

Their eyes were watching god

[Business](#)



The street lights seemed like they were shining right on me, everyone driving past in their cars seemed as if they were staring right at me. I could feel all the invisible eyes burning holes through my body.

I was sitting on the front steps of my friend's house, hearing screams of laughter from inside while I had tears streaming down my puffy red cheeks. I felt the hot breath of him breathing down my shivering back and his slaps and punches still stinging throughout my body. I saw his red, vainy, eyes staring into my watery absent bright blue eyes. I felt my body giving up the fight and my hands being held down. I still felt the burning of my legs trying to kick but being pinned down by legs that were too heavy for me to move. I still heard my own screams and was still listening for the help I was waiting for.

I still heard him telling me to shut the hell up. I still heard his voice in my head, his words running through my mind. And his hands, which will always be covering my mouth, forbidding me to speak. Janie, from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, helped me see the struggles of other women who have been dehumanized and silenced. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie demonstrates the struggle women face of being silenced and dehumanized through her relationships with Logan and Joe, along with overcoming society's lack of respect for women.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie gets forced into her first marriage with Logan by her Nanny. Janie was never in love with him, but Nanny made her marry him because of the financial stability he had. Once the wedding was over and it was just the two of them Logan turned dark. He immediately

started treating her like his property and controlling every move she made. He was verbally abusive and didn't treat her with any respect. He started slapping her and physically abusing her.

She ends up running away with a man named Joe. She thought she was in love with him until he showed his true colors and along with Logan, he turned extremely dark. He belittled her and took away her voice completely. He treated her like an animal and continued to dehumanize her through his words and actions. The town they lived in was the first all black town, and although the town was not racist the men, especially, were extremely sexist.

They didn't believe that women had any power and they continued to show that the men had all the power and began to drill it into their heads until they internalized it. When Joe was on his death bed, Janie finally confronted him and told him everything that was on her mind. If Joe was still healthy when she did this, she would be beat and yelled at very severely. After two previous marriages, Janie finally finds someone who she falls head over heels for and who treats her right. Tea Cake let her be herself and treated her with great respect. She learns what love is and what the dynamics of an equal partnership should be.

She shows society that their views of women are wrong and that women can do just as much as men. Tea Cake gave Janie back her voice that she has longed for, for years. Joe has continually told Janie that she is worthless and that she has no place in this world besides doing what she is told by him. While in the store Joe told her " Uh woman by herself is uh pitiful thing...dey need aid and assistance. God never meant em tuh try tuh stand by

themselves" (90). This quote demonstrates the power that men have over women.

Men continue to belittle the women so that they start to believe it and never even dream of overpower the men. He's telling Janie that she needs him and without him she'd be nothing. By saying this he is trying to make her internalize it and believe that without him she is nothing and she is worthless without him by her side. He is continually breaking down her confidence and making her feel worthless. In the story, men are constantly dehumanizing women and treating them as if they're animals and their property.

Joe thinks that because he's the husband, he can treat Janie however he wants to and diminish her. One day in the store, Joe accuses Janie of misplacing something; he yells " dat's cause' you need tellin'...it would be pitiful if Ah didn't. Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none themselves...Ah see one thing Ah understand ten. You see ten things you understand one..." (70).

Joe is comparing his wife to animals. He's saying that she is worth nothing and she isn't even a human being. He is drilling it into her head that she is nothing without a man and that his job is to control her because she can't do it for herself. He is dumbing her down and trying to make her feel stupid so that she will always know he has all the power. Although these are just words, they are meant to make women internalize what they are saying in the hopes that they will always know who's in charge in the relationship.

By constantly treating women like this, women begin to believe what they are told. They start putting their wishes aside because they don't feel they

<https://assignbuster.com/their-eyes-were-watching-god-essay-samples-4/>

have a right to have any desires. Throughout the book, Janie is constantly told that her place is in the home by both Joe and Logan. By making her feel that her place is in the home, it makes her feel useless to the world. By keeping women in the house it makes men inferior and confines women to where they want them to be and where they can control them. The home is where men can keep their women so can cut off the contact with the world.

Their job is to cook, clean, and prepare for when their husbands get home. When Joe becomes mayor and is giving a speech to the town, someone asks for Janie to make one. Joe's reply is " Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' ' bout no speck-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak that. She's uh woman and her place is in de home" (43). This quote demonstrates Joe taking away Janie's voice by not letting her make her speech.

He doesn't even give Janie time to speak for herself, he just silences her. Again, Joe says that as a woman her place is at the house, implying that all she is good for is cooking and cleaning. He is once again diminishing her self-worth and hoping she will internalize what he is trying to make her believe. By silencing her in front of the whole town, he is asserting his power and showing not only her, but everyone in town how he runs the relationship. While in her relationship with Logan, he also tells her how her place is only where he needs her to be. " you ain't got no particular place.

It's wherever Ah need yuh..." (31). He is showing his control over her and showing her who is in charge. He treats her like his property and makes her feel inhumane. It shows her that she needs to do what she is told and she

isn't worth anything without him. He makes her feel as if she has no talent and she isn't worth anything at all.

Wherever he tells her to go, that's where she belongs. He is not only treating her as his property, but is also taking away her voice and silencing anything she might have to say. Although Janie is older than most women in the town, she is still very beautiful and gets noticed a great deal by the men. She has long beautiful black hair that she loves to wear down. When she wears her hair down, it gives her the sense of freedom and confidence.

It lets her be who she is and it is something that she can control. Even though her voice has been silenced and she has been treated as an animal, her hair is a symbol of freedom. It lets her express herself without saying anything. It also is a sign of rebellion because it is showing her beauty and her independence that men don't want their wives to have when they're in public. Joe noticed the attention she was getting by other men and was anything but pleased.

She was not allowed to wear her hair down any longer. " That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store that was all. She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others" (55). By ordering her to tie up her hair, he was taking away her freedom and personality. He now could control everything about her. He told her when to speak and when to be silent, where to go, how to do what she was doing, and now he controlled how she looked.

This emphasizes the motif of dehumanizing and taking away a woman's freedom. She should be able to wear her hair how she wants to. It's not her
<https://assignbuster.com/their-eyes-were-watching-god-essay-samples-4/>

husband's hair, but because they were married, he took it as he had complete control and that he could make every decision for her. Janie can't even wear her hair how she wants. Women have the right to feel beautiful, it boosts self confidence and makes them feel good about themselves. Joe was scared that Janie would realize herself worth and leave him because she knew better.

In order to stop this he continued to put her down. By taking away the one thing that she has control over, he is emphasizing her lack of freedom and the oppression she is facing. Throughout the novel, there were many repeating themes and motifs. Dehumanization is one of the biggest themes throughout the book. In Janie's first two marriages, she was constantly dehumanized by the verbal and physical abuse. She was looked upon as an object and someone's property.

At one point she was even compared to chickens and cows. By dehumanizing Janie, Joe and Logan were trying to get their power across and show her exactly how things were going to be. In addition to the dehumanization, Janie also faced men throughout her life silencing her voice. They didn't care what she had to say, and they wouldn't even let her say it. If she were to speak against her husband, they would beat her and scream at her.

Another reoccurring theme was her freedom. She very rarely had any kind of freedom in her marriages. She was told what to do and when to do it. She wasn't able to even participate in the gossiping and games of the other town's people. Her place was in the house and that was the only place she belonged. She was nothing without a man in her life to tell her what to do.

She was worthless and she needed a man to give her a little bit of decency. Her lack of freedom demonstrates her being dehumanized because her rights are being physically taken away from her and by not being free, she is not being treated like a human. In the end, this novel made me realize that although the Women's Rights Movement had made a huge difference, there are still things today that have made women lower than men. My personal experience of being raped has made me realize that my voice has been taken from me. Like Janie, my opinion and desires were ignored. I was forced into doing something that I didn't want to do because he viewed me as an object, as property.

He ignored my voice and asserted his power over me. I felt extremely dehumanized because my voice was ignored and I was not treated as a human being. When Janie disagreed with one of her husbands, she was slapped, yelled at, and told not to speak. When I tried to fight back, I was slapped, yelled at, and told not to speak. Although there have been a lot more equal rights for women, there still is discrimination and silencing against them. Many women today are still being abused whether it's physically, emotionally, verbally, or sexually.

This is happening today because men are still asserting their power over women and trying to be superior. In many relationships, men often control the woman and have all the power in decision making. Although this is not violent, the control men have over women can easily turn into violent acts. In order to stop it from happening, women need to be seen in men's eyes as equal, capable, free humans. Without this view on women the discrimination is going to continue to happen.

<https://assignbuster.com/their-eyes-were-watching-god-essay-samples-4/>

Janie's experiences throughout the novel, illustrates the struggles many women still face today.