

Power and dominance in their eyes were watching god

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Hannah Ricci 11. 28. 11 p. 1 Their Eyes Were Watching God Essay 2. In her marriage to Jody, Janie is dominated by his power. At several points, however, it is obvious that he feels threatened by her. Why does Jody need to be in control of everyone around him? How does Janie threaten Jody and his sense of control? Power and dominance are both main themes in the book *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Jody is the embodiment of both of these things. He exerts his power over the town and over Janie in ways that are political, financial and physical.

While Janie tends to be submissive, Jody is threatened by the power that Janie holds in her own way, and with this, Jody's own power begins to deteriorate. Undoubtedly, Jody's amount of power significantly permeates all aspects of the townspeople, Eatonville, and Janie's life. Jody puts much care and attention into people's opinions of him. On one occasion, Jody buys Matt Bonner's overworked mule and sets it free. The townspeople relate him to Abraham Lincoln and the emancipation of slaves.

When Jody refused to allow Janie attend the mule's funeral, Jody prioritizes issues of polite behavior over Janie's happiness. He would rather keep her appearance in the town as a perfect lady instead of submitting to her wishes. Jody's well calculated act of "humility" accelerates his political power. Jody only feels happy and secure when he's in control of everything around him. While working in the town store, Janie is forced to keep her hair tucked away and covered. Although she despises doing it, she complies with Jody's wishes and he continues to feel a sense of control over Janie.

Just in the same way, Janie staying quiet at critical times in her marriage with Jody further reinforces his dominance over her. He blames her for her incontinence with handling money and forces her to stay in the store and wait on ladies when she'd rather be outside. Both times she chooses to keep her mouth closed, furthering her resentment for Jody and his need of control. Jody slaps Janie during a tense dinner one night and when Janie would most like to express her anger towards him, she stays silent and keeps a calm exterior.

When Janie does speak out against Jody's wishes, he suddenly feels insecure and threatened by her strong opinions. Hearing his wife disagree with him was an catastrophic blow to his ego. Moreover, Jody's physical deterioration correlates with his loss of control and power. Janie notices that he's unquestionably insecure with his changing looks. Jody's verbal attacks on Janie become more cruel and happen more frequently as his appearance deteriorates as well. He begins to humiliate her in front of the store customers and insulting her looks.

Since she knows that Jody is worried about his own waning attractiveness and she is continuing to look youthful and charming, she lashes back out on Jody by insulting his sagging body and stating that he looks like "de change uh life" when naked. After this verbal attack from his wife, he realizes his newfound lack of power that he once had. He believes that his reputation among the town folk is diminished when other men hear Janie talk back. He violently hits her and she fled from the store. Jody notices for the first time the amount of influence Janie has on his social standing.

After the confrontation, he moves into a separate room and refuses to talk to her. As he wallows in self pity, Janie is beginning to feel free for the first time since moving to Eatonville. While power and influence are incredibly important to Jody, this begins to fall apart once Janie starts exerting power of her own. Jody cannot hold on to his power over his wife, the town and eventually over himself. His death exhibits this final loss of his power and in return, the power that Janie gained.