

Second Life Project

Layout

For my Second Life project, I have chosen to use the novel, *Song of Solomon* as my basis. Though the book has several themes, the one which is the most prevalent is the search to define oneself, both as an individual, and as part of a community. The novel has numerous characters and several interwoven storylines. However, all these characters and narratives serve one main purpose: to tell the story of Milkman Dead. The narrative, as it applies to Milkman, begins with his birth, but ends relatively ambiguously. The ending leaves one to wonder whether Milkman is killed, commits suicide, or if Morrison has woven back in some of her magical realism from earlier in the novel. For the final scene of my project, I will take the magical realism approach.

If I were to make a Second Life site based on *Song of Solomon*, I would begin with a scene from before Milkman's birth. When the user is transported to the *Song of Solomon* site, they would enter into a rural farmland. There would be trees, a barn, (which could not be entered,) and a split-rail fence. Slightly separated from these things would be a partly plowed field, the unused plow left abandoned in the middle of the job. Close to the fence where Macon Sr. had died, would stand Macon Jr. and his sister, Pilate. The only wildlife in this particular scene would be a peacock strutting around the farmyard. In the distance of the scene would be a cave. If one were to click on the fence, it would say, "The Death Of Jake (Macon Dead Sr.)" Clicking on Macon Jr. or Pilate would produce the sound of children crying. If one were to 'catch,' the roaming peacock by clicking on it, they would collect the animal, which would come in handy later in the experience.

interesting

It would not take long for the user to explore all there is to see in this scene, so I feel they would instinctively head toward the cave next. Once in the cave, the user would see a small wooden box and large and very worn bag. In the furthest, darkest end of the cave would be a peacock. When the user clicks on the wooden box, it would open revealing a small scrap of paper with the name, 'Pilate,' printed on it. When the user clicks on the bag, a message would appear reading, "Gold." Upon a second click, the bag would fall away revealing a pile of bones. At this point, there would be nothing left for the user to do but head for the peacock. As they neared the darkest part of the cave, they would become aware that behind the peacock lies a passageway. As before, I think it would be instinctual for the user to collect the peacock and head through the passage.

The passage would be short. At the end of it, the user would find themselves in Milkman's apartment. In the center of the apartment would be Milkman lying on a couch, Hagar hovering over him with a knife in her hand. The walls of the apartment would be papered with completely blank, and partially filled family trees. Leaning in one corner would be an old guitar. If the user were to click on either Hagar or Milkman, Hagar would crumble to the floor, and audio of female sobbing would begin. If the guitar is clicked, a message reading, "Seven Days," would appear. There would be a door on the far end of the room. If the user opened the door, they would find the interior of the next room dark. A peacock would be on the other side of the threshold. The user would then collect the peacock, and head through the door.

Once through the door, the user would find themselves back in the cave. This time the bag and the box would be gone. The bones would still be in the scene, however they would have assembled into a human skeleton. Standing at the mouth of

the cave would be Milkman. Between the skeleton and Milkman would be yet another peacock. When the user clicked on the skeleton, audio of a man chanting, "Sing," would begin. Heading toward Milkman, the user would collect the last peacock. When the user clicked on Milkman, he would exit the cave.

Following Milkman, out of the cave, the user would find themselves in a forest. The user, Milkman and Guitar would all be standing on the edge of a cliff. Song clips from all of the artist and songs mentioned at the end of the novel would play. Guitar would be menacingly hulking over Milkman. Low in the audio mix would be the faint sounds of gunshots, dogs and hunters yelling. If one were to click on Guitar, he would begin a slow motion lunge toward Milkman. I feel that in this instance, the user would instinctively click on Milkman. What happens next would be based on whether or not the user had collected all of the peacocks. If all the peacocks were not collected, *interesting* Milkman would leap off the cliff, presumably to his death. The music would stop, and an audio clip, (if at all possible of Toni Morrison,) saying, "You want my life? You need it? Here," (Morrison 341). If the user had collected all of the peacocks, when clicked, Milkman would again jump from the cliff. The difference would be that this time he would begin to levitate, and then rise, eventually out of sight. While this is happening, again the previous audio would end, and a speaking part would begin. The quote would be, "If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it."

Analysis

Much of *Song of Solomon* is Milkman finding his lineage. This is something I have tried to represent in several parts of my Second Life project. The first scene

opening on Macon Dead Sr.'s farm is a jumping off point. At face value, the this scene based on one directly following Milkman's grandfather's death would seem to have little to nothing to do with Milkman, himself. However, the death of Jake deeply affects both Macon Jr. and Pilate. That in turn contributes to the life experience of Milkman. The abandoned plow and the field left half plowed is meant to represent Jake's untimely death, and all of his unfinished business. The category of, 'unfinished business,' would also include him leaving his children on their own. The peacocks throughout the project are, (like in the novel,) meant to represent Milkman's desire, ^{before his birth (on Lincoln's Heaven)?} as well as his inability to rise above it all, and fly. Milkman feels a strange, unspoken kinship with the flightless ^{source? quot: for evidence} bird, which is why I've chosen to give the user a reward for collecting all of them within the site.

The cave is another significant part of the novel. The cave is not only where the bones and supposed treasure are reputedly hidden. It represents a place of hiding, secrets and introspection within Milkman. The small wooden box is obviously meant to represent Pilate's earring. This not only represents a pivotal character in the story, but it gives a brief reminder to the user of the Dead family's method for choosing names. The deceptive bag represents the lack of trust and understanding within Milkman's family. The promise of gold teases the user into the second click, as well as reminds them another pivotal plot point. The second click which reveals the bones would drive the fact of deception home.

Milkman's apartment is another key location of the novel. It is where Hagar and Guitar have enjoyed the company of Milkman. It is also the place where Milkman's relationship with both of them deteriorated. This last point will be driven home to the

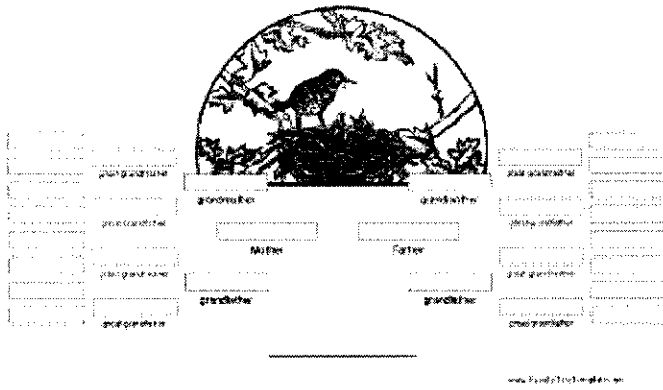
user by the image of Hagar preparing to end Milkman's life. Hagar's inability to attack Milkman, and her crumbling to the floor, sobbing, eludes to her eventual total breakdown. The guitar in the corner labeled 'Seven Days,' is quite obviously a reference to both Guitar's youth, (the basis of his nickname,) as well as the terrorist organization to which he becomes affiliated. The walls being covered with incomplete family trees represents Milkman's lack of knowledge of his own genealogy, as well as his eventual quest.

The user finding themselves once more in the cave solidifies the importance of the location. The assemblage of the bones into a skeleton shows the reality of Pilate's hauling the bag across the country. The clip of the word, 'Sing,' is, as it is in the novel, not only a reference to the voice Pilate sometimes hears. The word is also a reference to Milkman's grandmother, and the legend of Jake calling out to his deceased wife.

The final part of the Second Life project is obviously meant to represent the last scene of *Song of Solomon*. The music is a direct reference to Morrison calling out to, "Names that bore witness," (333). ^{why blues musicians + songs?!} The gunshots and shouting remind the user of the hunting party with whom Milkman went into the woods. Guitar's lunge toward Milkman shows his final act of aggression in the novel. It also cements the complete disintegration of the two men's relationship. It displays Guitar's choice to value the Seven Days over his friendship with Milkman. If the user does not collect all of the peacocks, Milkman plunges to his death. The user would take the quote as Milkman's final words on Earth. If the user collects all of the flightless birds, Milkman finally flies. The ascension of *Song of Solomon*'s central character shows Milkman's ability to finally rise above it all. He is able to leave behind the deceit, violence, confusion and abuse

which his life has brought to him practically non-stop, and, "surrender to the air," (341).

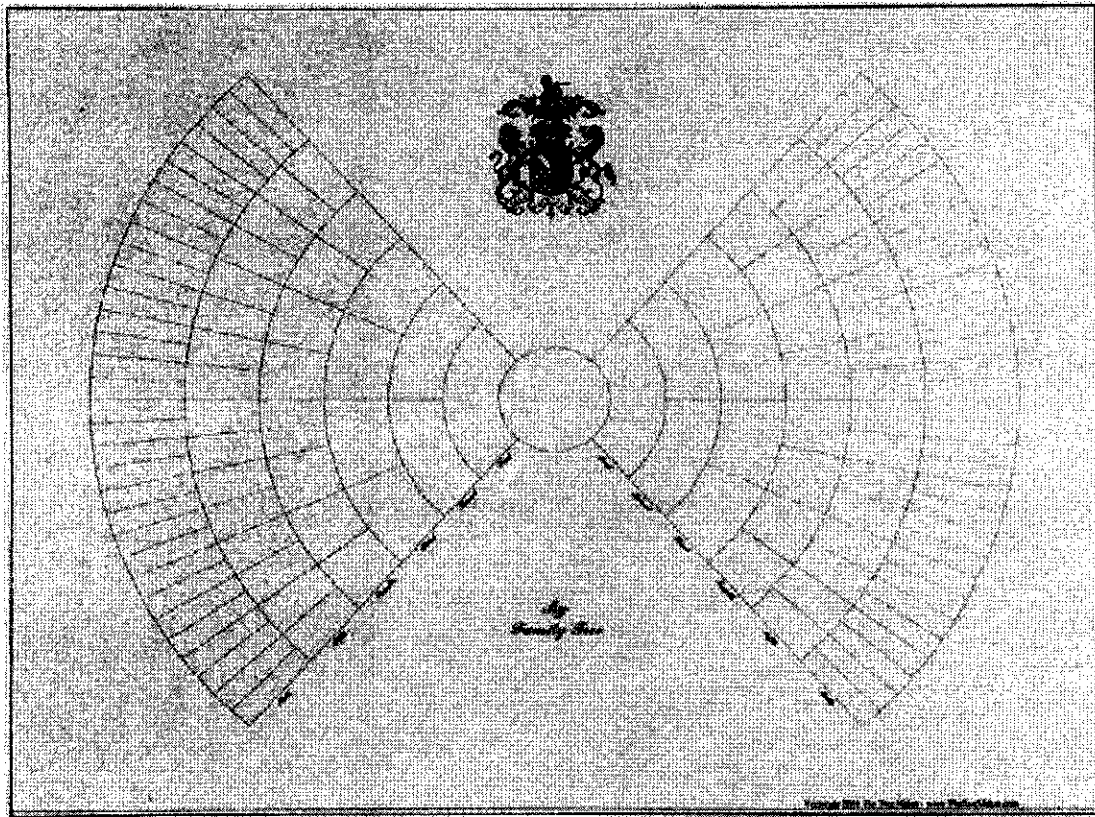
I feel that following these guidelines I have laid out, one could create an effective educational tool. It would take advantage of Second Life technology to bring an interactive visual supplemental tool to the student. *Song of Solomon* is a novel of several characters, themes and storylines. Out of all the characters and themes, the central point of the novel is Milkman's struggle to define himself. I feel that my Second Life project would be an accurate interactive way to bring this point home with the student.



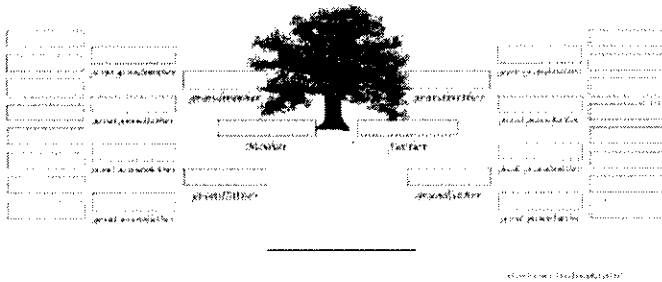
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Meat!
great variety
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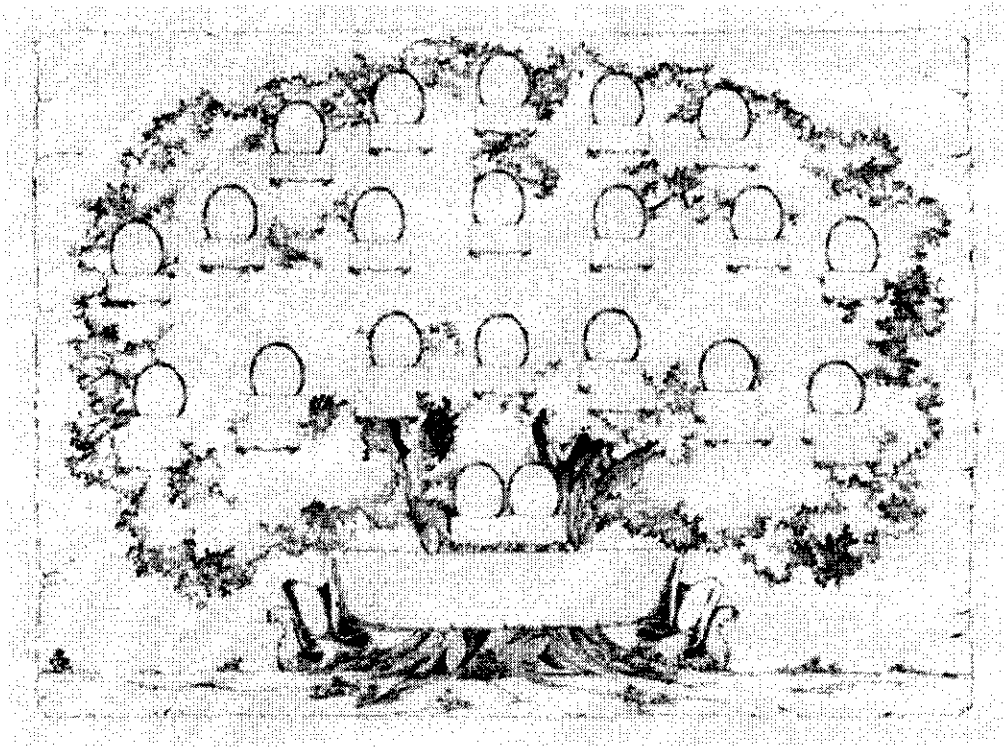
<http://www.thetreemaker.com/samples/family-tree-template.html>



Family Tree



<http://b4tea.com/information/family-tree-templates-family-tree-forms/>



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My Family Tree

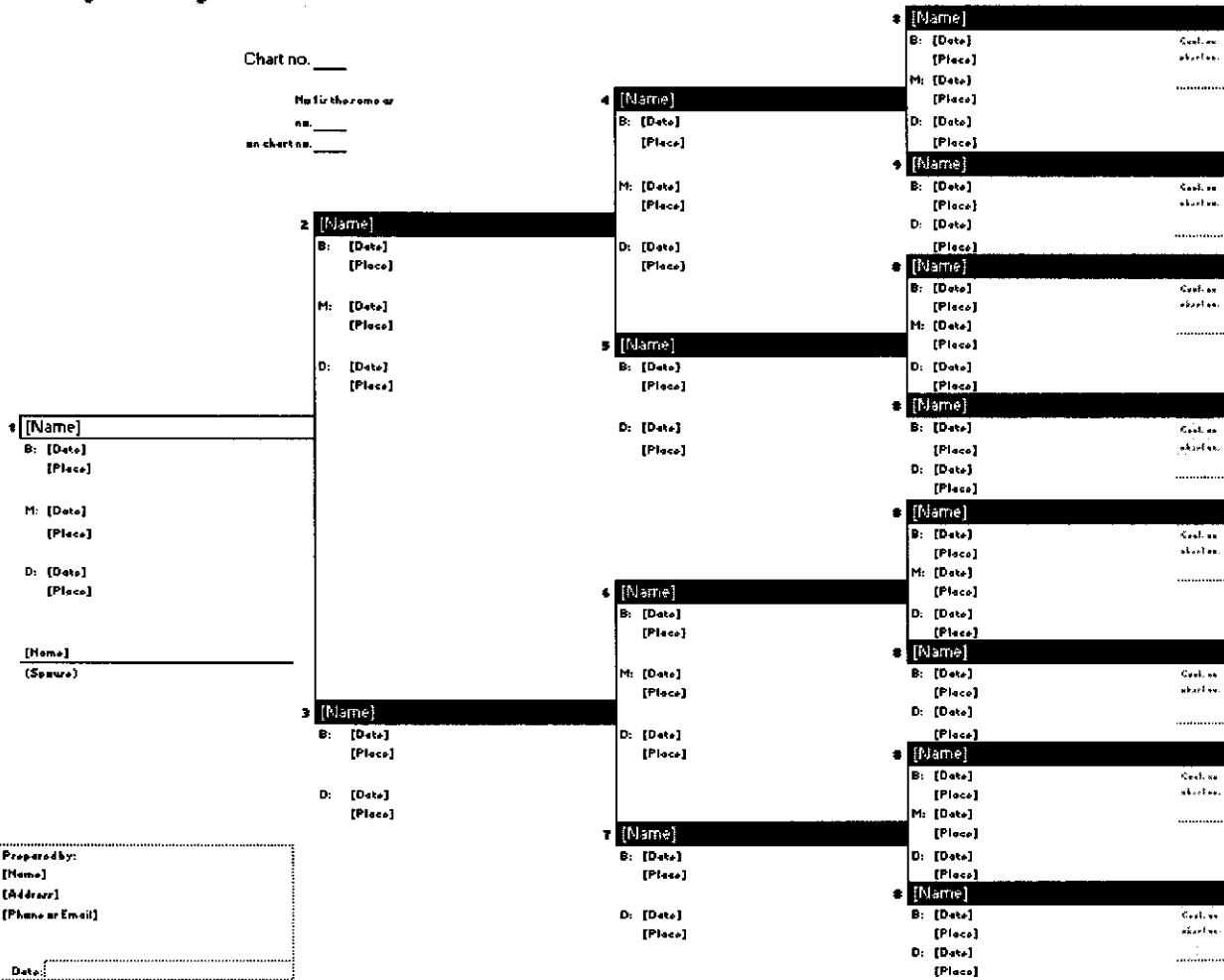
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<http://www.vertex42.com/ExcelTemplates/family-tree-template.html>

Songs Used

Belly, Lead. "Good Morning Blues." *Golden Greats: Greatest Blues*. Golden Greats Records, 2002. CD.

Belly, Lead. "Pig Meat." *The Story of the Blues*. Columbia/Legacy Records, 2003. CD.

Hurt, Mississippi John. "Stack O'Lee Blues." *The Story of the Blues*. Columbia/Legacy Records, 2003. CD.

Jefferson, Blind Lemon. "Black Snake Moan." *The Story of the Blues*. Columbia/Legacy Records, 2003. CD

King, B.B. "Take a Swing With Me." *Golden Greats: Greatest Blues*. Golden Greats Records, 2002. CD.

Perkins, Pinetop. "Pinetop's Blues." *Portrait of a Delta Bluesman*. Blind Pig Records, 1993. CD.

Waters, Muddy. "Little Anna Mae." *Golden Greats: Greatest Blues*. Golden Greats Records, 2002. CD.

Waters, Muddy. "Mannish Boy." *The Story of the Blues*. Columbia/Legacy Records, 2003. CD.

great!

Works Cited

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Morrison, Toni. Sula. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973