

# [Book able to take her ugly head wrap](https://assignbuster.com/book-able-to-take-her-ugly-head-wrap/)

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BooksummaryTheir Eyes Were Watching Godis written by Zora Neal Hurston an African American woman in 1937. This storyis about Janie Crawford, whose lifelong quest is to find true love. Janienarrates the story of her three marriages and her search for love to her friendPhoeby. When Janie is young, her grandmother arranges her marriage with a mannamed Logan Killicks, who becomes Janie’s first husband. Janie is not contentwith her marriage to Logan but optimistically wishes that she would grow tolove him. Unfortunately, her hopes are met by abuse by Logan, whom she feelstreats her as a child and as an animal to work in his fields. One day Janiemeets an ambitious man named Jody Starks, who courts her and ultimatelyencourages her to run away from Logan.

Janie complies; they marry and head offtogether to Eatonville, Florida. Janie finally feels that she might be happyfor the first time in a long time. However, Joe, like Logan, has veryunyielding definitions of gender roles and expects Janie to support him and notargue with him. Janie is too outspoken for this, and she and Joe have a rockyrelationship. Joe eventually dies, leaving Janie independent. After Joe dies, Janie finally has her freedom back; she is finally able to take her ugly headwrap that she had been wearing for more than 20 years. After a while, she fallsin love with a much younger man named Tea Cake. Janie leaves everything behindand moves to the Everglades of Florida.

Janie finally has the love that she haslonged for, and she and Tea Cake are happy. When a hurricane hits rabid dogattacks Janie, and when Tea Cake tries to save her, he is bitten by the dog andcontracts rabies. As a result, he begins to go mad, and he eventually tries toshoot Janie. She kills him in self-defense and is put on trial for murder. At thetrial, Tea Cake’s black male friends show up to condemn Janie, but a group ofwhite women from the town shows up to defend her.

The all-white jury sets herfree, Janie throws an extravagant burial for Tea Cake and returns back toEatonville. Overview of historical/ biographical theory criticismAn historical approach to literary interpretation andanalysis is one of the oldest and one of the most widely used critical approach. “ Historical criticism, literary criticism in the lightof historical evidence or based on the context in which awork was written, including facts about the author’s life and the historicaland social circumstances of the time. This is in contrast to other types ofcriticism, such as textual and formal, in which emphasis is placed on examiningthe text itself while outside influences on the text are disregarded” ( Britannica). In Their Eyes WereWatching God we can apply this theory that shows thefirst is the “ suspended woman,” the victim of men and of society as a whole, with few or no options, “ suspended” because she can’t do anything about hersituation (Tyson 385).  Examples includeNannie in Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937). Thesecond type is the “ assimilated woman,” who is not victimized by physicalviolence and has much more control of her life, but who is victimized bypsychological violence in that she is cut off from her African American rootsby her desire to be accepted by white society (Tyson 385) . This type is oftenfound in works set in the 1940s and 1950s.

Examples include Mrs. Turner inTheir Eyes Were Watching God. Finally, the third character type is the” emergent woman,” who is coming to an awareness of her own psychological andpolitical oppression and becoming capable of creating a new life and newchoices for herself, usually through a harsh experience of initiation thatmakes her ready for the change (Tyson 385). As the example of Janieillustrates, these character types are not confined to the historical settingswith which they are generally associated.   ConnectingHurston life to the novelWhile Their Eyes WereWatching God is a work of fiction, it has been considered autobiographical aswell. Hurston reveals her personality through the interaction of the author’s, protagonist’s, narrator’s voices and through the narrative events. Hurston’s father has beenlodged in many characteristics of Jody Stark.

Like Jody, her father moved to a solelyblack town called Eatonville as in the novel. Her father John Hurston was alsonoted for “ being very ambitious, hard-headed and having a prominent position ofcarpenter as well being a Baptist preacher and attaining a position of powerwithin the South Florida Baptist Association”. (Robert 5)  Like Jody, he sought out to be a leaderwithin the fledgling community of Eatonville Janie similarly shares manycharacteristics with Hurston. One of the most prominent images is that of theroad in the novel. The novel is about Janie’s journey; Hurston was very much atraveler herself, she was fascinated in “ anthropological research into thefolklore and cultural heritage of the southern blacks” (Robert 5). Thiscuriosity initiated her to go to many different places gathering information inthe south, and while traveling she erudite more about herself as exploring andreturning back to her roots.

These adventure and trips essential started havinginfluence in her work deeply; her observance of the “ Negro” culture and life isutmostly noticeable through her extensive use of dialect as the dominantlanguage pattern in the novel. The originality that isseen from her character and portrayal of community life that proposes that sheis not simply just an outsider of her culture, but more part of it as well. Forinstance when Janie and Tea Cake are living in the “ muck” they join in the funwith the game of “ Florida flip” and “ coon-can” (TEWWG 233), reciting rhythms” Yo’ mama don’t wear no Draws” (TEWWG p. 232), skipping and dancingwith the Bahamans people and telling exaggerated stories. There is a genuineand authentic real sense of Hurston’s pride and marvel at her people’s culture, it forms a unique framework of the novel and enhances liveliness.  Another evidence to propose that Zora is embeddingherself into the character of Janie.

As a child Hurston was creative and imaginative, frequently claiming, “ The birds, trees, and lake talked to her” (p14Howard). Similarly, in the novel the pear tree “ talks” to Janie in an” inaudible voice” (p. 24) about marriage and love. On her autobiography, she recalls that she “ used to climb to the top of one of the hugechinaberry trees which guarded our front gate and look out over the world.

Themost interesting thing that I saw was the horizon”. (Hurston 44)  This parallels when Janie is sixteen and “ searchedas much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps”. This instinctivecuriosity is deceptive in both Hurston and Janie from an early stage and beginslooking for that “ horizon” throughout her life’s journey. In the novel, it endswhen Janie pulls “ in her horizon like a great fish-net”(Hurston 193). The horizon is not in front of her instead but around her. This novel also” signifies” upon feminine images in nineteenth-century narratives written byAfrican American women. (woolflm 4) Consequently, it delivers a significantconnection between those earlier narratives and novels written by AfricanAmerican women in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Contrastingliterary forebear such as “ W.

Harper, Frances E, and Pauline Hopkins, Hurstonrejected to stereotype her protagonist or to imitate to earlier plotlines establishedby white predecessors”. (woolflm 9) Hurston thrusted Janie far beyond thelimitations and boundaries that reserved the “ true woman” of the nineteenthcentury, and in doing so, she delivered a heroic African American woman thatwas to greatly influence twentieth-century writers such as Alice Walker.   Harlem RenaissanceAliterary period knowns as the Harlem Renaissance in early 1920’s began, allowing and uplifting black artists and authors a voice in the societies acrossAmerica. The artists of this era “ Rejected the notion of the racial struggle asthe sole mission of the black elite. Instead, this group was dedicated toliterature and the arts as paths to uplift the black race,” (The Queen of theHarlem Renaissance 52). Oneof the prominent authors of this time was Zora Neale Hurston who approached thetheme of this era in a vastly different way than her peers, but her goal wasthe same: “ to uphold and promote the literary work of black people” (rollins). Hurston tried to link the cultural breach between whites and blacks while herpeers moved to obtain equality between both races. The Harlem Renaissance is commonlythought to have begun in the 1920’s, ending in the late 1930’s (Aberjhani xviii), just before the Great Depression.

The movement have been said to be an expansionof “ a unique awakening of mind and spirit, of race consciousness and artisticadvancement” (Aberjhani xviii). Additionally, this was the time where black people discovered their own forms of literatureand other forms of art and became more aware of themselves as. Numerous genrescame out of the Harlem Renaissance containing the musical genres Jazz, Ragtimeand the Blues; as well as black literature journalism, visual arts and theater (Aberjhanixviii).

Writers of this era were “ motivatedto write about black heroes and heroic episodes from American History as wellas the need for African Americans to express a franker and deeper revelation ofthe black self” (West 202). Hence, they sought to express their own culture wherethey were still being discriminated, not respected and or wanted.   Zora Neale Hurstonas a woman and a writer in Harlem RenaissanceHurstonpublished a surplus of literary works in her lifetime, including “ essays, folklore, short stories, novels, plays, articles on anthropology andautobiography”(Aberjhani163), Their EyesWere Watching God being one of the most widely read. Hurston did not writefor the greater political good but rather just for the sake of writing.  Many argue her place in the HarlemRenaissance, referring “ her flat refusal to politicize her early writings byadopting the prevailing notions driving African-American social reform”(Dawson, Aberjhani, 165). Nevertheless, Hurston wrote influential and powerful worksthat were broadly read by both races alike. .

Againstthe flow of racial anger, she wrote about sex, talk, work, music, and life’sunpoisoned pleasures, suggesting that these things existed even for people ofcolor, even in America; and she was harshly adjudicated. In Wright’s account, her novel contained “ no theme, no message, no thought” (Howard). By illustratinga Southern small-town world in which blacks enjoyed their own rich culturaltraditions, and were able to assume responsibility for their own lives, Hurstonappeared a blithely and criticized by the Harlem renaissance writers.       How wasHurston work different from othersTo many of Hurston’s peers, creating art during the HarlemRenaissance meant concentrating on the black experience and struggle with the Great Migration, which was “ the movement of millions of black Americans fromthe rural South to the urban North” (woolflm).

Manyof the migrants left their families and homes to escape the danger and violencepledged by white supremacists and typically a universal need to escape a “ landsoaked in much bad blood” (woolflm), or to find work and opportunities in anincreasingly industrialized urban setting. Hurston instead, sawblack culture, in all its “ geographical incarnations as persistently emergingand reinventing itself” (Robert). Therefore, when Janie spends the majority of Their Eyes Were Watching God trudging through the Florida muck and surrounded by black menand women who would sound a lot like the black “ mammies” and “ uncles” (Robert), Hurston is intent of conveying these characters into the modern era.

Wefollow Janie’s journey through life as she tries to follow her heart in pursuitof romantic love that is fulfilling to her emotionally and physically. WhenJanie finally meets Tea Cake, a man at least a decade younger we realize thatHurston is offering number of revolutionary possibilities. First, thatfinancial security does not need to be the basis of a modern black women’slove; second, that romantic love is not only for the young; and third, thatmodernity doesn’t only occur in the city. Hurston’s depiction of black modernwomanhood she displays that it is possible for all black women, no matter theirlocation or socio-economic status, to be worthy of a love they desire. The repossessionof that space and possibility may not seem revolutionary, but history continuesto show that black love and freedom are perpetually difficult to display. In Their Eyes WereWatching God, Hurston offers a moving call for black people toembrace a new kind of love, one based upon partnership and not ownership. The use of backdialect instead of Standard EnglishThenovel frequently transitions form a heavy southern dialect as the charactersspeak, to a prefect English when the narrator is speaking.  This displays Hurston staying true to herSouthern roots as portraying her characters in the way they truly are.

Hurston writes the narrative in perfect, proper English. Her use of strong metaphors and vivid imagery to depict thelife of Janie in the Southern towns of Florida. By writing this way, she also appealedto white audiences. If she had written the narrative with more slang andAfrican American voice, she may not have been as widely read by white people.

Inspite of the fact that Hurston writes the narrative this way, she uses thevernacular for her dialogue. By doing this, she is remaining true to her southernblack roots.  Many criticized the novelfor using the Southern dialect in her novel. One reviewer said  “ Her dialect is really sloppy…To let thereally important words stand as in Webster and then consistently misspell nomore than an aspiration in any tongue…the vernacular reads with about thisemphasis: ‘ DAT WUZ UH might fine thing FUH you TUH do.

‘ (Ferguson 78) Fergusonis saying that writing in the vernacular pulls attention away from the importanceof the sentence and draws attention to the tedious words. From the time thenovel first came out the dialect was a problem with reviewers (Heard 131), butHurston “ Voiced her commitment to represent the language of the Southern blackcommunity realistically,” (Heard 131). Thus, she did not care that her way ofwriting brought criticism; she wanted to stay true to her culture. During theHarlem Renaissance, she faced “ Extreme censorship and she needed to create astyle that would not alienate her writing from white readers but at the sametime she could not completely separate herself from the values and traditionsof her “ home” culture,” (Heard 131).

It is unquestionably effective in connectingthe rhythm and music of African-American culture in the Deep South in the early20th century. Hurston captures with her spelling the pronunciation that was common inthe black community during those years and in that location. Thus, we can seeand even hear the way of spoken language at that time, and within that specificsocial group. Looking back from the present, we also see that it captures amoment in time where Hurston recordshow people spoke at the time she was writing. It may be the case that this isno longer true.

Historians have look at novels like Hurston’s and seen howlinguistic dialects have changed over time.