez into the most diverse, yet harmonious, of literary communities.

She championed emerging fiction authors such as Gayl Jones and Toni Cade Bambara, helped introduce US readers to such African writers as Wole Solinka, among a host of others.