

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 the trial, Tea Cake's black male friends show up to condemn Janie, but a group of white women from the town shows up to defend her.

The all-white jury sets her free, Janie throws an extravagant burial for Tea Cake and returns back to Eatonville. Overview of historical/ biographical theory criticism An historical approach to literary interpretation and analysis is one of the oldest and one of the most widely used critical approach. " Historical criticism, literary criticism in the light of historical evidence or based on the context in which a work was written, including facts about the author's life and the historical and social circumstances of the time. This is in contrast to other types of criticism, such as textual and formal, in which emphasis is placed on examining the text itself while outside influences on the text are disregarded" (Britannica). In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* we can apply this theory that shows the first 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 her situation (Tyson 385). Examples include Nannie in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). The second type is the " assimilated woman," who is not victimized by physical violence and has much more control of her life, but who is victimized by psychological violence in that she is cut off from her African American roots by her desire to be accepted by white society (Tyson 385) . This type is often found in works set in the 1940s and 1950s.

Examples include Mrs. Turner in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Finally, the third character type is the " emergent woman," who is coming to an

awareness of her own psychological and political oppression and becoming capable of creating a new life and new choices for herself, usually through a harsh experience of initiation that makes her ready for the change (Tyson 385). As the example of Janie illustrates, these character types are not confined to the historical settings with which they are generally associated. Connecting Hurston life to the novel *While Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a work of fiction, it has been considered autobiographical as well. 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 been lodged in many characteristics of Jody Stark.

Like Jody, her father moved to a solely black town called Eatonville as in the novel. Her father John Hurston was also noted for "being very ambitious, hard-headed and having a prominent position of carpenter as well being a Baptist preacher and attaining a position of power within the South Florida Baptist Association". (Robert 5) Like Jody, he sought out to be a leader within the fledgling community of Eatonville Janie similarly shares many characteristics with Hurston. One of the most prominent images is that of the road in the novel. The novel is about Janie's journey; Hurston was very much a traveler herself, she was fascinated in "anthropological research into the folklore and cultural heritage of the southern blacks" (Robert 5). This curiosity initiated her to go to many different places gathering information in the south, and while traveling she erudite more about herself as exploring and returning back to her roots.

These adventure and trips essential started having influence in her work deeply; her observance of the “ Negro” culture and life isutmosty noticeable through her extensive use of dialect as the dominant language pattern in the novel. The originality that is seen from her character and portrayal of community life that proposes that she is not simply just an outsider of her culture, but more part of it as well. For instance when Janie and Tea Cake are living in the “ muck” they join in the fun with the game of “ Florida flip” and “ coon-can” (TEWWG 233), reciting rhythms “ Yo’ mama don’t wear no Draws” (TEWWG p. 232), skipping and dancing with the Bahamans people and telling exaggerated stories. There is a genuine and 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 embedding herself into the character of Janie.

As a child Hurston was creative and imaginative, frequently claiming, “ The birds, trees, and lake talked to her” (p14 Howard). 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 huge chinaberry trees which guarded our front gate and look out over the world.

The most interesting thing that I saw was the horizon”. (Hurston 44) This parallels when Janie is sixteen and “ searched as much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps”. This instinctive curiosity is deceptive in both Hurston and Janie from an early stage and begins looking for that “ horizon” throughout her life’s journey. In the novel, it ends when 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 by African American women. (woolfm 4) Consequently, it delivers a significant connection between those earlier narratives and novels written by African American women in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Contrasting literary forebear such as “ W. Harper, Frances E, and Pauline Hopkins, Hurston rejected to stereotype her protagonist or to imitate to earlier plotlines established by white predecessors”. (woolfm 9) Hurston thrust Janie far beyond the limitations and boundaries that reserved the “ true woman” of the nineteenth century, and in doing so, she delivered a heroic African American woman that was to greatly influence twentieth-century writers such as Alice Walker. Harlem Renaissance A literary period known as the Harlem Renaissance in early 1920’s began, allowing and uplifting black artists and authors a voice in the societies across America. The artists of this era “ Rejected the notion of the racial struggle as the sole mission of the black elite. Instead, this group was dedicated to literature and the arts as paths to uplift the black race,” (The Queen of the Harlem Renaissance 52). One of the prominent authors of this time was Zora Neale Hurston who approached the theme of this era in a vastly different way than her peers, but her goal was the same: “ to uphold and promote the literary work of black people” (rollins). Hurston tried to link the cultural breach between whites and blacks while her peers moved to obtain equality between both races. The Harlem Renaissance is commonly thought 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 expansion of “ a unique awakening of mind and spirit, of race consciousness and artistic advancement” (Aberjhani xviii). Additionally, this was the time where black people discovered their own forms of literature and other forms of art and became more aware of themselves as. Numerous genres came out of the Harlem Renaissance containing the musical genres Jazz, Ragtime and the Blues; as well as black literature journalism, visual arts and theater (Aberjhanixviii).

Writers of this era were “ motivated to write about black heroes and heroic episodes from American History as well as the need for African Americans to express a franker and deeper revelation of the black self” (West 202). Hence, they sought to express their own culture where they were still being discriminated, not respected and or wanted. Zora Neale Hurston as a woman and a writer in Harlem Renaissance Hurston published a surplus of literary works in her lifetime, including “ essays, folklore, short stories, novels, plays, articles on anthropology and autobiography” (Aberjhani 163), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* being one of the most widely read. Hurston did not write for the greater political good but rather just for the sake of writing. Many argue her place in the Harlem Renaissance, referring “ her flat refusal to politicize her early writings by adopting the prevailing notions driving African-American social reform” (Dawson, Aberjhani, 165). Nevertheless, Hurston wrote influential and powerful works that were broadly read by both races alike. .

Against the flow of racial anger, she wrote about sex, talk, work, music, and life's unpoisoned pleasures, suggesting that these things existed even for

people of color, even in America; and she was harshly adjudicated. In Wright's account, her novel contained "no theme, no message, no thought" (Howard). By illustrating a Southern small-town world in which blacks enjoyed their own rich cultural traditions, and were able to assume responsibility for their own lives, Hurston appeared a blithely and criticized by the Harlem renaissance writers. How was Hurston work different from others? To many of Hurston's peers, creating art during the Harlem Renaissance meant concentrating on the black experience and struggle with the Great Migration, which was "the movement of millions of black Americans from the rural South to the urban North" (Woolf).

Many of the migrants left their families and homes to escape the danger and violence pledged by white supremacists and typically a universal need to escape a "land soaked in much bad blood" (Woolf), or to find work and opportunities in an increasingly industrialized urban setting. Hurston instead, saw black culture, in all its "geographical incarnations as persistently emerging and reinventing itself" (Robert). Therefore, when Janie spends the majority of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* trudging through the Florida muck and surrounded by black men and women who would sound a lot like the black "mammies" and "uncles" (Robert), Hurston is intent of conveying these characters into the modern era.

We follow Janie's journey through life as she tries to follow her heart in pursuit of romantic love that is fulfilling to her emotionally and physically. When Janie finally meets Tea Cake, a man at least a decade younger we realize that Hurston is offering number of revolutionary possibilities. First,

that financial security does not need to be the basis of a modern black women's love; second, that romantic love is not only for the young; and third, that modernity doesn't only occur in the city. Hurston's depiction of black modern womanhood she displays that it is possible for all black women, no matter their location or socio-economic status, to be worthy of a love they desire. The repossession of that space and possibility may not seem revolutionary, but history continues to show that black love and freedom are perpetually difficult to display. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston offers a moving call for black people to embrace a new kind of love, one based upon partnership and not ownership. The use of black dialect instead of Standard English in the novel frequently transitions from a heavy southern dialect as the characters speak, to a perfect English when the narrator is speaking. This displays Hurston staying true to her Southern 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 the life of Janie in the Southern towns of Florida. By writing this way, she also appealed to white audiences. If she had written the narrative with more slang and African American voice, she may not have been as widely read by white people.

In spite of the fact that Hurston writes the narrative this way, she uses the vernacular for her dialogue. By doing this, she is remaining true to her southern black roots. Many criticized the novel for using the Southern dialect in her novel. One reviewer said " Her dialect is really sloppy... To let the really important words stand as in Webster and then consistently misspell no more

than an aspiration in any tongue...the vernacular reads with about this emphasis: ' DAT WUZ UH might fine thing FUH you TUH do.

' (Ferguson 78) Ferguson is saying that writing in the vernacular pulls attention away from the importance of the sentence and draws attention to the tedious words. From the time the novel first came out the dialect was a problem with reviewers (Heard 131), but Hurston " Voiced her commitment to represent the language of the Southern black community realistically," (Heard 131). Thus, she did not care that her way of writing brought criticism; she wanted to stay true to her culture. During the Harlem Renaissance, she faced " Extreme censorship and she needed to create a style that would not alienate her writing from white readers but at the same time she could not completely separate herself from the values and traditions of her " home" culture," (Heard 131).

It is unquestionably effective in connecting the rhythm and music of African-American culture in the Deep South in the early 20th century. Hurston captures with her spelling the pronunciation that was common in the black community during those years and in that location. Thus, we can see and even hear the way of spoken language at that time, and within that specific social group. Looking back from the present, we also see that it captures a moment in time where Hurston records how people spoke at the time she was writing. It may be the case that this is no longer true.

Historians have looked at novels like Hurston's and seen how linguistic dialects have changed over time.