



Their Eyes Were Watching God

by Zora Neale Hurston



LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES

Teacher's Guide

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A Perma-Bound Production

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Janie Crawford Woods, 40-year-old widow of a gambler and migrant worker, returns to Eatonville in Orange County, Florida, with her head high. Gossips question her overalls and attitude and speculate on Tea Cake, the younger man with whom she left town, and the money she inherited from her second husband. Pheoby Watson, her best friend for two decades, carries a plate of seasoned rice to Janie's house. Janie tells her story from 1897 to 1921.

Chapter 2

Deserted by Leafy, her mother, and never acquainted with her father, Janie lives with a maternal grandmother, "Nanny," on the property of her employers in West Florida. Janie is not aware she is black until age six. After Johnny Taylor kisses her, Nanny urges her to marry Brother Logan Killicks. As the concubine of Marse Robert, Nanny recalls the last time he made her let her hair down in 1863, just before riding off with other planters to avenge the death of their sons at the battle of Chickamauga. Mistis, angered that her husband frequented a slave cabin, struck Nanny because her child had a white father and threatened to have the overseer whip Nanny and sell the child. Because of her threats, Nanny ran away with her baby. After the war, she migrated to West Florida. Her devotion did not protect the 17-year-old from rape by her teacher. Trauma triggered rebellion in Leafy, who drank and caroused. After she departed, Nanny worked her small piece of land and raised Janie.

Chapter 3

Two and a half months after marrying Logan, Janie returns to her grandmother to ask why she feels no love for him. Nanny reminds her she has a home with Logan. Janie counters that Logan comes to bed with dirty feet. A month later, Nanny dies. Janie continues to pine for love.

Chapter 4

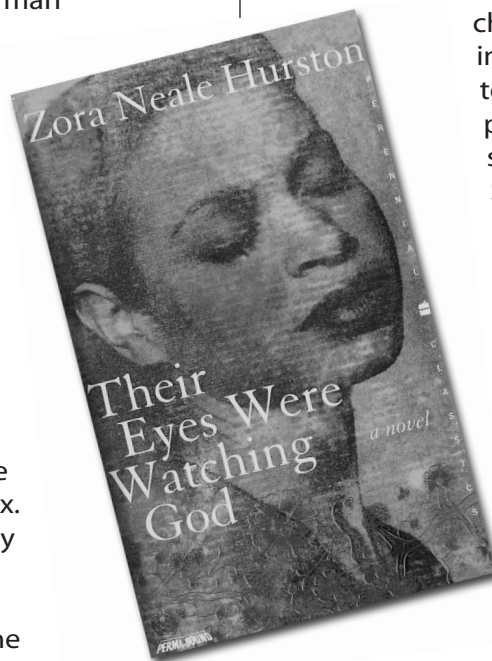
Before Logan and Janie's first anniversary, he stops chopping wood. Janie refuses to chop it. He blames Nanny for spoiling Janie and sets out for Lake City to buy a gentle mule so she can plow. While preparing potatoes for spring planting, she hears Joe Starks whistling down the road. To gain his attention, she jerks the pump handle and shakes her hair.

Starks informs Janie that a group of black people are establishing a town. He is disturbed that she must work so hard. For two weeks, the two meet in the scrub oaks. Logan accuses Janie of being too independent. She implies that she might leave him. The next morning, he orders her to move a manure pile. She refuses to leave the kitchen. She hurries south

toward Joe. They travel to Green Cove Springs for their wedding and stay at a boarding house for their honeymoon.

Chapter 5

Departing for Maitland the next day, Janie and Joe reach the black town of Eatonville. He calls a meeting and forms a committee, then rents a house and buys two hundred acres. Before building a permanent residence, he establishes a store to serve as a community center. With Tony Taylor as chairman, Joe superintends the building of a crossroads. Six weeks later, ten families move to Eatonville. To ennoble herself, Janie dresses in red silk. Tony nominates Joe for mayor and Janie for Mrs. Mayor. Joe retorts that she is a housewife.



While Joe tends to politics, he leaves Janie to watch the store. Because Joe uses her as a trophy wife, she feels lonely. He embellishes his two-story house. Citizens grow jealous, but they acknowledge that he boosts the town's spirit. As he grows more self-important, he denigrates Janie. She represses her anger.

Chapter 6

Community members tease Matt Bonner, a tight-fisted owner of a 23-year-old mule. Janie loves to take part and despises duties in the store and post office. She hates wearing a head-rag, the symbol of Joe's tyranny. One evening the mule-baiting gets out of hand. Janie makes a small speech comparing Joe to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. When the mule dies, the community joins in a dragging-out party. Joe leaves Janie out of the fun.

One night, Lum discovers that Janie has accepted a bill without checking in a keg. Joe humiliates her. The seven-year marriage founders when Joe slaps her. At age 24, she realizes that she still wants a man who will appreciate her. Because she defends abused women, Joe accuses her of being mouthy.

Chapter 7

At 35, Janie grows more resentful of Joe, who is fat and ungainly. She defies him for insulting her and denigrates his manhood. He strikes her and forces her out of the store.

Chapter 8

By their 20th year of marriage, husband and wife sleep in separate rooms. Joe's kidneys cease functioning; he hires a woman to cook for him. Janie says he is going to die and blames him for forcing her to act the part of the mayor's wife. He wishes that lightning would strike her. He dies in agony. Before announcing the death to the community, she loosens her hair.

Chapter 9

Beneath a widow's veil, Janie conceals her resurrection. She returns to tending the store and refuses all suitors. Pheoby insists that Janie hide her exhilaration at being free of Joe.

Chapter 10

While the community attends a baseball game in Winter Park, Janie meets Vergible "Tea Cake"

Woods, an Orlando man. He teaches her to play checkers and walks her home.

Chapter 11

Before Tea Cake returns a week later, Janie concludes that he is too young for her. He takes her to Lake Sabelia to fish all night. The next night, he returns, plays the piano and sings, then combs her hair. He professes his love. He arrives on Saturday driving a battered car and invites her to the Sunday School picnic.

Chapter 12

The town is irate that Mrs. Mayor Starks quit attending church and is sparking a drifter only nine months after her husband's death. Citizens condemn her behavior. They predict that Tea Cake will squander her money. Janie announces plans to sell the store and marry.

Chapter 13

With the promise of a railroad job in Jacksonville, Tea Cake comes for Janie. They marry and move into his rented room. While she sleeps, Tea Cake takes the \$200 she pins to her shirt to put on a supper for friends. He explains that his friends are too common for her. Janie confesses that she has \$1200 in the bank. He returns the \$200 he took from her and prepares to move to "the muck," the area around Clewiston and Belle Glade in the Everglades.

Chapter 14

On Lake Okechobee, Tea Cake works bean fields, gambles, and plays his guitar. He teaches Janie to shoot so they can hunt alligators and sell the hides and teeth. Out of jealousy, he spies on Janie. She earns the community's respect for living like a field hand and entertaining friends at their house.

Chapter 15

Janie also suffers jealousy from the flirtation between Tea Cake and Nunkie. Janie confronts him. Their tussle ends with lovemaking.

Chapter 16

At the end of bean season, Tea Cake and Janie stay at the shack as other migrants move on. She meets Mrs. Turner, a snob who prefers light skin to dark. Tea Cake and Janie ignore her and enjoy trips to Palm Beach, Fort Myers, and Fort Lauderdale.

Chapter 17

After Janie meets Mrs. Turner’s brother, Tea Cake whips his wife to demonstrate how men should dominate their wives and starts a free-for-all at Mrs. Turner’s eating house to drive her back to Miami.

Chapter 18

Seminoles warn that a hurricane is coming. Janie and Tea Cake continue frolicking with Bahamian laborers. Too late, he tries to locate a car to escape the overflowing lake. They leave Motor Boat in their house and run and swim to a bridge. Tea Cake battles a mad dog with his switch blade. The couple reach Palm Beach the next day and sleep in makeshift quarters.

Chapter 19

Two days later, white men force Tea Cake to assist a Red Cross burial detail. He escapes with Janie and returns to their shack, where Motor Boat slept out the storm. Four weeks later, Tea Cake becomes ill with rabies. Crazy with disease, he hides a pistol under his pillow and he snarls at Janie. Because she sleeps alone, he deduces she is unfaithful. He fires at her; she fells him with her rifle. She faces a trial for murder. The jury declares the incident accidental and justifiable. She buries her husband in Palm Beach and wears overalls to the funeral.

Chapter 20

Janie is too lost without her husband to remain. She returns to Eatonville to pour out the story to Pheoby. Janie concludes that she owes no one an explanation of her life. At peace in her house, she lives alone with memories.

Character Genealogy

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Mistis=Marse Robert=/=Nanny Crawford
    | Washburn      |
Robert's son  Leafy Crawford=/=school teacher
killed at    b. 1863      | rapist
Chickamauga          |
September 18,  Janie Mae Crawford
1863              b. 1881
                  m. age 16 =Logan Killicks=first wife
                  m. age 17 =Joe "Jody" Starks
                  m. age 39 =Vergible "Tea Cake" Woods
    
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Timeline of Fictional and Historical Events

- September 19, 1863** The Battle of Chickamauga begins.
- September 4, 1864** Sherman captures Atlanta.
- 1881** *Leafy Crawford gives birth to Janie.*
- 1887** *Janie Crawford realizes that she is black.* Eatonville, Florida, is incorporated.
- January 7, 1891** Zora Neale Hurston born in Notasulga, Alabama.
- 1897** *Janie ponders the sweetness of romance before marrying Logan Killicks.*
- 1898** *After deserting Logan, Janie marries 27-year-old Joe Starks and lives in Eatonville, Florida.*
- 1899** Anthropologist Franz Boas begins teaching at Columbia University.
- 1905** *Jody slaps Janie.*
- 1916** *Janie notices that Joe's health is failing.*
- 1918** *After Janie sasses Joe for bragging, he strikes her and forces her out of their store.* Hurston graduates from Morgan Academy in Baltimore, Maryland.
- August 26, 1919** Women receive the right to vote.
- 1920s** The Harlem Renaissance dominates American black literature.
- ca. 1920** *Janie is sleeping alone when Jody dies.*
- a month later** *Men begin courting Janie's favor.*
- two months after Joe's death** *Ike Green advises Janie about remarrying.*
- six months after Joe's death** *Janie begins visiting and fishing with Pheoby.*

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age 40	<i>Janie encounters Vergible "Tea Cake" Woods.</i>
nine months after Joe's death	<i>Janie sells the store and marries Tea Cake.</i>
two weeks later	<i>Tea Cake takes Janie's cash and holds a chicken and macaroni supper for railroad hands.</i>
that night	<i>Tea Cake wins Janie's money back, but is knifed in a fight.</i>
next day	<i>The couple moves to Okechobee.</i>
end of bean season	<i>Tea Cake whips Janie to establish himself as man of the house.</i>
October 1921	<i>Seminoles warn Janie of an approaching hurricane.</i>
October 25, 1921	<i>A severe hurricane kills eight as it sweeps across Florida.</i>
later	<i>As laborers struggle through high wind and water, a rabid dog bites Tea Cake.</i>
next day	<i>Tea Cake and Janie arrive in Palm Beach.</i>
two days later	<i>Workers ask Tea Cake to help bury corpses for the Red Cross.</i>
immediately	<i>Janie and Tea Cake return to the Everglades.</i>
a month later	<i>When Tea Cake develops rabies, Dr. Simmons concludes that it is too late to save him.</i>
that night	<i>Tea Cake snarls at Janie.</i>
next day	<i>Janie goes to jail for shooting Tea Cake.</i>
three hours later	<i>The court sets Janie free.</i>
later	<i>Janie buries Tea Cake in a vault at Palm Beach.</i>
a few weeks	<i>Janie remains among friends.</i>
later	<i>She returns to Eatonville and cherishes happy memories.</i>

1926	Hurston wins a fiction award from <i>Opportunity</i> magazine.
1937	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> is a Book-of-the-Month Club featured selection.
1942	Hurston wins the Anisfield-Wolf Award.
February 1943	Hurston is featured on the cover of <i>Saturday Review</i> .
January 28, 1960	Hurston dies of complications from a stroke in Fort Pierce, Florida.
1973	Alice Walker locates Hurston's unmarked grave.
1977	Robert Hemenway, Hurston's first biographer, publishes <i>Zora Neale Hurston</i> .
February 1991	<i>Mule Bone</i> is produced on Broadway.

Author Sketch

The daughter of a former teacher, Lucy Ann Potts and John Hurston, a Baptist minister and handyman, Zora Neale Hurston was born into a large family, the fifth of eight children, on January 7, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama. Within the first few years of her life, the family moved to the small community of Eatonville, Florida on Highway 4 a few miles north of Orlando, where she grew up in the nation's first incorporated black town. She absorbed the southern Florida lore, speech, and lifestyle that became her trademark. Her mother struggled to rear the children until her sudden death in 1904.



Hurston lost a sense of home after her father remarried. She joined an itinerant stage troupe as maid and wardrobe mistress. While the company performed in Baltimore, she enrolled at the Morgan Academy and graduated in 1918, working part time as a waitress and manicurist. She studied at Howard University over the next six years, learning from critic Alain Locke and poet Georgia

Douglas Johnson and publishing in *Forum*, *Messenger*, *The New Negro*, *Opportunity*, and *Stylus*, the university literary magazine. In 1921, she issued her first story, "John Redding Goes to Sea," followed with "Drenched in Light" (1924) and "The Eatonville Anthology" (1926).

Emulating the arty crowd, Hurston joined painters, sculptors, writers, and revolutionaries in Harlem, New York's black oasis. After she collaborated with Langston Hughes on the play *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life* (1930) and in the magazine *Fire!*, Hurston allegedly tried to reissue their play under her name alone with a new title, *De Turkey and De Law*. In 1926, she won a fiction award and scholarship to Barnard College, where she received a fellowship to research the *Clotilde*, the last slave ship to deliver Africans to the United States. She completed graduate studies at Columbia University.

Divorced from musician Herbert Sheen following a seven-month marriage, Hurston came under the influence of anthropologist Franz Boas, who suggested she research folklore in Eatonville. With a stipend from her patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, Hurston collected black lore of the early Depression era. She proved so adept at blending American, Caribbean, and African traditions that she produced a singular volume containing conversational lore, primitivism, voodoo, conjure plants and herbal medicine, games, and human sexuality, particularly the struggle of women against patriarchy. The completion of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* took place during a seven-week sojourn in Haiti.

At the end of the 1930s, Hurston married Albert Price III, with whom she worked for the WPA and the Federal Theater Project in Florida. At their breakup, she used a Rosenwald Fellowship to travel Louisiana, Haiti, the British West Indies, and Jamaica. She wrote novels and collected anecdotes, folkways, and songs about "kinfolks and skin folks." A 1942 winner of the Anisfield-Wolf Award for her autobiographical *Dust Tracks in the Road: An Autobiography*, she reviewed for the *New York Herald Tribune*. She was featured in the February 1943 *Saturday Review* cover story and published short pieces in *Saturday Evening Post*, *Negro Digest*, *Journal of American Folklore*, and *American Mercury*. Dwindling finances and poor health forced her to write for Paramount Pictures, a Cincinnati radio station, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *Encyclopedia Americana*. She taught drama at North Carolina Negro College and Bethune-Cookman

College, joined the staff as a librarian at Patrick Air Force Base, and worked as a housemaid in Rivo Alto, near Miami. On welfare at the Saint Lucie County Welfare Home in Fort Pierce, Florida, she died of diabetes, heart disease, and complications from a stroke on January 28, 1960, and was buried in an unmarked grave in the Garden of the Heavenly Rest cemetery.

Hurston and the Critics

In the 1970s, a resurgence of interest in black feminism brought renewed interest in Zora Neale Hurston. The University of Florida collected her papers; publishers reissued and anthologized her essays, griot lore and folk arcana, domestic fiction, drama, short stories, fool tales, work songs, children's rhymes, herbalism, sermons, aphorism, and autobiography. In 1973, novelist Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*, located Hurston's grave and honored it with an appropriate marker. Actor Ruby Dee recreated the author's zestful repartee in a PBS teleplay, *Zora Is My Name* (1990). In February 1991, sixty years after its composition, *Mule Bone* was produced at Lincoln Center in New York City. Other contemporary authors, particularly Toni Morrison and Terry McMillan, owe a debt to Hurston's authentic vernacular voice and its relentless examination of Southern-American lifestyles and styles of humor. Today, Hurston ranks among the nation's most significant folklorists and black authors.

Hurston's Published Works

- "John Redding Goes to Sea," story in *Stylus*, 1921
- "Drenched in Light," story in *Opportunity*, December 1924
- "Spunk," story in *The New Negro*, June 1925
- Color Struck*, play, 1926
- "Sweat," story in *Fire!*, November 1926
- "Muttsy," story in *Opportunity*, August 1926
- "Possum or Pig," story in *Forum*, September 1926
- "The Eatonville Anthology," story in *Messenger*, Fall 1926
- The First One*, play in *Ebony and Topaz*, 1927
- "Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slaver," article in *Journal of Negro History*, October 1927
- "How it Feels to Be Colored Me," article in *World Tomorrow*, May 1928
- Mule Bone*, play in collaboration with Langston Hughes, 1930
- "Hoodoo in America," article in *Journal of American Folklore*, 1931

Fast and Furious, revue, 1931
The Great Day, revue, 1932
"The Gilded Six Bits," story for *Story*, 1933
"The Fiery Chariot," story, 1933
Jonah's Gourd Vine, novel, 1934
"The Fire and the Cloud," story in *Challenge*,
September 1934
Singing Steel, play, 1934
Mules and Men, folklore, 1935
Their Eyes Were Watching God, novel, 1937
Tell My Horse, folklore, 1938
Moses, Man of the Mountain, novel, 1939
"Now Take Noses," story in *Cordially Yours*, 1939
"Cock Robin, Beale Street," story in *Southern Literary
Messenger*, July 1941
Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography, 1942
"Story in Harlem Slang," story in *American Mercury*, July 1942
"Lawrence Silas," profile in *Saturday Evening Post*,
September 5, 1942
"The Pet Negro Syndrome," essay in *American Mercury*,
May 1943
"My Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experiences," essay
in *Negro Digest*, June 1944
Mrs. Doctor, unpublished, 1945
"The Rise of the Begging Joints," article in *American
Mercury*, March 1945
"Crazy for This Democracy," article in *Negro Digest*,
December 1945
Seraph on the Suwanee, novel, 1948
"Conscience of the Court," article in *Saturday Evening
Post*, March 1950
"What White Publishers Won't Print," article in
Saturday Evening Post, April 1950
"I Saw Negro Votes Peddled," article in *American Legion*,
November 1950
"Why the Negro Won't Buy Communism," article in
American Legion, June 1941.
"A Negro Voter Sizes Up Taft," article in *Saturday Evening
Post*, December 8, 1951
"Hoodoo and Black Magic," column for *Fort Pierce
Chronicle*, 1957-1959
The Sanctified Church, posthumous nonfiction, 1981
Spunk: The Selected Short Stories of Zora Neale Hurston, posthu-
mous collection, 1985
Barracoon, 2004
The Six Fools, 2006
The Three Witches, 2006

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- Kaplan, Carla. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters*. New York: Anchor, 2003.
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- _____. *Zora Neale Hurston & American Literary Culture*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- Yannuzzi, Della A. *Zora Neale Hurston: Southern Storyteller*. Springfield, N. J.: Enslow Publishers, 1996.
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- "Zora Neale Hurston," <http://www.detroit.freenet.org/gdfn/sigs/l-corner-world/hurston/html>.

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Zora Neale Hurston's writing, present the following terms and applications:

Climax the height of an action, a crisis or turning point from which all behaviors or attitudes are permanently altered and nothing can ever be what it once was. In the worst moment of her life, Janie's frenzy at Tea Cake's illness forces her to shoot him to protect herself. The use of self-preservation as a climactic theme indicates Hurston's belief that women must stop being voluntary slaves like Nanny and respect themselves and their own needs.

Confessional Novel an extended narrative that serves a main character as a vehicle for unburdening or justifying actions. When Janie returns to Eatonville and reunites with Pheoby Watson, the revelation of three marriages and their toll on Janie expresses her inner yearnings. The text focuses on her buoyant self-regard, the quality that sustains her during the flood, Tea Cake's death, and the trial for murder. By justifying past actions, she intends to halt the malicious gossip that disturbs her peace in Eatonville and prevents her from living a free life as a citizen, rather than the trophy wife of the deceased mayor. Another aspect of confession is reframing for herself the events that have characterized her self-liberation.

Motif a pattern or predictable arrangement of elements to express an abstract theme in a story, as found in the overlapping stories of husbands and marriages. The concept of matrimony in Janie's life compromises her courage and self-determination in three households. Initial disappointment and revulsion at marriage to a dirty farmer and her distaste for the role of trophy wife for the Eatonville mayor depicts the types of marriage that demean and demoralize her. Although she lives humbly among working-class people in her third marriage, a relationship with Tea Cake suits her emotional needs more than either of the first two pairings. The give and take of their everyday existence satisfies them both and contributes to harmony and contentment.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about Zora Neale Hurston, black history and customs, emotional distress, hurricanes, the Caribbean, women's rights, women's literature, Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes, Lake Okechobee, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Audiocassettes

Stories of Courage, Barnell-Loft
Their Eyes Were Watching God, Caedmon

Books

The Atlas of Literature, De Agostini Editions
Disaster! Hurricanes, Frudin
Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature, Facts on File
Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, University of North Carolina
The Harlem Renaissance, Highsmith
The Harlem Renaissance, Millbrook Press
Historical and Cultural Atlas of African Americans, Macmillan
The History of Southern Literature, Louisiana State University Press
The Life of Langston Hughes, Oxford University Press
Okeechobee: A Modern Frontier, University of Florida Press
The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas, Penguin
Places and Peoples of the World: The Caribbean, Chelsea House
Self-Fulfillment, Guidance Associates
When Harlem Was in Vogue, Alfred A. Knopf
Writing About Family Roots, Interact

Disc Recording

Raisin, Columbia Records

Filmstrips

Between the Wars: 1915-1945, Thomas Klise
The Harlem Renaissance, Thomas Klise
Weather, A. W. Peller

Internet

Crisis, Grief, and Healing
<http://www.webhealing.com>
Eatonville
<http://www.flheritage.com/magazine/eatonville.html>
Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities, Eatonville, Florida
<http://longwood.cs.ucf.edu/~zora>

Posters

America in the Twentieth Century, Knowledge Unlimited

Science Kit

Thinking Things Through, A. W. Peller

Short Stories

"*Désirée's Baby*," Kate Chopin

"*The Revolt of 'Mother*,'" Mary Wilkins Freeman

Video

Band of Angels

Beloved

Charms for the Easy Life

Chocolat

The Color Purple

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Places in the Heart

Proud to Be Me

Ragtime

Zora

The Importance of Setting

The settings in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* carry Janie from childhood in the post-Civil War South into the beginnings of autonomy for blacks in an all-black city and to an agrarian society that bases its joy and self-expression on Caribbean rhythms and lore. In the backyard of whites, Janie grows up under the care of Nanny, a slave-era black worker and concubine whose long tenure with the Washburn family robs her of true membership in black society. After Janie realizes that she is black, she begins formulating realistic expectations for life and happiness apart from Nanny's wishes. The older woman's failure to arrange a marriage worthy of Janie's character precipitates two inappropriate households—the first with Logan Killicks, the dirty farmer, and the second with the ambitious mayor of Eatonville, whom she seizes on the rebound in flight from farming to an ideal relationship.

Jody rescues Janie from muck work, the moving of a manure pile in Logan's farmyard. After Jody and Janie flee to Eatonville (also called West Maitland), living in an all-black community frees Jody from white society and enables him to grow and progress as city planner and entrepreneur. Because he has no understanding of Janie's need to be free and no sensitivity toward her feelings, he treats her like the neighborhood mule that buckles under a life of ridicule and supplies front-porch jokers with a target for cruel banter. When Janie

enters widowhood, she conceals her emancipation under a veil for the funeral and burial. In the privacy of her own home, she makes a symbolic gesture to all who enslave her by freeing her hair, an emblem of womanhood and sexuality. To gossips who hope to suppress her into the Eatonville stereotype of widowhood, she turns her back on shallow folkways and searches from the heart for a man who will love her for herself. Their courtship on lake fishing jaunts and at the breakfast table typify Janie's simple needs and Tea Cake's willingness to please her.

On the muck at Lake Okechobee in south Florida, Janie and Tea Cake live a primal existence, like agrarian peasants of the Caribbean. They enjoy nature and the cycles of planting and harvesting beans and and shooting alligators for their skin and teeth. The couple escape occasionally to Florida's coastal cities—Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Palm Beach—to refresh themselves with urban entertainments. They consider traveling to Nassau. Janie's ability to thrive in extreme locales proves that she has rid herself of confining self-images that fail to accommodate mature ambitions. After Tea Cake's demise, she survives the court trial and returns to Eatonville, a refuge that she can reinhabit as a whole woman, satisfied in love and content with past experiences.

Related Reading

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*

Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth* and *The Woman*

Kate Chopin, "*Désirée's Baby*" and *The Awakening*

Rita Dove, *Thomas and Beulah*

Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*

Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes*

Mary Wilkins Freeman, "*The Revolt of 'Mother*"

Ernest Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*

Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster* and *A Virtuous Woman*

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Robert Harling, *Steel Magnolias*

Beth Henley, *Crimes of the Heart*

Sylvia Lopez-Medina, *Cantora*

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* and *Sula*

Marsha Norman, *'night Mother*

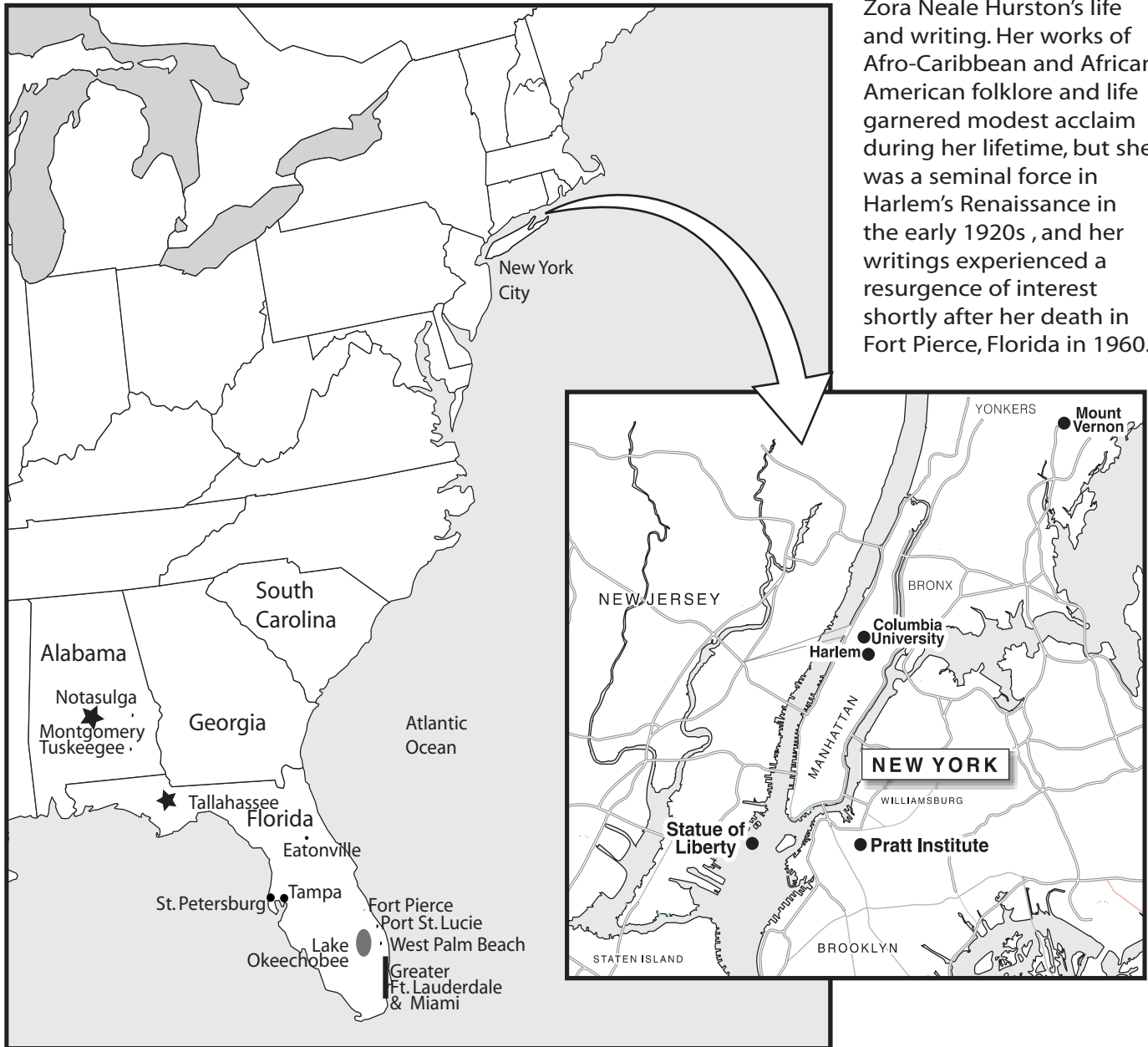
Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Margaret Walker, *Jubilee*

Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*

The all-black community of Eatonville, Florida shaped Zora Neale Hurston's life and writing. Her works of Afro-Caribbean and African American folklore and life garnered modest acclaim during her lifetime, but she was a seminal force in Harlem's Renaissance in the early 1920s, and her writings experienced a resurgence of interest shortly after her death in Fort Pierce, Florida in 1960.



Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* should include these aspects:

Themes

- slavery
- racism
- arranged marriage
- flight
- disappointment
- rebellion
- conflict

- friendship
- loss
- survival
- return to roots

Motifs

- fleeing a patriarchal marriage
- asserting self over a tyrannic husband
- joining a primitive culture
- righting old wrongs and resolving old griefs
- restoring self-esteem through action and memory

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are provided so that you can re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. She walked around the fence corner and went in the intimate gate with her heaping plate of mulatto rice. (Chapter 1, p. 4)
(Pheoby greets her friend Janie with a symbolic gift—a plate of blended plain and wild rice, known as “dirty rice” for its color. Mulatto implies a mix of white and black races, usually Caucasian and Negro. The blend produces a biracial person and provides a pejorative, racial slur, status symbol, or elitism, depending on the prevailing cultural appraisal of mixed blood people.)
2. The cooling palma christi leaves that Janie had bound about her grandma’s head with a white rag had wilted down and become part and parcel of the woman. (Chapter 2, p. 12)
(Janie applies a folk remedy for migraine headache, a poultice of the twelve-lobed leaf of the castor oil plant, a poisonous foliage shrub that yields an oil used in lamps, varnish, or household lubricants and soaps. In ancient Egypt it served embalmers as a preservative and was useful to healers as a purgative and skin balm. The term is a blend of Latin and Greek for “hand of Christ.”)
3. Then de big house and de quarters got sober and silent. (Chapter 2, p. 17)
(After the master returns to the slaves’ living area on the plantation for one last sexual union with Nanny, his black concubine, the others grow quiet by halting their rejoicing over imminent liberation. The quarters are located near the “big house,” barn, paddock, and kitchen gardens to allow white owners constant surveillance and discipline of blacks and easy access to house slaves.)
4. You don’t take nothin’ to count but sow-belly and cornbread. (Chapter 4, p. 30)
(In reply to Logan’s insult of her family, Janie retorts that he reduces everything to the value of cornbread and sow belly, a form of salt pork or cheap bacon that Southern cooks use to season cooked vegetables, make redeye or sawmill gravy, or fry to fill a biscuit.)
5. This business of the head-rag irked her endlessly. (Chapter 6, p. 55)
(Janie wears a scarf to tie up her hair, a symbol of free-flowing sensuality. The covering is not to keep it from falling into food or to protect it for cleaning, rather, “[because] Jody was set on it.

Her hair was NOT going to show in the store.” He carefully conceals that he doesn’t want her hair loose because he is jealous of admiring men she sees daily in her job as clerk.)

6. He had always been scornful of root-doctors and all their kind, but now she saw a faker from over around Altamonte Springs, hanging around the place almost daily. (Chapter 8, pp. 81-82)
(As kidney failure takes over Jody’s health, he summons an herbalist who is a healer or practitioner of naturopathy, gris-gris, voodoo, obeah, or home remedies. To Janie, he’s a huckster selling fraudulent nostrums for a disease that will inevitably kill Jody.)
7. Cut uh piece uh dat oilcloth quick fuh our papers. We got tuh go, if ain’t too late. (Chapter 18, p. 160)
(Janie cuts a common cotton, oilskin, or flannel fabric. Found in dime stores, it is coated with wax, oil, clay, pigment, paint, silicone, or resin to waterproof it for use in shelf liner, curtains and table linens, hats, raincoats, and raingear for sailors and fishermen.)
8. A large piece of tar-paper roofing sailed through the air and scudded along the fill until it hung against a tree. Janie saw it with joy. That was the very thing to cover Tea Cake with. (Chapter 18, p. 165)
(Janie seizes a loose piece of heavy paper coated in tar and used to waterproof outside walls and roofs. Invented in the 1890s as a cheap covering of plank buildings to keep out wind and weather, it developed into a pejorative term for the residences of people too poor to afford shingles, siding, brick, and stone.)
9. He had to die uh me one. Mah switch-blade said it wuz him. (Chapter 18, p. 167)
(Tea Cake relies on his spring-loaded pocketknife, an invention of the 1930s that snaps open at the touch of a button or catch in the handle. The term names a weapon used in gang fights or stabbing. It is often barred from public entertainments, gatherings, and restaurants as a dangerous concealed weapon. The scene prefigures Janie’s quick action in shooting Tea Cake to prohibit him from murdering her.)
10. Plenty quick-lime on hand to throw over the bodies as soon as they were received. They had already been unburied too long. (Chapter 19, p. 170)
(After the flood, Red Cross workers sprinkle calcium oxide, sold as unslaked lime, a white caustic substance used in mixing mortar and in the making of cement, glass, brick, and aluminum. It is a practical covering of carrion or human waste to conceal odor, hasten decomposition, and discourage insects, which spread disease.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the novel.

Motivation

1. Describe Nanny's difficulty rearing a granddaughter.

(Leafy's humiliation and death disappoint Nanny, the former slave who hoped Leafy's daughter, Janie Mae Crawford, would rise above plantation upbringing and bring honor and prestige to a demoralized family. After Leafy's rape by the school teacher and her loss of reputation, Nanny devotes herself to Janie, the abandoned baby who results from Leafy's downfall. Nanny is poor and must work to support the two of them. When she spies Janie kissing Johnny Taylor, she relives the public dishonor of Leafy's past and hurries to pledge Janie to a willing husband to protect her from producing another generation of illegitimate children.

The initial discussion does not go well. Rising from her sickbed, Nanny commands, "Look at me, Janie. Don't set dere wid yo' head hung down. Look at yo' ole grandma!" She declares she has been praying "to mah Maker" to spare her heavy emotional burdens. When Janie rejects Logan Killicks as a potential husband, Nanny asks, "You wants to make me suck de same sorrow yo' mama did, eh? Mah ole head ain't gray enough. Mah back ain't bowed enough to suit yuh!" Janie's refusal and pouting cause Nanny to slap, then caress her, "suffering and loving and weeping internally for both of them.")

Character Response

2. How does Janie respond to Joe Starks?

(Janie Mae Crawford Killicks suffers the "cosmic loneliness of the unmated" when she encounters the whistle of Joe, a "cityfied, stylish dressed man with his hat set at an angle that didn't belong in these parts." Realizing that Joe is a different breed from the rural men she has known, Janie examines his silk sleeveholders and seal-brown color before yanking the pump handle and flinging her hair to draw attention to herself. His knowledge of "a town all outa colored folks" intrigues her, but his defense of a woman forced to plow and perform heavy farm labor endears Joe to her as a savior, a refuge from Logan Killicks' dirty feet and snide insinuations about her family. In daily meetings in the scrub oaks, she "pulls back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon." The contrast to Logan is enough to make Janie toss her apron into the bushes and begin a new life with Joe.)

Plot

3. Summarize the last moments of Janie's marriage to Mayor Starks.

(As Jody Starks succumbs to kidney failure, he makes "a deep-growling sound like a hog dying down in the swamp and trying to drive off disturbance." Janie, realizing his nearness to death, relents in her anger and tries to make up. She confesses to being a poor wife, but he interrupts the confession with virulent blame for "holdin' me up tuh scorn," the public humiliation that demeaned him before the community of Eatonville. His rejection of her conciliatory gesture forces her to refer to his declining health. "His eyes buckled in vacant-mouthed terror and she saw the awful surprise in his face and answered it.")

Unable to offer more compassion to a harsh tyrant, Janie asserts, "You done lived wid me for twenty years and you don't half know me atall." She accuses him of admiring his accomplishments and "cuffin' folks around in their minds till you didn't see uh whole heap uh things yuh could have." The discussion is one-sided as Jody sinks into realization that death is near. As she presses her case for liberation, he calls down thunder and lightning to kill her. At his death, she composes his hands on his chest and ponders how "life had mishandled him too.")

Theme

4. What is Janie's reaction to widowhood?

(Freed from Jody without having to run away a second time with another man, Janie realizes that there might be another way of living, but "what that other way could be, she had no idea." Liberation through widowhood and inheritance of property and a sizeable bankroll is a new feeling. She stares at her reflection in the mirror and sees the full womanhood that has replaced dewy youth. Immediately, she rips away the offensive, enslaving head scarf and lets down her hair, the physical characteristic that first drew Jody to her.

Although Jody's death is an unforeseen end to bondage, Janie puts on the face of mayor's wife long enough to call in neighbors and report, "Jody is dead. Mah husband is gone from me." Following a fine funeral with motor hearse, Cadillac and Buick carriages, Dr. Henderson in full regalia, and the Elks band at the church portal playing "Safe in the arms of Jesus," Janie veils herself and "[sends] her face to Joe's funeral" while her heart floats free.)

Resolution

5. How does Janie survive a second widowhood?

(The loss of Tea Cake is a heavy grief compounded by a court trial. When Janie obtains exoneration from the court and leads the procession in her husband's grand funeral, she wears no fake expression to show a terrible loss. Returned to Eatonville, she realizes that she has "been tuh de horizon and back and . . . kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons." The serenity of

living on ample cash in the mayor's grand house free of male bondage restores her determination to fulfill personal ambition. With a new-found appreciation of experience, she concludes, "Love is lak de sea. It's uh movin' thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it's different with every shore."

Emancipation buoys Janie and Pheoby, who "[grows] ten feet higher from jus' listenin'" to Janie's narration. The silence that completes the story allows them to listen to a clean sound—wind in the pines. When Pheoby leaves, Janie locks the door and retreats to her room, the lamp forcing her shadow "back and headlong down the stairs" as though dispelling the harsh memories that once bound her to a debilitating lifestyle. Memory replaces grief as Janie reaches out for peace. She pulls it toward her like a fishing net, wraps it around her shoulders, and sinks into joy.)

Conflict

6. Why does Janie kill Tea Cake?

(The arrival of Dr. Simmons reveals a sickness worse than the hurricane that uproots people and animals from Lake Okechobee. The fatal symptom—inability to swallow water—fills Janie with dread. The doctor gives her pellets to dose Tea Cake, but extends little hope that her husband can recover from the bite of a rabid dog. She refuses the idea of putting him in a county hospital to die in bondage and accepts responsibility for caring for him herself.

After supplicating heaven for a sign, Janie returns to Tea Cake's hard eyes and his collapse on the floor by the bucket of water he can no longer abide. She hurries to question Dr. Simmons in private, then returns to Tea Cake to find him suspicious of her departure. When her hands touch the pistol under the pillow, she realizes that Tea Cake's addled mind can twist him from loving, needy husband to attacker. In fear of the loaded six shooter, she removes the first three shots from the chamber to give her warning. When the "fiend in him" forces Tea Cake to fire, she fires almost simultaneously with her rifle.)

Atmosphere

7. How does the trial test Janie?

(The trial takes place three hours after Janie's arraignment for murdering her husband. She faces "twelve strange men who didn't know a thing about people like Tea Cake and her." In the rear of the courtroom, black onlookers "packed tight like a case of celery, only much darker than that," cast their dark eyes against her. She feels pelted with malevolent thoughts, "their tongues cocked and loaded." They conclude that she is a frivolous, faithless wife who found another man as soon as Tea Cake took sick from the storm.

Dr. Simmons' testimony expresses the danger that Janie and the whole town risked by having a rabid man slowly dying in the agony of fever and hallucination. He explains that Janie was

bitten on the arm, but sat on the floor "petting Tea Cake's head." When Janie testifies, she tells the whole story of their courtship and love. Her simple, straightforward narration silences judge, lawyer, and onlookers. Within five minutes, the jury is unanimous in declaring the shooting "entirely accidental and justifiable.")

Gendered Motif

8. How does Janie depart in triumph from her old friends?

(When the trial concludes and Janie walks free, white women defend her as "Negroes, with heads hung down, shuffled out and away." At sunset, Janie thanks her "kind white friends" and, with no thought to gossip or danger, spends the night at the boarding house. As evil rumblings from the men downstairs rises to her ears, she makes no move to counter their belief that "uh white man and uh nigger woman is de freest thing on earth. Dey do as dey please.")

Janie returns to Tea Cake, burying him in West Palm Beach in a vault that would protect him from the "Glades and its waters [that] had killed him." With money wired from Orlando, she demanded a handsome job from the undertaker and a silken couch decked with roses for Tea Cake's burial. With understanding, she forgives the men who reviled her and accepts them at the funeral "with shame and apology in their faces." Unlike her performance at Jody's funeral, her second widowhood reveals a loving widow welcoming friends in ten sedans and a band escorting Tea Cake "like a Pharaoh to his tomb." Too busy grieving to wear a vain face and formal funeral clothes, she takes her place dressed in overalls.)

Comparative Literature

9. What does Zora Neale Hurston bring to the American novel?

(Hailed four decades after its publication as the first feminist novel of the twentieth century, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has earned a place among the best American fiction alongside John Steinbeck's novels of displaced migrant workers and the dialect classics of black American literature. An outgrowth of Hurston's study of black idiom, gesture, mores, and thought patterns, the novel enthrones one of fiction's most compelling heroines, Janie Mae Crawford Woods, liberated woman. Told as a framework confession, the story begins at the end as Janie confides to friend Pheoby a lengthy marital odyssey.

Like Richard Wright, who was shuttled among insensitive relatives, Zora Neale Hurston came of age in a troubled, motherless family. Her writing reveals a compassion for suffering that comes of personal understanding. Like Janie, Hurston allows experience to filter events, gentling her spirit and enabling her to tell a hard-pressed woman's story with a flow and grace that couples pain with joy, hardship with reward.)

Feminist History

10. Why is Hurston a significant figure decades after her achievements as anthropologist and novelist?

(Like many prominent women of the 1920s, Zora Neale Hurston—famed anthropologist, essayist, folklorist, novelist, dramatist, autobiographer, and short fiction writer—lived a life of limited notoriety and influence, except in her immediate area in Harlem or among Columbia’s scholars. After her death, she, like Margaret Sanger, Dorothy Day, Lillian Wald, and Emma Goldman, lent long-dead voices to issues such as black pride, self-actualization and equal rights for women, labor issues, and cultural diversity. After Alice Walker restored Hurston to her place among the Harlem Renaissance greats, late twentieth-century audiences re-evaluated her work in light of civil rights and feminism and concluded that Hurston was a champion of womanhood far ahead of her time.)

How Language Works

Zora Neale Hurston gives her characters opportunities to express wisdom. For example:

1. Nanny instructs Janie on the tenuous nature of black families: “Us colored folks is branches without roots.”
2. To Jody, the mayor’s wife must “look on herself as the bell-cow,” his image of a fashion-conscious trophy wife.
3. To the mule baiting in front of the store, Janie believes, “People ought to have some regard for helpless things,” a subtextual reference to her own dilemma as Jody’s wife.
4. On the possibilities of his future, the ebullient Tea Cake remarks, “Ah’m born but Ah ain’t dead.”

Across the Curriculum

Composition

1. Compose a short segment in which you become a peripheral character in the novel. Consider taking the role of minister, boss over migrant workers, seller of Sears Roebuck streetlamps, shopper in Mayor Starks’ store, seller of a mule to Logan Killicks, Leafy’s pal, Red Cross disaster relief supervisor, court judge, boarding house owner, owner of a rabid dog, vault maker, or pawn shop keeper.

2. Compose a character sketch emphasizing the relationship of race and self-esteem of Tea Cake, Leafy, Mrs. Turner, Logan Killicks, Nanny, Robert’s son, Motor Boat, Sop-de-Bottom, Nunkie, Seminoles, and Janie. Discuss differences among light- and dark-skinned peoples.
3. Compose a first person account of life in the Jim Crow South during Zora Neale Hurston’s childhood. Explain why she chose to study and develop her talents in Harlem rather than southern Florida. Account for the return to the South and Caribbean settings for much of her anthropological research.
4. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character, such as Mrs. Turner’s brother, Matt Bonner, Mistis, Robert’s son, Leafy’s school teacher, Motor Boat, Dr. Simmons, Hezekiah, Sop-de-Bottom, Ike Green, and the Red Cross workers.
5. Compose the text of a television documentary on African-American women who demanded equal rights from black men who wanted to keep them enslaved.

Drama

1. Write several conversations that are only implied, such as Motor Boat’s reunion with Tea Cake and their plans to go to Nassau, Robert’s son’s Civil War experiences as told to Mrs. Washburn, neighborhood gossip about Leafy’s wild behavior, Tea Cake’s confrontation with Mrs. Turner’s brother, Mayor Starks’ plans to buy a streetlamp, Hezekiah’s concern for his employer, Dr. Simmons’ court testimony, and Matt Bonner’s quarrels with townspeople over the mule’s death. Act out your dialogue for an audio or video taping.
2. Role-play the arrival of Joe Starks and Janie in Eatonville. Indicate the most serious needs of the community, including organization, land, leadership, drainage, lighting, commerce, and a community center.
3. Join a group in pantomiming scenes in which Janie’s hair is a central issue, such as her display of loose hair to Joe, her distaste for head-rags, which she burns when Joe dies, and her return to Eatonville as a widow in overalls with free-flowing hair.

Mathematics and Computers

1. Using several types of graphs, illustrate Red Cross figures on human and property loss in the October 1921 hurricane.
2. Create a bulletin board illustrating current census figures concerning the racial makeup of the United States and of migrant workers in particular. Highlight a map with graphs and data indicating what parts of the nation are the most racially diverse. Note the percentage of nonwhite peoples in Florida, Georgia, and the Caribbean.
3. Using a computer genealogy program, draw a family tree connecting Marse Robert and Nanny with Leafy, Janie, and Janey's three husbands. Include approximate dates.

Psychology and Mental Health

1. Explain to a small group what survival techniques give black mothers like Nanny the strength to face loss, family disunity, shame, gossip, and disappointment. Discuss why other characters, such as Leafy, Matt Bonner, Mrs. Turner and her husband and brother, Logan Killicks, Joe Starks, Ike Green, and Annie Tyler fail to earn the reader's admiration.
2. Discuss with a group the necessity for mutual respect in marriage. Explain how Joe violates this principle by setting Janie above her neighbors and, in private, treating her like a hireling.
3. Characterize in a theme Janie's development from teenage innocent to disillusioned wife, to runaway lover, to Mayor's wife, to widow, to Tea Cake's girlfriend, and finally to self-fulfilled widow.
4. Explain in a theme how the author characterizes Janie's moments of despair, gaiety, self-evaluation, daring, romance, fear, distrust, grief, loneliness, determination, confession, defiance, joy, and insecurity.

Music

1. Listen to recordings of works by Zora Neale's Hurston's contemporaries, particularly Jessie Redmon Fauset, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Claude McKay, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and

Sterling Brown. Determine how these writers expressed the influence of music, dialect, and rhythms of Caribbean and African peasants.

Literature

1. Draw a character web representing the interconnectedness of residents and animals on the muck. Include Seminoles, Bahamians, the boss, Dr. Simmons, the Turners, Janie and Tea Cake Woods, Motor Boat, the dog and cow, and other migrant laborers.
2. Apply three Greek terms to the play: *philos*, or belonging to or acceptance by a group or family; *eros*, or passion, and; *agape* or unconditional love and acceptance. Discuss how failure to achieve any of these three states produces tension and disappointment in human relationships, as demonstrated by Janie's exclusion from the front porch conversation, Pheoby's friendship, and Tea Cake's devotion.
3. Read aloud other black authors' descriptions of black community life, such as Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, William Armstrong's *Sounder*, Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*, Ernest Gaines' *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, or Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* or *Beloved*.
4. Organize a discussion of folklore. Explain why anthropologists value tall tales, songs, riddles, jokes and pranks, aphorism, hymns and spirituals, idiom, gossip, religious chant, and myths as indicators of human themes. List examples of folkways from your area either in the past or present.
5. Contrast the types of love offered by Nanny, Pheoby, and Tea Cake. Discuss with a small group what Janie learns from each of them. What does she lack from Leafy Crawford, Logan Killicks, and Jody Starks?
6. Divide the class into small groups to study background elements of the story, particularly Jim Crow laws, migrant work in the Everglades, Seminoles on Lake Okechobee, Bahamian music and dance, Eatonville, alligator hunting, disaster relief, burial practices for blacks and whites, and laws prohibiting bigamy.

Language

1. List and explain vocabulary terms that express important concepts, such as Jim Crow, quadroon, jive, jook, bill of lading, submission, head-rag, percale, zigaboos, the muck, chunky, quick-lime, switch blade, booger man, peart, class off, cut caper, root doctor, rabies, palma christi, oilcloth, Saws, mulatto rice, Keys to de Kingdom, hummock, bailiff, accidental and justifiable, cut-eye look, chasten, reconciled, quarters, big house, Bahamans, Seminoles, and sick headache.

Cinema

1. View the films *The Color Purple*, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, *Chocolat*, *Band of Angels*, *The Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *Charms for the Easy Life*, *The House of the Spirits*, *Daughters of the Dust*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Heat and Dust*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Beloved*, and *Places in the Heart*. Discuss why women need opportunities to actualize talents and aspirations.
2. Determine how a film director would describe setting, atmosphere, mood, tone, theme, and characters for the hurricane scenes on the muck. Name current actors who would play the parts of Dr. Simmons, laborers, Mrs. Turner, Nunkie, and Janie.

Social Studies and Geography

1. Make a time line of the writers, movements, events, and works of the 1910s-1920s that influenced Zora Neale Hurston, particularly the vote, women's rights, the Harlem Renaissance, World War I, Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, anti-war speeches of Emma Goldman, and the labor movement.
2. Explain briefly how anthropologists conduct research on folk cultures. Why did Franz Boas advise Zora Neale Hurston to study her own people, even though most researchers chose foreign cultures as a focus in order to remain objective?
3. Using incidents from the book, determine how migrant workers cope with rootlessness, money problems, medical emergencies, community unrest, gossip, jealousy, danger, and boredom.

4. Compose an extended definition of community. Determine the major differences between Eatonville and the plantation or the muck.

Art

1. Create a bulletin board contrasting these settings: Nanny's house, the manure pile on Logan Killicks' acreage by the side of the road, pear tree, Eatonville's store and post office, Mayor Starks' house, boarding house in Jacksonville, shack on the muck, dike on Lake Okechobee, room at Palm Beach, the muck after the hurricane, courtroom, fishing at the lake, and Tea Cake's vault in Palm Beach.
2. Design a business card for Dr. Simmons or Mayor Starks, a welcome sign for Eatonville, a train schedule for the route from Jacksonville to Maitland, a placard naming hours for Jody's store and post deliveries, hiring practices of the Red Cross, headstones for white and black victims of the hurricane, and a newspaper headline and article on Sherman's capture of Atlanta and the battle of Chickamauga.
3. Draw a wrap-around book jacket, web site, or poster stressing a colorful scene from the novel, such as Tea Cake's fight with the rabid dog, the lighting of the Eatonville streetlamp, the freeing of Matt Bonner's mule, the departure of animals from the swamp, the marriage of Tea Cake and Janie, Janie's arrival at the Jacksonville railroad station, and Janie kissing Johnny Taylor.
4. Suggest a memorial to honor Tea Cake. Include his love of music, checkers, food, fishing, dance, and friendship.

Law

1. Lead a debate about whether Janie, Joe, and Tea Cake should be prosecuted for bigamy. List the usual punishment in Florida during the early 20th century. Discuss whether ignorance justifies the crime.
2. Discuss your response toward the strain of Janie's trial. Explain why Tea Cake's friends are reluctant to support her until the jury clears her of culpability. Characterize the release Janie feels in telling her story to Pheoby Watson.

Economics

1. Compose an informal essay on the value of self above money. Describe occasions when Janie ignores monetary security in order to free her spirit from oppression, lovelessness, and despair.
2. Describe in a short speech the effect of money, prestige, and power on Joe Starks and Janie. Explain why a rise in class elevates the mayor and imprisons the mayor's wife.

Speech

1. Compose a short speech in which you describe how Janie represses her need to be loved and appreciated. Explain how biracial birth, illegitimacy, denigration, gossip, physical abuse, longing, spite, and isolation affect human relationships.
2. Make an oral report on the importance of pride. Discuss ways in which Janie might have altered her life if she had been born fifty years later and received educational and career opportunities.
3. Describe aloud the change that takes place in Janie from age six to her fortieth year. Note how she earns peace of mind by determining her own goals, taking risks, rebelling against gendered codes of behavior, reflecting, and evaluating experiences.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of suffering and violence in the lives of the characters, for example, Tea Cake's discipline of his wife, a hurricane on Lake Okechobee, Jody's kidney disorder, the knifing of Tea Cake, an attack by a rabid dog, the death of Matt Bonner's 23-year-old mule, burial of hurricane victims, a fight on Mrs. Turner's property, Jody's slapping of his wife, Tea Cake's gun pointed at Janie, and Janie's murder of Tea Cake.
2. Compile a list of actions and statements that demonstrate Janie's disillusion with romance and marriage. Include Logan Killicks' dirty feet in bed, Jody Starks' trophy wife dressed in red silk, the obligatory head rags, and the slap that ends Janie's love for Jody.
3. Compose a scene in which citizens of Eatonville welcome Janie home from the muck and inquire about her third marriage. Include Hezekiah, Ike Green, Pheoby Watson, and Matt Bonner. Indicate which neighbors disapprove of Janie's lack of respect for Jody and of her marriage to a younger man.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each, including: Jody's tyranny, Janie's belief in romance, Jody's theft of \$200, Leafy's lack of motherly love, Mistic's threat to have a slave whipped and her infant sold, Robert's sexual exploitation of a female slave, Mrs. Turner's racial snobbery, and Dr. Simmons' blunt prediction of Jody's death from kidney disease.
5. Account for a blend of hardship and joy in Janie's life on the muck.

Vocabulary

Fill in each blank in the sentences that follow with an appropriate synonym for the words in bold from the list below. Place your answer in the blank provided. You will have answers left over when you finish:

baiting, beglamored, beseeching, Caucasian, chasten, consolation, coquetry, decorum, desecrators, diffused, divinity, elude, eulogy, groveling, helm, homage, hyperbole, indiscriminate, inevitable, insensate, irk, mien, mulatto, ornery, passive, peevish, pelvis, prong, pugnaciously, quadron, revelation, rhetoric, stances, stolidness, transmutation, unattainable, uncompromising

1. Everybody was having fun at the **mule-teasing** _____.
2. It was distressing to emerge from her inner temple and find these back **defilers** _____ howling with laughter before the door.
3. Mrs. Turner, like all other believers, had built an altar to the unattainable—**white** _____ characteristics for all.
4. And when she was with Janie she had a feeling of **change** _____, if she herself had become whiter and with straighter hair.
5. She hated Tea Cake first for his defilement of **godliness** _____ and next for his telling mockery of her.
6. All gods who receive **worship** _____ are cruel.
7. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to **flee** _____ her.
8. That was before the golden dust of pollen had **decked** _____ his rags and her eyes.
9. He give me every **comfort** _____ in de world.
10. She had been summoned to behold a **disclosure** _____.
11. Stark led off with a great **sermon** _____ on our departed citizen, our most distinguished citizen and the grief he left behind him, and the people loved the speech.
12. He had scented the matter as quickly as any of the rest, but **manners** _____ demanded that he sit oblivious until he was notified.
13. It was a contest in **overstatement** _____ and carried on for no other reason.
14. She moved men, but the **pilot** _____ determined the port.
15. Mrs. Bogle who was many times a grandmother, but had a blushing air of **flirtation** _____ about her that cloaked her sunken cheeks.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Match each of the following descriptions with a character. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left. Some of the answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| _____ 1. comes whistling down the road | A. Janie |
| _____ 2. aims a pistol at Janie | B. Robert |
| _____ 3. rejects Nunkie's flirtation | C. Sop |
| _____ 4. stands trial | D. Nunkie |
| _____ 5. rocks Janie like a baby | E. Leafy |
| _____ 6. punishes Nanny | F. Jody |
| _____ 7. insists on covered hair | G. Ike |
| _____ 8. prefers light-skinned people | H. Dr. Simmons |
| _____ 9. serves a macaroni and fish dinner | I. Logan |
| _____ 10. advises Janie on remarriage | J. Nanny |
| _____ 11. abandons a daughter | K. Robert's son |
| _____ 12. poses for a picture with white children | L. Vergible Woods |
| _____ 13. dies at Chickamauga | M. Motor Boat |
| _____ 14. can't save Tea Cake from rabies | N. Mistis |
| _____ 15. sleeps peacefully during the storm | O. Mrs. Turner |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Janie can't afford a vault in Palm Beach.
- _____ 2. Tea Cake escorts Janie to the mule-dragging.
- _____ 3. Nanny doesn't survive to see Janie married.
- _____ 4. Logan insists that Janie move the manure pile.
- _____ 5. Janie and Tea Cake ignore warnings from the Seminoles.
- _____ 6. Tea Cake's friends stand disapprovingly in the back of the courtroom.
- _____ 7. The knifing occurs after Tea Cake wins back Janie's \$200.
- _____ 8. The Red Cross buries blacks and whites in a common plot.
- _____ 9. Janie proves the migrant workers wrong by harvesting beans.
- _____ 10. Jody likes to see the mayor's wife wearing blue.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill in the blanks below with a word or phrase which completes the sentence. Place your answer in the space provided at left.

1. Janie Crawford Woods, 40-year-old _____ of a gambler and migrant worker, returns to _____ in Orange County, Florida, with her head high.
2. Gossips question the _____ she wears to the funeral and speculate on Tea Cake, the younger man with whom she left town, and the money she inherited from _____, her second husband.
3. Deserted by _____, her mother, and never acquainted with her father, Janie lives with a maternal grandmother, "Nanny," on the property of her employers in _____ Florida.
4. Before _____ and Janie's first anniversary, he stops _____ wood. Janie refuses to chop it.
5. Before being elected _____, Jody rents a house and buys two hundred _____.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the establishment of a black Florida town.
2. Explain how Janie honors her third husband.
3. Discuss the cultural background of the muck.
4. Account for Jody's curse on his wife.
5. Summarize events that precede Janie's second marriage.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with terms from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| _____ 1. detested item of apparel | A. \$200 |
| _____ 2. hides Janie's delight in widowhood | B. pear blossoms |
| _____ 3. pinned to Janie's shirt | C. lime |
| _____ 4. left over from the harvest | D. seeds |
| _____ 5. kills a dog | E. dirty feet |
| _____ 6. hides a pistol | F. overalls |
| _____ 7. clothing tossed into the bushes | G. head rag |
| _____ 8. Tea Cake's favorite | H. pillow |
| _____ 9. purchased in Palm Beach | I. red silk |
| _____ 10. Logan's insult to Janie | J. apron |
| _____ 11. symbol of romance | K. vault |
| _____ 12. mayor's wife's garment | L. switchblade |
| _____ 13. valuable part of hunting on the muck | M. veil |
| _____ 14. covering for the dead | N. hides |
| _____ 15. mourning garment at Tea Cake's funeral | O. blue |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided.

- _____ 1. What does Jody order from Sears, Roebuck?
- _____ 2. Who threatens to sell a child?
- _____ 3. In what county is Eatonville?
- _____ 4. Who kisses Janie before she marries?
- _____ 5. What does Logan intend to buy for Janie?
- _____ 6. What does Janie shake at the man whistling down the road?
- _____ 7. Who builds a crossroads?
- _____ 8. Who forces Janie out of the store?
- _____ 9. What game does Tea Cake teach Janie?
- _____ 10. Who anticipates a railroad job in Jacksonville?

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the phrase that completes each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

_____ 1. Tea Cake grows suspicious after

- A. Dr. Simmons examines him.
- B. Janie sleeps alone.
- C. rattlesnakes crawl the yard.
- D. Mrs. Turner's brother starts a brawl.

_____ 2. The night that Tea Cake first arrives

- A. citizens of Eatonville attend a ball game.
- B. Matt Bonner's mule dies.
- C. he brings a string of trout.
- D. he drives a battered car.

_____ 3. Nanny lets down her hair

- A. because Mistis' son dies at Chickamauga.
- B. to prove that she is dying.
- C. while fishing at the lake.
- D. for Robert.

_____ 4. Tea Cake and Janie are surprised that

- A. Bahamans practice voodoo.
- B. Mrs. Turner likes dark skin.
- C. Motor Boat is safe.
- D. Red Cross workers help migrants to safety.

_____ 5. Tea Cake believes that

- A. herbs can cure rabies.
- B. Janie has \$1,200 in the bank.
- C. his friends are too common for Janie.
- D. Jody will die of kidney disease.

_____ 6. Janie charges Tea Cake with

- A. flirting with Nunkie.
- B. wasting money on a guitar.
- C. embarrassing Mrs. Turner.
- D. losing the oilcloth bundle.

_____ 7. Tea Cake surprises Janie by

- A. combing her hair.
- B. renting a room for them to share.
- C. finding her a job with the railroad.
- D. telling Pheoby about his love for Janie.

_____ 8. Joe is annoyed that Janie

- A. admires George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
- B. depends on Hezekiah.
- C. conceals a keg from the last shipment.
- D. defends abused women.

_____ 9. Before he dies,

- A. Tea Cake regrets shooting at his wife.
- B. Jody hires a cook.
- C. Motor Boat discovers a rabbit hiding in the shack.
- D. Sop-de-Bottom hides under the bridge.

_____ 10. The school teacher

- A. calls Janie "Alphabet."
- B. rapes Leafy.
- C. welcomes Robert's slaves to class.
- D. strikes a mulatto child for having a white father.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why Nanny wants her granddaughter to marry.
2. Contrast life in Eatonville with life on the muck.
3. Describe changes in Janie after Jody dies.
4. Account for Pheoby's interest in Janie's story.
5. Give examples from Janie's life proving that "De nigger women is de mule uh de world."

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. baiting | 6. homage | 11. eulogy |
| 2. desecrators | 7. elude | 12. decorum |
| 3. Caucasian | 8. beglamored | 13. hyperbole |
| 4. transmutation | 9. consolation | 14. helm |
| 5. divinity | 10. revelation | 15. coquetry |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. N | 11. E |
| 2. L | 7. F | 12. A |
| 3. L | 8. O | 13. K |
| 4. A | 9. L | 14. H |
| 5. J | 10. G | 15. M |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

- widow, Eatonville
- overalls, Jody
- Leafy, West
- Logan, chopping
- mayor, acres

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. H | 11. B |
| 2. M | 7. J | 12. I |
| 3. A | 8. O | 13. N |
| 4. D | 9. K | 14. C |
| 5. L | 10. E | 15. F |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

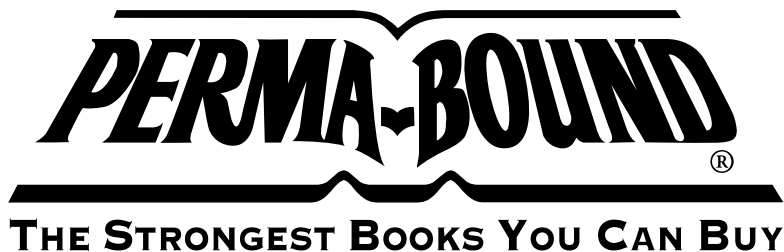
- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. streetlamp | 6. her hair |
| 2. Mistis | 7. Joe Starks |
| 3. Orange County | 8. Joe Starks |
| 4. Johnny Taylor | 9. checkers |
| 5. gentle mule | 10. Tea Cake |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A |
| 2. A | 7. A |
| 3. D | 8. D |
| 4. C | 9. B |
| 5. C | 10. B |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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