English 11

Unit 3
Searching for “Everybody’s Zora” in Zora Neale Hurston’s Life and Work
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Note

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ACT recognizes that, as you determine how best to serve your students, you will take into consideration your teaching style as well as the academic needs of your students; the standards and policies set by your state, district, and school; and the curricular materials and resources that are available to you.
Unit 3  Searching for “Everybody’s Zora” in Zora Neale Hurston’s Life and Work

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Purpose

Students will refine their understanding of literary devices that enable them to comprehend, interpret, and draw conclusions about the work of Zora Neale Hurston. They will learn the importance of a novel’s themes in determining its relevance over time and place. Finally, students will synthesize their reading and research to show their understanding of Hurston and her writing. Studying Hurston’s life and writing provides students with a model of how one author explored her identity and expressed ideas that others may learn from and enjoy.

Overview

Zora Neale Hurston is considered by some critics to be the most successful and significant African American woman writer of the first half of the twentieth century. Having grown up in Eatonville, Florida, a community which is thought to have been the first incorporated African American township in the United States, Hurston was surrounded by a culture that nurtured her and modeled African American achievement. She became a part of the literary renaissance in Harlem in the 1920s and in 1928 graduated from Barnard College where she pursued her interest in anthropology as well as writing. The zenith of her writing career came in the 1930s and 1940s with the publication of her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. For various political and cultural reasons, her work slid into obscurity until the 1970s, when interest in it was revived.

Unit 3, *Searching for “Everybody’s Zora” in Zora Neale Hurston’s Life and Work*, will require students to participate actively in class as well as to read and work on projects and papers outside of class. Students will learn about Hurston’s life, the influence of the Harlem Renaissance on her writing, and the reactions of other authors to her work. They will conduct research to answer questions about Hurston and her writing and present their information to the rest of the class. As part of a culminating activity they will write a short essay based on their reading, research, and class notes. Before reading the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, they will read the essay “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” and a short story “Sweat,” both by Hurston. In addition, students will read “Looking for Zora,” an essay by Alice Walker, an African American writer who was inspired by Hurston and who was largely responsible for the renewed interest in Hurston’s work. Students will participate in small group and whole class activities and discussions. As they read and discuss, they will take two-column notes. They will dramatize scenes of Hurston’s work by improvisation. At the conclusion of the unit, they will present to the class a project based on events in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The project will allow students to pursue their own areas of interest and talent. For example, students may choose to write a song, adapt all or parts of the novel to a play format, or use their artistic abilities to draw, sculpt, or build representations of aspects of the novel. As an extension, they may read and discuss “Between Laughter and Tears,” a review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, written by Richard Wright, the twentieth century African American author of *Black Boy* and *Native Son* who criticized Hurston’s portrayal of “Negro life.”

Time Frame

This unit requires approximately twenty-five 45–50 minute class periods.
In rereading Hurston, I am always struck by the density of intimate experiences she cloaked in richly elaborated imagery.

Equality of educational treatment succeeds when two results occur. First, each container should be filled to the brim, the half-pint container as well as the gallon container. Second, each container should be filled to the brim with the same quality of substance—cream of the highest attainable quality of substance—cream of the highest attainable quality for all, not skimmed milk for some and cream for others.
   —Mortimer J. Adler (1982, p. 3)

Speak properly, and in as few Words as you can, but always plainly; for the End of Speech is not Ostentation, but to be understood.
   —William Penn (1693/1999, p. 401)

UNIT 3
SEARCHING FOR “EVERYBODY’S ZORA” IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON’S LIFE AND WORK

Prerequisites

- Experience writing interpretive questions about literature and discussing possible answers
- Experience taking notes and annotating a text
- Familiarity with a stylebook such as the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
- Ability to compose a simple thesis statement
- Ability to state the theme of a piece of writing and determine its relevance over time and place
- Mastery of literary elements in the writer’s craft (i.e., diction, detail, figurative language, imagery, irony, symbolism) and the ability to discuss these elements

Selected Course Objectives

The primary objectives, which represent the central focus of this unit, are listed below and highlight skills useful not only in English 11, but in other disciplines as well. Secondary objectives are listed in Appendix K.

A.2. Reading Strategies

a. Apply strategies before, during, and after reading to increase fluency and comprehension (e.g., adjusting purpose, previewing, scanning, making predictions, comparing, inferring, summarizing, using graphic organizers) with increasingly challenging texts
b. Use metacognitive skills (i.e., monitor, regulate, and orchestrate one’s understanding) when reading increasingly challenging texts, using the most appropriate “fix-up” strategies (e.g., rereading, reading on, changing rate of reading, subvocalizing)
c. Demonstrate comprehension of increasingly challenging texts (both print and nonprint sources) by asking and answering literal, interpretive, and evaluative questions
d. Use close-reading strategies (e.g., visualizing, annotating, questioning) in order to interpret increasingly challenging texts
e. Compare texts to previously read texts, past and present events, and/or content learned in other coursework

A.4. Influences on Texts

a. Explain the relationship between the time in which a literary work is set, the time during which the author wrote, and the time in which the reader reads (e.g., Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible* as a comment on the McCarthy era)
b. Analyze and evaluate the influence of traditional and mythic literature on later literature and film (e.g., the quest for the holy grail as depicted in Terry Gilliam’s film *The Fisher King*)

A.5. Author’s Voice and Method

b. Recognize an author’s choice of narration and evaluate how it affects characterization and credibility in increasingly challenging texts
c. Identify, analyze, and evaluate plot, character development, setting, theme, mood, and point of view as they are used together to create meaning in increasingly challenging texts
e. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the ways in which the devices the author chooses (e.g., irony, imagery, tone, sound techniques, foreshadowing, symbolism) achieve specific effects and shape meaning in increasingly challenging texts
f. Evaluate ways authors develop style to achieve specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes, noting the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme; cite specific examples from increasingly challenging texts

data. Craft first and final drafts of informational essays or reports that provide clear and accurate perspectives on the subject; support the main ideas with facts, details, and examples; and make distinctions about the relative value and significance of those facts, details, and examples

B.2. Modes of Writing for Different Purposes and Audiences

b. Organize writing to create a coherent whole with effective, fully developed paragraphs, similar ideas grouped together for unity, and paragraphs arranged in a logical sequence
c. Add important information and delete irrelevant information and details to more clearly establish a central idea
d. Rearrange words, sentences, and/or paragraphs and add transitional words and phrases to clarify meaning and to achieve specific aesthetic and rhetorical purposes
c. Write an introduction that engages the reader and a conclusion that summarizes, extends, or elaborates points or ideas in the writing

**C. Research**

a. Use research methods (e.g., background reading, online searches, surveys, interviews) to locate and collect reliable information from print and nonprint sources
b. Decide on a research question and develop a hypothesis, modifying questions as necessary during the project to further narrow the focus or extend the investigation
c. Evaluate multiple sources of information for accuracy, credibility, currency, utility, relevance, reliability, and perspective
d. Identify discrepancies in information, recognize the complexities of issues conveyed about the topic, and systematically organize the information to support central ideas, concepts, or themes
e. Summarize, paraphrase, and directly quote from sources, including the Internet, to support the thesis of the paper and/or presentation; accurately cite every source to avoid compromising others’ intellectual property (i.e., plagiarism)
f. Compose a research paper that maintains an appropriate balance between researched information and original ideas, anticipates counterarguments, blends quotations into its body gracefully, and includes title page, outline, first and final drafts, and works-cited page, adhering to MLA or other stylebook guidelines

**D.2. Application**

b. Use effective delivery skills (e.g., appropriate volume, inflection, articulation, gestures, eye contact, posture, facial expression)
c. Give impromptu and planned presentations (e.g., debates, formal meetings) that stay on topic and/or adhere to prepared notes

**E. Study Skills and Test Taking**

a. Apply active reading, listening, and viewing techniques by taking notes on classroom discussions, lectures, oral and/or video presentations, or assigned at-home reading, and by underlining key passages and writing comments in journals or in margins of texts, where permitted

**Research-Based Strategies**

- Reflective Questioning (p. 6)
- Background Knowledge Probe (p. 7)
- Quick-Writes (pp. 8, 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 23, 29, 31, 34)
- Fishbowl (pp. 11, 18)
- Think-Pair-Share (p. 14)
- Historical Investigation (pp. 14–16)
- Group Work (pp. 9–33)
- Long-Term Projects (pp. 14–35)
- Reciprocal Teaching (pp. 17–34)
- Four Corners (p. 25)
Essential Questions

1. What determines one’s values?
2. What was it like to live and work as a female African American author during the early twentieth century?
3. Why do readers react differently to the same piece of literature?
4. Does Their Eyes Were Watching God fit the definition of classic literature?

Suggestions for Assessment

Except where otherwise noted, assessments can be given a point value or they can simply be marked off as completed.

Preassessment

Worksheet—Since it is unlikely that students will have studied the work of Zora Neale Hurston, use the Zora Neale Hurston Questionnaire worksheet (pp. B-2–B-3) to determine student knowledge about American writers during the early twentieth century. Then supplement their knowledge with background information. Querying students with the same questions at the end of the unit serves as a good supplemental assessment of what students have learned.

Embedded Assessments

Quick-Writes—Assign short, impromptu writing throughout the unit to help students form connections to the text. Collect students’ work periodically or at the end of the unit. (Days 1, 3, 4, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20)

Leading Discussion—Students bring their own concerns, questions, and insights into the class reading environment by leading class discussions. Assess students’ work with the Discussion Leader Rubric (pp. C-2–C-3). (Days 3, 11–19)

Presentation—The research project (Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation prompt, p. D-2) helps students understand the cultural context in which Hurston wrote and helps students develop critical reading and researching skills. The presentation also helps students strengthen public speaking skills. Score the project using the Presentation Rubric (pp. D-3–D-4). (Days 5–11)

Essay—To demonstrate their understanding of Hurston’s writing, students use information from their own research and reading, as well as presentations by others, to write a persuasive essay in which they support or refute remarks about Hurston by Richard Wright or Alice Walker (Zora Neale Hurston Persuasive Essay prompt, p. D-5). This activity gives students practice in researching, note-taking, analyzing literature, and writing a persuasive essay that develops a clearly defined thesis statement. Score the essay with the Essay Rubric (p. D-6). (Days 11–21)

Quizzes—Give short quizzes containing literal and interpretive questions throughout the unit to check students’ understanding (Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–5 Quiz, pp. G-2–G-3; Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz, pp. H-2–H-3; Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–15 Quiz, pp. I-2–I-4; Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 16–20 Quiz, pp. J-2–J-3). Approach the quizzes as enabling assessments to help students prepare for their final project. (Days 14, 16, 19, 21)
Unit Assessment

Project—Students create and present a project that demonstrates either their understanding of the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or their new understanding of Hurston and the times in which she lived (*Their Eyes Were Watching God* Project, pp. E-2–E-3). Students’ work may be individual or collaborative. Assess the project using the Project Rubric (p. E-4). (Days 12–21)

Unit Description

Introduction

Materials & Resources

- Unit Assignments and Assessments (pp. A-2–A-3)

Reading Zora Neale Hurston achieves a higher purpose than the exquisite pleasure of reading texts that engage and transport readers to intense worlds of the past. Exploring the cultural context of Hurston’s adult life during the Harlem Renaissance allows students to appreciate what life was like for an African American female writer during the

Figure 1  Portrait of Zora Neale Hurston by Carl Van Vechten, 1938. (Available from the Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division)

Tips for Teachers

Consider providing a tool such as the Unit Assignments and Assessments example (pp. A-2–A-3) to help students organize their time.
early twentieth century. Hurston created through her themes, characters, and language a rich legacy of regional literature with a far-reaching influence.

In this unit students will explore the powerful narration, vivid metaphors, and engaging dialogue that Hurston uses to describe a journey of self-discovery. However, it is important to establish ground rules before assigning the reading. Both “Sweat” and Their Eyes Were Watching God contain the word nigger. Hurston used the word to capture actual spoken language in the time and places about which she wrote. Her writing also explores sensitive issues such as racial stereotypes. The ground rules that you establish should insist that all members of the class be respectful of each other and of each other’s opinions. This does not mean they cannot disagree. It does mean that when students do disagree, they should try to offer reasonable arguments and calm explanations of their positions. It also means that personal attacks will not be tolerated.

It is important to create a safe atmosphere for students and pay attention to interpersonal dynamics in the classroom. Be aware of who speaks most often, who might feel silenced, and who might feel anger or discrimination. Expect to be a little uncomfortable in the classroom. Ask students to provide concrete examples of the claims they make, and use Reflective Questioning to encourage them to think more critically about what they say (Bolgatz, 2005). Remember that one purpose of the unit is to explore identity and how people express their ideas. Encourage students to explore their assumptions by asking probing questions that can move them further along in their understanding of themselves and their culture. Finally, throughout the unit encourage students to schedule a time to talk privately if they feel uncomfortable about class discussions.

Tips for Teachers

As an aid for reflective questioning, you may want to keep a set of questions at hand. Write the following questions on index cards, one question per card:

- Why do you think that?
- How do you know?
- Could you give me an example?
- What data do you have to support your position?
- What more can you tell me about . . . ?
- How might you find out or confirm?
- What essential question might this topic refer to?
- What more would you like to know about . . . ?
- Does this situation remind you of other problems you have solved?
- Can you find a similar, but simpler, problem to help you understand this one?
- How would you explain so that a 6-year old could understand that concept?
- Is there another way to represent this information?
- Can you solve the problem in another way?
- What is the main idea of . . . ?
- How does . . . affect . . . ?
- What is a new example of . . . ?
- How are . . . and . . . similar and how are they different?

Over time, add to your repertoire by inserting new questions, revising old ones, and constantly shuffling the deck so that you never settle into predictable habits.
Suggested Teaching Strategies/Procedures

Days 1–3

Students are assessed on their prior knowledge of Zora Neale Hurston and the early twentieth century. Students also take notes on a brief lecture about Hurston’s life and literary contributions. They continue to explore Hurston’s life and writing by discussing the essays “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” by Hurston and “Looking for Zora” by Alice Walker.

Materials & Resources

- Photographs of Zora Neale Hurston* (optional)
- Zora Neale Hurston Questionnaire (pp. B-2–B-3)
- Chart paper*
- “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” by Zora Neale Hurston (pp. B-4–B-6)
- “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” Reading Guide (pp. B-7–B-8)
- “Looking for Zora” by Alice Walker (pp. B-9–B-20)
- “Looking for Zora” Reading Guide (p. B-21)
- Class notebooks*
- Zora Neale Hurston Introductory Lecture (pp. B-22–B-23)
- “Sweat” by Zora Neale Hurston (pp. B-27–B-34)

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

The first day of the unit serves as a Background Knowledge Probe of students’ knowledge about Zora Neale Hurston and the time during which she wrote. It will also spark students’ interest in her writing. Therefore, as you acquaint students with Hurston, consider posting several pictures of her in the classroom. Students will spend most of the class time writing. Not only will they complete a questionnaire to assess their prior knowledge of Hurston and respond to a writing prompt about their own life journeys, but also they will do a Quick-Write about value systems. These writing samples will provide you with information about student knowledge and writing ability. The writing process will give students the opportunity to clarify their thinking and develop their thoughts. Having a few minutes to organize their thoughts is especially important for the personal tribute assignment they share with others.

Begin by introducing the unit: students will be reading the work of Hurston. They will be assessed on daily class participation, journal writings, quizzes, a research essay, presentations, and a unit project. Do not to give more than a brief overview of the unit, however. Otherwise, what you say may influence the preassessment.

Distribute the Zora Neale Hurston Questionnaire (pp. B-2–B-3), and give students ten minutes to complete it. As they work, write the following prompt on the board:

After completing a thirty-five year career that you have found very rewarding, you are ready to retire. At your retirement party your colleagues, friends, and family have been asked to reveal how you have influenced them and your contributions to society. What would you want people to say about you? Write your own tribute.
When students finish the questionnaire, ask them to respond in writing to the prompt. As students read Hurston’s work, it will become obvious to them that her writing affected her contemporaries in different ways. We will never know exactly how Hurston would have liked to have been remembered, but all of us know what impression we would like to make on others. What we say and how we say it, our actions, our attitudes, and our appearances leave impressions on others. The prompt requires that students think about themselves and their future. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to respond in their journals.

Students should then get into groups of three or four to share their writing. By this point in the course, students should be familiar with the process: one student will be the discussion leader, another will be the recorder, and a third student will be the reporter. After groups have discussed their tributes, each group’s reporter should share one or two main ideas from the discussion with the class. As the groups contribute ideas, compile a list on the board or on chart paper to post on the wall. During the unit the list will serve as a point of comparison between the way students would like to be remembered and the way Hurston has been remembered.

After the reporters have summarized their groups’ discussions, wrap up the day with a Quick-Write. Before giving students the prompt, tell them that Janie, the protagonist in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, goes on a physical journey that is also a journey of self-discovery, much like the protagonist of Herman Hesse’s novel *Siddhartha*. By the end of the book, Janie has a better understanding of her potential and what is important to her. She acquires this self-knowledge from a variety of influences. Ask students to think about their own character development and then to respond to the following prompt in their journals: How do people decide what is important in their lives? In other words, how are peoples’ value systems developed and by whom? The prompt is a preview of Essential Question 1.

For homework have students read the essays “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” (pp. B-4–B-6) by Zora Neale Hurston and “Looking for Zora” by Alice Walker (pp. B-9–B-20). Reading and discussing the works is intended as a lead-in to studying Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. When used together, the essays offer glimpses of Hurston’s life, her writing style, opinions, the importance she places on knowing and expressing oneself, and the effect she has had on others. In addition, students should complete the accompanying reading guides for “How It Feels To Be Colored Me?” (pp. B-7–B-8) and “Looking for Zora” (p. B-21). The reading guides require students to read carefully and help focus their attention on important details and the main ideas of the essays. As you introduce the homework, take a few minutes to explain the connotation of the word *colored* since 1925. The original connotation was neutral but today it is considered by many to be condescending or insulting.

Assign both essays, distribute both reading guides, and instruct students to be prepared to discuss “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” on Day 2 and “Looking for Zora” on Day 3. They should answer the reading guide questions and also write three to five interpretive and evaluative questions for each reading. Tell the students that you will be leading the discussion over “How It...
Feels To Be Colored Me,” using group work and a reflective questioning strategy.

At the beginning of Day 2, introduce students to Zora Neale Hurston and her heritage, life, and literary reputation through a lecture. Biographical notes about Hurston are provided in the Zora Neale Hurston Introductory Lecture background information, (pp. B-22–B-23); you may want to conduct additional research to provide students with information you personally find interesting and relevant. It is a good practice to deliver a lecture with frequent breaks: lecture for ten minutes, then ask students to discuss what was said, check notes, and ask questions. Students should take notes on the lecture, not only to practice taking notes, but also to have material to refer to as they read, answer questions, and write the essay later in the unit.

After the lecture, lead a class discussion of “How It Feels To Be Colored Me.” Begin by telling students that the biographical essay offers a taste of Hurston’s writing style and insight into how her value system began to develop as a child. It is also an opportunity to discuss Essential Question 1: “What determines one’s values?”

Read at least the first three paragraphs of the essay aloud so that students can hear the cadence of Hurston’s writing. Then reread the same paragraphs. This time, conduct a think-aloud to model the questions you might have while reading. As you read, ask questions that establish a reason to read further for the answers. For example, the question of “From whose point of view is this selection being told?” is answered by the repeated use of the first-person pronoun I. The answer to another question, “Why did she not know before age thirteen that she was colored?” starts to be revealed in the second paragraph when Hurston writes, “Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. It is exclusively a colored town. The only white people I knew passed through the town . . .” The inference you might make is that she did not have any reason to focus on color because it was not an issue in the all-African American community. Then point out that Hurston writes in the fifth paragraph, “But changes came in the family when I was thirteen, and I was sent to school in Jacksonville.” The rest of the essay explains the changes. It is important for students to see that you also have questions and do not always understand new material the first time you read it. Thinking aloud for students models the process of asking questions and discovering the answers within a text. It also reinforces the purpose of reading to learn.

After the think-aloud use the reading guide’s questions and questions of your own to lead the class to an understanding of Hurston’s background as well as her narrative style, point of view, use of imagery, symbols, and figurative language, and the effects of her word choice on tone. Allow time for students to ask any of the interpretive and evaluative questions they wrote in their reading guides.

By the end of the discussion, it is important that students realize that as Hurston grew up, her self-image changed as she was exposed to others’ perceptions of African Americans. Students should also understand that Hurston’s use of metaphor adds a depth of imagery to her writing that requires time to explore. Allowing that time will help students better comprehend not only this essay, but also Hurston’s short stories and novels.

At the close of the discussion, ask students to voice two of Hurston’s opinions in the essay and two examples of her writing style. List students’
responses on the board. If students do not suggest them first, you might suggest one or more of the following opinions and stylistic features of the text:

- Blunt, controversial refusal to condemn slavery
- Championing of her color
- Celebration of her extroversion and love of theatrics
- Empathy and pity for white people
- Attribution of things to “Great Soul” and “Great Stuffer of Bags”
- Vivid, poetic description of the effect of jazz
- Use of sentence fragments
- Evocative and unusual imagery

On Day 3 students will use their reading guides and questions they have written to discuss Alice Walker’s essay, “Looking for Zora” in groups of three to four. The group leader’s main responsibilities will be to ask the reading guide questions and keep their group focused on the discussion. By the end of class students should have answered all questions on the reading guide and discussed the interpretive and evaluative questions that students have. Allow a few minutes for groups to ask you and the class for additional help.

To help students draw conclusions and make inferences about what they have read, wrap up by assigning another Quick-Write. Students should respond in their journals to both of the following questions:

- How does Hurston use the essay form to announce her beliefs and attitudes toward her “color”? (Interpretive)
- What examples from your own life can you think of when “keeping what one has is never as exciting as the game of getting” it? (Evaluative)

For homework assign the short story “Sweat” and have students write three to five interpretive and evaluative questions about it. Tell students that as they are reading at home, they may choose to read aloud if they become confused by the language. Hearing the words may help them to better comprehend the text.
Day 4

Students write about and discuss their idea of the perfect marriage before discussing Zora Neale Hurston’s short story “Sweat.” The discussion serves as a model that students can emulate as they prepare to lead discussion over Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Materials & Resources

- Discussion Leader Rubric (pp. C-2–C-3)
- Class notebooks*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Glossary (pp. C-4–C-5)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Cast of Characters (pp. C-6–C-7)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapter Settings (p. C-8)
- Janie’s Genealogy Chart (p. C-9)

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

Before beginning the lesson, familiarize yourself with the descriptions of good discussion leadership on the Discussion Leader Rubric (pp. C-2–C-3) to ensure that you exemplify these descriptors. Students will evaluate your leadership using the same rubric that will then be used to evaluate them. This will give the students an opportunity to watch you analytically and to gain firsthand experience in evaluating a discussion. However, remind students to balance evaluating you with participating in the discussion. Participation, after all, is their primary job.

Before discussing the short story “Sweat,” take time to explain and organize the group discussion that will take place during the reading of Their Eyes Were Watching God. Distribute and read aloud the Discussion Leader Rubric (pp. C-2–C-3). Even though most students will have participated in a Fishbowl or student-led Reciprocal Teaching group in Unit 2, some may still have questions about the procedures.

After introducing the discussion assignment, warm up by assigning a Quick-Write in which they respond to these questions in their notebooks:

- What is your idea of the perfect marriage?
- How does the relationship between Delia and Sykes fit your idea of the perfect relationship?

Allow students approximately five minutes to write and then ask them to share ideas from their writing.

First, inform students that the short story introduces Hurston’s typical subject matter, character types, and style. Therefore, the discussion will model the kind of discussion they will lead in the coming days. Second, ask students what questions they have about the story. If students have literal questions, ask the class to find the answers in the text. Incorporate students’ interpretive questions of “Sweat” into the discussion. Ask students to read the short story aloud to reinforce the idea that hearing dialogue spoken makes it easier to understand. Be sure to read through the second page of the story where the dialect begins. Encourage students to read along silently, even to move their lips as they read. This is usually enough to help them catch meaning. Practicing with the short story will help the novel go more easily.

Arrange the class into an inner and an outer circle for a Fishbowl discussion. Students in the inner circle should be discussion leaders. They should bring books and notebooks to use in the discussion. Desks should be cleared of everything else. The inner circle members should discuss the
questions they have written. Strive to merely ask clarifying questions or to ask students to justify claims; other than that do not talk. Have students switch circles halfway through the period.

If these topics are not covered in the student-led discussion, introduce the following interpretive and evaluative questions:

- What does the story gain by early introduction of the bullwhip and Delia’s fear of snakes? (Evaluative)
- Why is it important that Delia is a washwoman rather than having a different job? (Evaluative)
- Why is Delia’s religious observance important? (Evaluative)
- Why does Sykes mock Delia for working on Sunday? Why does he call her a hypocrite? (Interpretive)
- What does each part of the story represent? What is gained by making the division? (Interpretive, Evaluative)
- What does the story gain by presenting Delia’s thoughts as she goes to sleep? (Evaluative) Her last thought before sleeping is of justice for Sykes’s wrongdoing. Why? (Evaluative)
- Why does the story describe Delia’s work-worn knees crawling “over the earth in Gethsemane and up the rocks of Calvary many, many times”? (Interpretive)
- Why does the sight of the fangs “curved like scimitars” trigger a “red fury” in Delia? (Interpretive)
- Delia tells Sykes she has moved her church membership so she does not have to take the sacrament with him. Does the story approve of or condemn her for doing this? (Evaluative)
- Why does the story describe the snake as “pouring his awful beauty from the basket upon the bed”? (Interpretive)
- Delia is a religious woman; why does she not warn Sykes about the snake? (Interpretive)
- Why does Delia not go for help when she knows Sykes has been bitten? (Interpretive)
- Why does Sykes’s “one open eye [shine] with hope”? (Interpretive)
- What is the meaning of the last sentence: “She could scarcely reach the Chinaberry tree, where she waited in the growing heat while inside she knew the cold river was creeping up and up to extinguish that eye which must know by now that she knew”? (Interpretive)
- Does the story blame or excuse Delia? How can you tell? (Evaluative)

To wrap up the discussion, have students respond to the discussion in a Quick-Write of seven to ten minutes in their notebooks. If too little time remains, have the students respond to the following prompts in their notebooks as homework:

- How might men and women readers react differently to this story?
- What causes readers to react differently to the same piece of literature?
- What have you discovered are the recurring topics?
- Do you agree or disagree that Delia’s actions were justified? Support your opinion.

Discuss students’ evaluations of the discussion.
Before class ends, introduce the reading schedule for *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and distribute the handouts *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Glossary (pp. C-4–C-5), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Cast of Characters (pp. C-6–C-7), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapter Settings (p. C-8), and Janie’s Genealogy Chart (p. C-9). Encourage students to refer to the handouts as they read.

Invite students to begin reading the novel immediately, especially those assigned to lead discussion early. By Day 12 of the unit, students should have read the first and second chapters. The entire reading schedule is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Reading Schedule for *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

| Day 12 | Chapters 1–2          |
| Day 13 | Chapters 3–5          |
| Day 14 | Quiz chapters 1–5; chapter 6 |
| Day 15 | Chapters 7–9          |
| Day 16 | Quiz chapters 1–9; chapters 10–12 |
| Day 17 | Chapters 13–15        |
| Day 18 | Chapters 16–18        |
| Day 19 | Quiz chapters 1–15; finish chapters 16–18 |
| Day 20 | Chapters 19–20        |
| Day 21 | Quiz chapters 16–20   |
Days 5–11

*Students are assigned to groups and given a question to research in preparation for a presentation. They receive the assignment sheet and grading rubric and discuss how to cite sources, if necessary.*

**Materials & Resources**

- Class notebooks*
- Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation (p. D-2)
- Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation Rubric (pp. D-3–D-4)
- Internet Guidelines*
- Access to library, media center, or computer lab*
- Audiovisual equipment*
- Zora Neale Hurston Persuasive Essay (p. D-5)
- Persuasive Essay Rubric (p. D-6)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

Warm up by asking students to do a Think-Pair-Share on their responses to the Quick-Write from Day 4. Then ask students to share one interesting idea from their discussion.

Direct students’ attention to Essential Question 2: “What was it like to live and work as a female African American author during the early twentieth century?” To answer the question and to contextualize *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, students will conduct a Historical Investigation in order to explore the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston’s life and literary contributions, into the lives and contributions of her contemporaries, and the critical response to her writing.

Distribute the Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation prompt (p. D-2) and explain the assignment. Students will research in small groups and then present their findings to the class. Assigning specific research questions to student groups allows you to match the students’ abilities to the difficulty level of the question. Each presentation must include at least three resources cited in MLA or another standard bibliographic style. The individual notes that students take should be handed in at the time of the presentation. After introducing the assignment, distribute the Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation Rubric (pp. D-3–D-4), explain it, and respond to any questions students may have. Point out that presenters will receive individual and group scores on the presentation.

After the topics have been assigned, you may need to review appropriate behavior in the library, how to use Internet search engines, how to cite Internet sources, and how to evaluate websites. Encourage students to use the Internet Guidelines worksheet (which they first used in Unit 1, *Introduction to English 11*). Many students will use the Internet to find information, but encourage them to use

**Tips for Teachers**

It is often difficult to evaluate many different aspects of a group presentation at one time. You may need to adjust the rubric to focus on only the criteria that you feel are most important for meeting the course objectives and the needs of your students.

You may want to reserve the first three research questions for students with poor research skills. If you do not see a need to match the difficulty of the question to the group, let students choose their own group and draw questions from a box or envelope.
all available resources including reference books, scholarly essays, magazines, short stories, and novels.

Finally, ask groups to brainstorm how they will proceed. Encourage them to devise a plan of action by identifying tasks and timelines, and assigning responsibilities. If time permits, allow students to go to the library, media center, or computer lab to begin research on the assigned research questions.

Days 6 and 7 should be spent researching. Students should work in groups to collect, review, and organize information as well as to identify gaps in or repetition of material. If you have time in your schedule, you may want to give students an additional day to research. Throughout the research days, move from group to group asking questions; in particular, ask groups to evaluate the strength of their sources. Wrap up each day by checking on each group’s progress.

After researching, students should spend Days 8 and 9 organizing their research information and constructing a works cited page as well as planning and practicing their presentations.

As you listen and talk to each group, some students will likely share their struggles or frustrations with organizing their presentation material. Assist them by asking Reflective Questions such as:

- What was your assigned question?
- What type of information is the question asking you to find?
- Does this information fit a particular type of writing organization such as cause/effect or chronological?

The first presentation prompt, for example, could be organized by cause and effect. Chronological order would be a logical choice for prompts 2, 3, and 4 because they deal with biographical information and how an author’s writing develops over time. Prompts 5 and 6 are more complex, so a combination of organizational techniques could be used. For example, the introductory part of each presentation may be organized chronologically, since students will be providing brief biographical and literary history for each of the authors. The body of these presentations could be organized around a thesis statement followed by supporting examples.

All presentations should conclude by restating or paraphrasing the question, and they should provide a brief summary of what the group considers the most important aspects of the answer. This will help students identify the main points of the presentation as they are taking notes.

As students work, remind them to review the Hurston Research Presentation Rubric to ensure they are fulfilling the expectations for the presentation, including the audiovisual component. Wrap up each day by allowing students to share solutions to problems they have encountered. For homework, students should practice delivering their presentation.

Before presentations begin on Day 10, quickly review the Cornell note-taking system so students will be ready to take notes about the new information they will be learning. Collect the presenters’ research notes and works cited pages. All students should take notes on the presentations, but be sure to choose three students to fill out the Hurston Research Presentation Rubric for each group. Asking these students to complete the rubric provides additional feedback to presenters, and gives you additional information on which to base your evaluation. If you are concerned that students might not
listen to other presentations, ask them to hand in the notes they take for credit and tell students that they will be responsible for knowing the information for their own essays.

Before class ends, distribute the Zora Neale Hurston Persuasive Essay prompt (p. D-5) and the Persuasive Essay Rubric (p. D-6). For homework, students should read both documents and be prepared to ask questions about them on Day 11.

After the presentations conclude on Day 11, wrap up the day by leading a brief discussion over Essential Question 2: “What was it like to live and work as a female African American author during the early part of the twentieth century?” For homework, students should read the first two chapters of Their Eyes Were Watching God. They should bring to the next class any evaluative and interpretive questions they have about characters, settings, and plots.
Day 12

Students work in small groups to discuss the concept of “arranged marriage” and begin class discussion of Their Eyes Were Watching God. The final project is assigned, which is part of the culminating assessment.

Materials & Resources

- Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Overhead projector*
- Class notebooks*
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Their Eyes Were Watching God Project (pp. E-2–E-3)
- Their Eyes Were Watching God Project Rubric (p. E-4)

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

In the first eleven days of this unit students have studied Zora Neale Hurston and her writing. Today students will begin to analyze and discuss her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God. To prepare for further discussions, students will review the terms symbol and frame narration. Their responsibilities as leaders and participants in the student-led discussions will also be explained in greater detail.

Because there are several activities to complete on this day, assign students to groups as they enter the room. As before, one student in each group should be the discussion leader, one should be the recorder, and one should be the reporter. Other members of the group should be active contributors. Students will use this same group discussion strategy throughout the study of Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Warm up by asking students to define the word symbol and provide examples of symbols. If they need prompting, ask students to explain the symbolism of the United States flag or of a heart. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, as the protagonist Janie grows up she is intrigued by a pear tree in her yard. She observes how natural and beautiful it is for bees to seek the pollen in the pear blossom and to fertilize other blossoms. The symbolism of the pear tree is a motif that weaves throughout the story as Janie reflects on her relationships with different men. There is no need to explain the symbol of the pear tree further at this time, but as students read they should pay attention to the instances when the pear tree is mentioned.

Review points of culture that will be important for students to understand as they read Their Eyes Were Watching God. For example, the novel has a marriage in it that has been arranged by the protagonist’s grandmother. Ask students to name any famous or infamous couples in real life or fiction whose marriages were arranged. Students may say marriages in India and Korea are arranged. They might also offer some names from British royal history or the marriage between Marie Antoinette and Louis XIV of France. Students who have read Romeo and Juliet will probably remember that Juliet’s father arranged a marriage for her with Paris. On the board or overhead projector, write the following questions:

Tips for Teachers

If you decide that more extensive discussion is necessary for pear symbolism, many resources are available. For example, The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols (1996), says, “In dreams, the fruit is a ‘typically erotic symbol, fraught with sensuality . . . its sweet taste, juiciness, and also to its shape which has a suggestion of the feminine about it’” (p. 742).
What do you know about arranged marriages?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of arranged marriages?
Would you be interested in having your marriage arranged? Why or why not?
Would you trust your parent(s) or a family representative to select a good partner for you?
How might your choice of a spouse be similar to or different from one that others would make?

Give students ten minutes to discuss the questions.
Next, give students time to ask questions they have about the reading. Encourage them to focus on literal questions dealing with character, setting, and plot that will aid their understanding of the basic narrative. Their homework was to bring interpretive and evaluative questions to class for discussion, but they may have more basic questions that need to be answered first. Have other class members answer these first, if possible, before answering them yourself.

Students should form two concentric circles for a Fishbowl discussion about *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Your role is to sit outside the circle, evaluate the discussion leaders’ contributions with the Discussion Leader Rubric, listen carefully to ideas posed by other students, and intervene only when necessary for clarity.

Students should lead discussion for fifteen to twenty minutes. At the end of the discussion, move into the circle to discuss reactions to the discussion and to clarify any literary elements.

If student discussion did not directly address the following details, draw attention to them:
- Details of Janie’s recent past
- The difference between the men’s and the women’s reactions to Janie’s return
- The nature of the friendship between Janie and Pheoby
- Janie’s desire to reveal her experiences
- Nanny’s desire to “preach a great sermon” but “there wasn’t no pulpit” for her
- Nanny’s experiences as a slave that shape her attitude toward Janie’s need for protection

Then, introduce the term *frame narration*. Frame narration is a story within a story. Sometimes narratives include multiple frames. Ask students to locate where in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Janie becomes the narrator. Then ask students what effect this should have on reader understanding. Have them describe the differences in the language that the narrator and Janie use. Ask students if they can think of other novels that have used the same structure, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* or Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*.

Before class ends, introduce the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Project (pp. E-2–E-3) and the accompanying rubric (p. E-4). Students will be required to create and present a project that demonstrates their understanding of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or shows that, through their reading, research, and discussion, they have a new understanding of Hurston and the times in which she lived. In other words, students show their understanding by synthesizing what they have learned. Students may work alone or in a small group for the project. They may choose one of several options or suggest their own. All
students should get approval from you before beginning the project. Along with the project, they will hand in a one-page critique paper that describes the process they used to create the project and assess their work. They should respond to each of the following questions in the critique:

- Why did you choose this project?
- What did you learn from doing the project?
- What did you like and dislike about the final project?
- What would you do differently if you had to do it again?

All students will present their projects to the class. Each presentation should include a summary of the critique.

Wrap up the lesson with a Quick-Write by asking students to write their reactions to the first two chapters and the discussion in their journals. Students should respond to the following questions:

- What did you learn from this discussion?
- What did you find interesting?
- What questions do you still have either about the book or the discussion?

If time is an issue, have the students respond to the questions for homework.

For homework, students should read chapters 3–5 and write any questions they have. In addition, they should decide what project they would like to do and if they plan to work with others, decide who those people will be.
Day 13

*Students discuss chapters 3–5. Students also learn the term free indirect discourse and apply it to the novel.*

**Materials & Resources**

- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
- Class notebooks
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Hurston’s Use of Language (p. F-2)

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit*

For the day’s warm-up, give students five to ten minutes to identify the project they are thinking of doing and to form project groups. Students may also work alone. Use the time to approve student projects and to help brainstorm ideas.

Then, introduce the term *free indirect discourse*, in which a narrator adopts the style of another narrator such that the voices are indistinguishable. In free indirect discourse it can be unclear whether the narrator or a character is speaking. Ask for volunteers to point out where in chapters 3–5 Janie and the narrator’s voices shift. Ask students what effect this has on their reactions to what is happening in the story.

Let the student leaders direct the flow of the discussion. However, you should make sure that they stay on topic and that each student participates. Some students may attempt to dominate the conversation, so make sure that each student gets a chance to express his or her opinion.

Then, follow the student-led discussion procedure from Day 12, evaluating discussion leaders’ contributions with the Discussion Leader Rubric. If the discussion does not cover the following details, draw students’ attention to them:

- How one’s value system is determined
- Janie’s observations of pear blossoms and bees
- Nanny’s insistence that Logan’s wealth makes him the best husband for Janie
- Logan’s expectations for Janie as a wife
- The death of Janie’s dream of love as a result of her marriage to Logan
- The reasons for Janie’s attraction to Joe Starks

Wrap up the lesson with a Quick-Write by asking students to respond in their journals to one of the following prompts:

- Considering Nanny’s life experiences, is she correct in wanting Janie to marry Logan? Did Janie do the right thing leaving Logan? For each statement support your stance with passages from the book.
- Out of fear for Janie’s future Nanny sets in motion a chain of events to protect Janie from having to live the same disappointing and difficult life that she herself has led. What type of parent do...
you think you will be? What parenting behaviors of your parents will you emulate and what will you change? Why might significant adults in your life sometimes “nag” you about such things as getting a good education, driving safely, and choosing friends wisely?

- Summarize the relationship between Logan and Janie and explain why Janie is not happy in the relationship. In addition, ask a question about something in the reading you do not fully understand.

For homework, students should complete the Hurston’s Use of Language worksheet (p. F-2). They should also review chapters 1–5 in preparation for a quiz and read chapter 6.
Day 14

*Students take a quiz on the first five chapters of Their Eyes Were Watching God. They discuss chapter 6 and focus on the language of porch talk.*

**Materials & Resources**

- Class notebooks*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 1–5 Quiz (pp. G-2–G-3)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 1–5 Quiz Key (p. G-4)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Glossary of Porch Talk (p. G-5)

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

For the day’s warm up activity give students five minutes to review their notes. As they review, collect their homework.

It is a good idea to hold students accountable with periodic quizzes that ensure they are reading carefully and understanding the novel. A quiz provides both the student and you with information about the student’s comprehension. It also allows for reteaching or clarifying discussions before continuing. Beginning with the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 1–5 Quiz (pp. G-2–G-3), the quizzes in this unit progress from primarily literal questions about the characters, setting, and plot developments to interpretive questions that assess students’ comprehension. Quizzes should be adapted to the actual class discussions. As students finish and hand in the quiz, they should work on their essays until everyone has finished.

As before, students should lead discussion over chapter 6 of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Evaluate discussion leaders’ contributions with the Discussion Leader Rubric. If the following details are not addressed during the student-led discussion of chapter 6, address them:

- The tone of the following sentence: “People sat around on the porch and passed around the pictures of their thoughts for the others to look at and see.”
- Janie’s analogy between Joe freeing the mule and Lincoln freeing the slaves. Ask students to recall previous statements about mules from the text.
- Describe Joe’s gesture of buying the mule and what the others say about it.
- A description of the scene of the mule’s funeral.
- This description of Janie and Joe’s marriage: “So gradually, she pressed her teeth together and learned to hush. The spirit of the marriage left the bedroom and took to living in the parlor . . . . She wasn’t petal-open anymore with him.”
- Janie’s reaction when Joe strikes her: “She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. Then she went inside there to see what it was.”
- Janie’s speech at the end of the chapter to the men who have been discussing Mrs. Robbins.
- The connection between Janie’s waning affection for Jody and the way he treats her in the store.
Distribute the Glossary of Porch Talk handout (p. G-5). Have students read the handout, and then ask them to identify the kinds of dialogue the porch talkers in the novel engage in. They should cite specific examples from the text. As you conclude the discussion, invite students to describe what they learned about the people and events in Eatonville from the porch talk scenes. Students should also explore what effect the porch talks have on Janie.

Wrap up the day by asking students to respond with a Quick-Write to the following prompts in their journals:

- What did you learn from today’s discussion?
- What did you find interesting?
- What questions do you still have that were not addressed?
- Identify three adjectives that describe life in Eatonville for Janie and three different adjectives that describe how life in Eatonville is portrayed for Joe. Find evidence from the text that supports each adjective. Examples should address how Janie and Joe each perceive her or his own life and how others perceive Janie’s and Joe’s lives.

For homework, students should read chapters 7–9 and, as before, write any questions they may have.
Day 15

Students review the first quiz and continue discussion of the novel. In addition, they use the Four Corners strategy to take a stance on an issue and justify it.

Materials & Resources

- Copies of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 1–5 Quiz
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Signs for a Four Corners activity*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

For the warm up have students improvise a porch talk scene based on *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, or ask students to improvise a similar scene in the school cafeteria using high school slang. The purposes of this activity are to give students an opportunity to perform in front of the class, to validate their own and others’ dialects, and to inspire understanding of the novel by way of analogy. Ten to fifteen minutes should be sufficient time.

Next, review the quiz to provide students with feedback while the material is still fresh in their minds. Timely reviews especially benefit students who might be confused or who are not reading carefully enough to meet the unit objectives.

Before returning the quizzes, have students get into groups of four to six students each. Then distribute two blank copies of the quiz to two students in the group. Designate one of the students in each group as a discussion leader and the other as a recorder. The leader should read the question and the remaining group members should offer answers while the recorder writes the answer on one of the blank quizzes. As each group works, circulate around the room and address any problems, being careful not to reveal answers. Then, return students’ graded quizzes and give them a minute to compare their answers to the key their group has generated. Because students are expected to have taken ownership of their own knowledge, at this point few questions should remain. Instruct students who still have questions to mark them on their quiz papers for you to review. The review should take five to ten minutes.

After students finish reviewing the quiz, begin the student-led discussion of chapters 7–9. Evaluate discussion leaders’ contributions with the Discussion Leader Rubric. Draw their attention to the following points, if students do not cover them themselves:

- Explore the following passage: “she was the world and the heavens boiled down to a drop. Man attempting to climb to painless heights from his dung hill.”
- Explain Janie’s split consciousness: How does one part of her stay in the store and the other lie under a shady tree?
How does Joe react to growing older? Discuss Janie’s consciousness of Joe’s aging.

What prompts Janie to remark, “When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change of life.” How do the men respond? How does Joe respond?

Explain the following simile: Joe’s “vanity bled like a flood.”

What does the phrase “the sleep of swords” indicate about the atmosphere between Joe and Janie after Joe is publicly embarrassed by her?

Janie describes Joe’s face as having “a look with all the unthinkable coldness of outer space.” How does this contrast to the way he looked when they first met?

Why does Joe choose a voodoo doctor instead of a medical doctor when he is ill?

Explain Janie’s concept of Death.

In Janie’s final conversation with Joe, she says, “Mah own mind had tuh besqueeze and crowded out tuh make room for yours in me.” Why did she wait twenty years to say this to him?

Janie’s reaction to Joe’s death is, “Poor Joe! . . . Jody is dead. Mah husband is gone from me.” Why does Janie refer to her husband with two different names?

What is the difference between Janie’s thoughts and actions when Joe is buried?

What does Janie’s burning of the head rags symbolize?

What memories of Nanny does Joe’s death trigger in Janie?

What do the townspeople assume will happen to Janie after Joe’s death?

Why does Hezekiah imitate Joe and what does Janie think about it?

Explain Janie’s confidence to Pheoby that “mourning oughtn’t tuh last no longer’n grief.”

Keeping in mind the class discussion, consider Essential Question 3: “Why do readers react differently to the same piece of literature?” How might men and women readers react differently to this novel? Conclude the discussion by using the Four Corners strategy to get students to take a stance on a position statement.

The Four Corners strategy helps to develop listening, verbal communication, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. It can be used to reinforce course content, to clarify student values, and to develop an understanding of differences in values and opinions. Use these steps to conduct the Four Corners strategy:

1. On four large signs, write the following phrases: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Place these signs in the four corners of the classroom. Clear the corners by placing chairs and tables in the center of the room. On an overhead transparency write the following statement: Janie’s marriage to Joe demonstrates that Janie’s way of seeking happiness is no better than Nanny’s.

2. Read the statement aloud.
3. Ask students to take a position by moving to the corner that best signifies their response to the statement. Students may change corners at any time.

4. Once students have selected their corners, call on them to give simple, one-sentence statements justifying their opinions on the position statement.

To wrap up the day, ask students what is revealed about Janie’s and Nanny’s ideas of happiness by the Four Corners activity.

For homework students should read chapters 10–12. They should also study for a quiz over chapters 1–9.
Day 16

Students take a second quiz and continue discussion of the novel.

Materials & Resources

- Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz (pp. H-2–H-3)
- Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz Key (p. H-4)
- Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Chart paper*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

As on Day 14, give students time to review their notes, then distribute the Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz (pp. H-2–H-3). Most of the questions test students’ knowledge of chapters 6–9. Students should work on their essays until everyone is finished with the quiz.

After the quiz, students should lead a discussion on chapters 10–12 of Their Eyes Were Watching God. Evaluate discussion leaders’ contributions with the Discussion Leader Rubric. In addition, ask the following questions after the student-led discussion:

- What are Janie’s first impressions of Tea Cake?
- *Verigible* is a form of veritable (truthful). What would you expect a character with this name to be like?
- Why does Tea Cake ask Janie to play checkers?
- How do Tea Cake’s frequent references to her hair effect Janie?
- How does Janie’s first meeting with Tea Cake contrast with her first meeting with Joe Starks?
- In what ways do Janie and Tea Cake’s conversations differ from other porch talk?
- After their first night together, Janie “got up and opened the window and let Tea Cake leap forth and mount to the sky on a wind. That was the beginning of things.” Given this beginning to their relationship, what might you predict about their future life together?
- Why does Tea Cake disappear for three days and how does Janie react to his disappearance?
- Tea Cake tells Janie to “Have de nerve tuh say whut you mean” after Janie is hesitant about going to the picnic. How is this different from advice Joe would give her?
- What are the reactions of the townspeople to Janie openly seeing Tea Cake?
- What do Pheoby and Sam speculate about Tea Cake and Janie’s relationship?
- What are Pheoby’s words of advice to Janie, and what is Janie’s reaction?
- Pheoby refers to Mis’ Tyler and Who Flung as a warning to Janie. What analogy is she suggesting?

Wrap up the lesson by asking students to predict the future of Janie and Tea Cake’s relationship. Encourage them to take into account Janie’s character and Tea Cake’s behavior thus far. Record students’ predictions on chart paper so that they can compare them to the other relationships Janie has had.

For homework, students should read chapters 13–15.
Day 17

Students review the quiz over chapters 1–9 of Their Eyes Were Watching God and discuss chapters 13–15 of the novel.

Materials & Resources

- Copies of Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz
- Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Class notebooks*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

Review students’ quizzes over chapters 1–9 of Their Eyes Were Watching God as you did on Day 15. Since this will be the second time they have done this, it should move quickly. Students should be in different groups than they were on Day 15.

Students should continue discussing the novel as you evaluate leaders’ contributions with the Discussion Leader Rubric. After several days at this activity, students should be comfortable leading the discussion. Keep an eye on the class as they discuss and make sure that all students are participating. Afterwards, call attention to the following points:

- Describe Janie’s reaction to Tea Cake taking her $200 and his explanation for spending it.
- What reason does Tea Cake give for not taking Janie to his party?
- How does Janie justify Tea Cake’s gambling?
- What conclusion can you draw from Tea Cake’s insistence that Janie save the $200 he has won?
- What is attractive to Janie and Tea Cake about working on the muck?
- What are possible interpretations of the phrase “Work all day for money, fight all night for love”?
- Tea Cake insists that Janie learn to fire a gun, saying, “Even if you didn’t never find no game, it’s always some trashy rascal dat needs uh good killin’.” What is the tone of this remark?
- What prompts Janie’s jealousy, which is described as a “seed of fear . . . growing into a tree”?
- Explain Tea Cake’s description of Janie as “something tuh make uh man forgit tuh git old and forgit tuh die.”
- Why would Hurston develop Tea Cake in such a way that his behavior is highly suspect and demonstrates a total disregard for Janie’s feelings? (Students may suggest that Hurston is building suspense, portraying stereotypes of deceived women and/or insensitive men, or showing how jealousy might be the result of freedom in a relationship.)
- How does Janie’s wedding to Tea Cake compare to her two previous weddings?
- How is Janie’s decision to move to the Everglades different from her decision to move to Eatonville?
- Compare Tea Cake’s house to Joe Starks’ store as meeting places.
- How is Janie’s work on the muck different from cutting potatoes for Logan and working in the store for Joe?
How do Janie’s lifestyles in the Everglades and Eatonville differ?

How does Janie’s role in the evening conversations on the muck differ from her role in Eatonville conversations?

Help students explore the meaning of itinerancy. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, Janie and Tea Cake, like many others, move to southern Florida to pick produce. They go where they can get jobs, and they are prepared to move again when there is another crop to pick somewhere else. To prepare your students to empathize with Janie and Tea Cake as outsiders, have them take part in a small group activity.

For this group activity, divide the class into groups of three or four students each. Give groups ten minutes to discuss the following questions:

- Have you ever moved to a new school or become friends with someone new? What was difficult about the situation? How did you or your friend adjust to new surroundings?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the “new kid”?
- What do you know about itinerant or migrant workers? How are they different from workers who are transferred routinely as part of their job?
- Are there any itinerant workers in our state? Do you know any personally?
- What are the similarities between being new at a school and being an itinerant worker?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an itinerant worker?
- What are the connotations of the terms migrant worker and itinerant worker?

At the conclusion of the discussion, groups should record three to five questions or thoughts inspired by the discussion to share with the class. Sharing should be quick. Have one member of each group contribute a new question or statement, then continue quickly around the room until all groups have contributed. Then, explore the questions and the theme of itinerancy with the class.

Because students are about halfway through the book, they have read enough to be able to talk with significant understanding about it. Allow discussion to take more than one class period. Wrap up Day 17 with a Quick-Write. Ask students to take a position in response to the following statement in their notebooks:

Tea Cake has proven that he is honorable and true; he is an ideal mate for Janie. Support your stance with information from the text as well as from class discussions.

For homework, students should read chapters 16–18 and write any questions or comments they have.
Day 18

*Students continue discussing* Their Eyes Were Watching God.

**Materials & Resources**

- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Overhead projector*
- Class notebooks*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit*

Warm up by asking students to list the main scenes in chapters 13–15 on the board or an overhead transparency. This should be a quick review before moving on to the student-led discussions. As usual, use the Discussion Leader Rubric to evaluate leaders’ contributions. If the following details do not emerge from the student-led discussion, address them:

- What are Mrs. Turner’s opinions about dark skinned African Americans? Why does Mrs. Turner admire Janie and want to introduce her to her brother?
- What do Janie and Tea Cake think about Mrs. Turner?
- What do you learn about Mrs. Turner from her speech about Booker T. Washington?
- What is the difference between Janie’s private and public reactions to Tea Cake’s beating her?
- What causes the incident at Mrs. Turner’s eating house that involves Tea Cake, Stew Beef, Sop-de-Bottom, Bootyny, Motor Boat, and the others?
- Explain the significance of the title passage concluding in “but their eyes were watching God.” Why did Hurston place it so late in the novel?
- Janie and Tea Cake’s conversation when they reach Palm Beach reaffirms their love for each other. Identify the lines from the text that support this idea.
- What are the reactions of the Seminoles, animals, ’Lias, and workers to signs that a hurricane is coming?
- Identify passages that create a vivid image of the impending storm.
- Does Motor Boat’s presence in the hurricane scene add to the story? Why or why not?
- Predict what could happen after the dog bites Tea Cake’s face.

It may be helpful to students to compare the hurricane in the novel to a real-life hurricane such as Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast in 2005. Ask students to list in their journals Katrina’s effects. If any students in your class have been in a hurricane, ask them to describe the experience. Then, students should try to include a statement from each of the following areas of Katrina’s impact: personal/psychological, physiological health, economic, political, and social in their journals. Record on the board or overhead projector what they say for each category. Have each student contribute one new idea for the list, and continue around the room until all statements have been shared. No student should repeat something that has already been said. When the list is complete, ask students to look it over and, as a class, draw a
general conclusion from the information presented for each category. At the end of the discussion, ask students to compare information about Katrina to the hurricane in the novel.

Ask students to describe Mrs. Turner’s character. Students should understand that Mrs. Turner exemplifies racism and bigotry. Have them point to specific passages that show Mrs. Turner’s racism. How do Janie and Tea Cake feel about her?

Students should also identify new information they have about Tea Cake. As important as the hurricane is in this novel for providing a catastrophic setting for the dramatic rescue of Janie, students also need to focus on Tea Cake’s need to be in control. Even though Janie loves Tea Cake, he has a need to publicly demonstrate his domination of her. This could be interpreted as a way of enslaving her, of keeping her in her place like a possession. Given the title of the novel, some students may see parallels between God’s control over God’s kingdom and Tea Cake’s control over his own. This is an important discussion and may take additional time.

Wrap up the lesson with a Quick-Write by asking students to respond to the following prompts in their journals:

- Compare the effects of the hurricane in the novel to the effects of Hurricane Katrina.
- Why did Hurston include Mrs. Turner as a character? What does she represent?

For homework, have students study for a quiz over chapters 1–15, and continue reading chapters 16–18.
Day 19

_Students take a quiz on chapters 1–15 of Their Eyes Were Watching God and discuss the novel through chapter 18._

**Materials & Resources**

- *Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–15 Quiz (pp. I-2–I-4)*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–15 Quiz Key (p. I-5)*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston*
- *Class notebooks*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit*

As before, warm up by giving students time to review their notes for a quiz over chapters 1–15 of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Although this quiz is cumulative, most of the questions test students’ knowledge of chapters 10–15. Distribute the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 1–15 Quiz (pp. I-2–I-4), and give students as much time as they need to complete it. As students finish the quiz, they should use the extra time to work on their essays.

Finish the student-led discussion of chapters 16–18, if necessary. No new reading was assigned for this day to allow some flexibility for discussion. Then, have students reread the first paragraph of the novel. Invite them to speculate about what will happen in the last chapters of the novel based on what they have read so far in the novel. Students should write a short prediction in their journals. They will revisit the prediction after they finish the novel.

Day 19 can also be used as a day for student-teacher writing conferences. As students finish their quizzes, call them up individually or in small groups to your desk and speaking quietly see if they have any questions or concerns about the essay.

For homework, students should read chapters 19–20 and think about how Hurston ties the beginning and end of the novel together.
Day 20

_Students review the third quiz as well as the term theme. Students finish discussing the novel and focus on what makes a novel a classic._

### Materials & Resources

- Copies of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 1–15 Quiz
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston*
- Discussion Leader Rubric
- Class notebooks*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

As with the previous quizzes, have students gather in groups and review the quiz. Then conclude the student-led discussions of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, evaluating leaders’ work with the Discussion Leader Rubric. Make sure that the following questions are included in the discussion of chapters 19–20:

- How does the image of Death, personified at the beginning of chapter 19, compare to other images you have seen or read about?
- How does the segregated burial of the hurricane victims compare to Joe’s funeral and burial?
- What conclusions do Janie and Tea Cake draw about the attitudes of many white people toward African Americans?
- Why does Janie refer to Tea Cake as “the son of Evening Sun”?
- Explain Janie’s thoughts about God’s role in Tea Cake’s illness: “She looked hard at the sky for a long time . . . God would do less than He had in His heart.”
- Was there any other action that Janie could have taken besides shooting Tea Cake?
- Given how Tea Cake contracted rabies, what prediction might be made after Tea Cake bites Janie?
- Explain the peoples’ attitudes toward Janie at the trial.
- Relate the concept of frame narration to chapter 20.
- How does Pheoby respond to Janie at the end of Janie’s story?
- Describe Janie’s feelings toward Tea Cake at the end of the story.
  What did he contribute to her life?

Ask students to define the literary term _theme_. As they define the term, ask them to explain the difference between a topic and a theme. A _topic_ is the subject of a text. A _theme_ is a point that an author is making about life. Generally, a story’s theme should be stated in a complete sentence to emphasize its specificity. This should help students keep the terms topic and theme clear in their minds.

On a sheet of scratch paper, have each student identify themes for “Sweat” and “How It Feels To Be Colored Me.” Quickly call on several students to share themes they identified. Ask the class to evaluate which themes are the most accurate and the best stated. Help students revise their themes as specific claims about the stories’ main ideas. Students should leave the discussion able to write themes on their own. When students understand the concept of theme, ask them to identify the themes of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Finally, ask students to connect the idea of a theme to Essential Question 4: “Does *Their Eyes Were Watching God* fit the definition of classic literature?”
reason a novel becomes identified as a classic is that its themes remain relevant across time and place. The themes of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* illustrate that:

- Love must come naturally; it cannot be forced.
- Material goods do not guarantee happiness.
- One’s concept of self changes and grows throughout life.
- Mourning should last no longer than grief.
- People use others for their own ends.

Bring the discussion to a close by asking students to define the term *classic literature* and to evaluate whether *Their Eyes Were Watching God* fits that definition. Allow the discussion to range broadly, and encourage students to debate the novel’s merits. It may be worthwhile during the discussion to explain that even scholars cannot agree on the definition of *classic literature*. Certain qualities, however, appear in many definitions of the term. The definitions say that classic literature:

- Expresses some universal truth
- Withstands the test of time and place
- Is influenced by and influences history
- Is an accepted model of excellence
- In a broad sense no longer refers only to ancient Greek and Roman works

To wrap up Day 20 and to consolidate learning, ask students to do a Quick-Write in which they take a stand on each of the following statements in their journals:

- It is an inconsistency of the novel that Janie, who is supposed to have found her own voice, does not speak in her own defense at the trial.
- It is a weakness of the novel that Janie never has a child.

Students should support their stances with evidence from the text.

Before students leave class, remind them that their persuasive essays are due on Day 21. In addition, students should study for the final quiz over chapters 16–20. To prepare for group presentations, students should list on index cards the names of group members, the date of presentation, and the equipment or other materials they will need.
Day 21

_Students submit their essays and take the final quiz over Their Eyes Were Watching God._

**Materials & Resources**

- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 16–20 Quiz (pp. J-2–J-3)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 16–20 Quiz Key (p. J-4)

As you collect students’ essays and index cards, ask students to share something they learned from writing the essay. Encourage each student to offer an idea that no other student has mentioned.

When students have finished the warm-up activity, distribute *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 16–20 Quiz (pp. J-2–J-3). This quiz focuses only on the last five chapters because they include many important events, such as the climax of the novel.

After the quiz, take time for a wrap-up discussion of overarching ideas that students find interesting and relevant. If questions have been raised in class that you feel need more discussion, address them. Otherwise, ask the following questions:

- How is Nanny like all mothers who try to protect their children?
- How is Tea Cake all too human?
- How do culture and vulnerability lead Janie to put up with twenty years of subservience?
- Is Janie’s encounter with love a surrender to a fairy-tale life?
- Why does Tea Cake believe it is right for him to beat Janie?
- Which, if any, of the archetypal female categories does Janie fit into: virgin princess, mother, wise old crone, _femme fatale_, or wizened evil witch?
- Did students’ predictions about Janie and Tea Cake’s relationship come to pass?

Finally, give students time to meet in their presentation groups or to work on their individual presentations if they are not in a group.

For homework students should practice for the final presentation.

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If you would like to extend the study of the novel further, organize a formal debate about it. Matt Copeland’s *Socratic Circles: Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in Middle and High School* (2005) and Carla Beard’s Web *English Teacher* (2008) are excellent resources that explain how to set up classroom debates.
Days 22–25

*Students review the last quiz and present their final projects.*

**Materials & Resources**

- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapters 16–20 Quiz
- Audiovisual equipment and materials for student presentations*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Project Rubric (p. E-4)

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

Review the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Chapter 16–20 Quiz as before. Address any questions students have that were not answered by the group discussion.

When the quiz review is finished, students will present projects as the final assessment. Select at least three students to be peer evaluators for each presentation. Give each peer evaluator a copy of the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Project Rubric. Listening to student projects for a number of days can make even the most attentive students restless. Therefore, remind the class that they have worked for two weeks on these projects and deserve an attentive audience. It will be their final chance to show what they have learned about Zora Neale Hurston.

At the conclusion of the presentations, wrap up the unit by distributing the Zora Neale Hurston Questionnaire (pp. B-2–B-3) that students filled out at the beginning of the unit and have them fill in the “Later Thoughts” sections. This can be done during class, if time permits, or assigned as homework.
ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING

Selected Course Objectives

B.4. Sentence-Level Constructions

a. Recognize and correct errors that weaken writing, including nonparallel structure, shifts from active to passive voice, misused modifiers, and awkward sentence construction
b. Combine phrases and clauses to create sentences of varying lengths and sophistication (e.g., simple, compound-complex, balanced, periodic, cumulative) and to coordinate or subordinate meaning for effect
c. Use parallel structure to present items in a series and items juxtaposed for emphasis
d. Evaluate own sentence style by identifying common sentence patterns and constructions
e. Use resources and reference materials (e.g., dictionaries and thesauruses) to select effective and precise vocabulary that maintains consistent style, tone, and voice
f. Use formal, informal, standard, and technical language effectively to meet the needs of audience and purpose
g. Use strong action verbs, sensory details, vivid imagery, and precise words

B. 5. Conventions of Usage

a. Correctly spell commonly misspelled/confused words
b. Correctly choose verb forms in terms of tense, voice (i.e., active and passive), and mood for continuity
c. Make subject and verb agree in number, even when a phrase or clause between the two suggests a different number for the verb
d. Use pronouns correctly (e.g., appropriate case, pronoun-antecedent agreement, clear pronoun reference)
e. Correctly choose adjectives, adjective phrases, adjective clauses, adverbs, adverb phrases, and adverb clauses and their forms for logical connection to word(s) modified
f. Correctly use parts of speech

B. 6. Conventions of Punctuation

a. Recognize that several correct punctuation choices create different effects (e.g., joining two independent clauses in a variety of ways)
b. Use punctuation correctly within sentences and words
c. Demonstrate correct use of capitalization

Unit Extension

Suggested Teaching Strategies/Procedures

Materials & Resources

- DVD of Their Eyes Were Watching God*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit
One extension to the unit is to show a recent film adapted from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, such as the television movie starring Halle Berry (Martin, 2005). Ask students to compare the film to the novel, focusing on characterization and plot development. Students should also consider how characters’ thoughts are conveyed to the audience. This film is a suitable aid for English Learners as well because it provides a visual context for words or concepts that might be confusing when reading.

Other videos, such as *Zora is My Name* (Barnett, 1990), Part Two of *I’ll Make Me a World* (Greene, 1999), or *Jump at the Sun* (McGhee-Anderson, 1994), are also ways students could learn more about Zora Neale Hurston.

**Reteaching**

**Suggested Teaching Strategies/Procedures**

**Materials & Resources**

- “Gilded Six Bits” by Zora Neale Hurston*

*Materials or resources not included in the published unit

The best time to reteach is as soon as you discover that students do not understand the concepts you are teaching and, therefore, will not be able to achieve the class objectives. One technique for reteaching is to use the results from the formative quizzes to review important concepts.

Students who show little understanding of the reading based on quizzes and discussions can be assigned another Zora Neale Hurston short story, such as “Gilded Six Bits.” To have more exposure to Hurston’s writing, they could read the story and then confer with the teacher or a small group of peers.

Students who have difficulty writing, research papers, in particular, should continue writing drafts until they demonstrate mastery. Writing conferences are the best ways to work with struggling writers.

**Reflecting on Classroom Practice**

- How effective were the student-led discussions in evoking thoughtful questions and meaningful conversations, and in helping students learn from each other?
- How could journaling prompts be improved to promote even better writing?
- To what extent were students able to work with each other to create a project and present it to the class?
- What key insights were revealed in students’ persuasive essays?
Bibliography

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  - Record Keeping
## Unit Assignments and Assessments

Name: ____________________________  Period:   Unit 3: Searching for “Everybody's Zora”

**Directions:** Prior to starting the unit, complete the log on the next page according to the example below and distribute it to students as an organizational tool.

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<th>In Class</th>
<th>Homework</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Feedback (Completed/Points)</th>
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# Unit Assignments and Assessments

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Zora Neale Hurston Questionnaire

Name: _________________________________________  Period: ________  Date: ________________

Directions: Respond to the prompts as completely as you can. Your responses will provide important information about the extent of your knowledge about the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston. The worksheet will be revisited at the end of the unit.

1. What do you know about Zora Neale Hurston’s life and/or writing?
   Initial Thoughts
   
   Later Thoughts

2. When you hear the words Harlem and Renaissance what events, persons, or images come to mind? Based on your response, what assertions could you make about the Harlem Renaissance? Support your ideas.
   Initial Thoughts
   
   Later Thoughts

3. List American works and authors of the early twentieth century.
   Initial Thoughts
   
   Later Thoughts

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Worksheets B-2
4. Indicate your level of familiarity with each author by writing the following abbreviations after his or her name: R (Recognize), SK (Some Knowledge), EK (Extensive Knowledge). Then list what you know about him or her.

Richard Wright

Initial Thoughts

Later Thoughts

Alice Walker

Initial Thoughts

Later Thoughts

5. When you encounter difficult vocabulary, unfamiliar dialect, or language patterns in your reading, what do you do? How well does the strategy help you understand the meaning of the text?

Initial Thoughts

Later Thoughts
The essay "How It Feels To Be Colored Me" first appeared in *World Tomorrow*. ©1928 by Zora Neale Hurston.

I am colored but I offer nothing in the way of extenuating circumstances except the fact that I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother’s side was not an Indian chief.

I remember the very day that I became colored. Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. It is exclusively a colored town. The only white people I knew passed through the town going to or coming from Orlando. The native whites rode dusty horses, the Northern tourists chugged down the sandy village road in automobiles. The town knew the Southerners and never stopped cane chewing when they passed. But the Northerners were something else again. They were peered at cautiously from behind curtains by the timid. The more venturesome would come out on the porch to watch them go past and got just as much pleasure out of the tourists as the tourists got out of the village.

The front porch might seem a daring place for the rest of the town, but it was a gallery seat for me. My favorite place was atop the gate-post. Proscenium box for a born first-nighter. Not only did I enjoy the show, but I didn’t mind the actors knowing that I liked it. I usually spoke to them in passing. I’d wave at them and when they returned my salute, I would say something like this: "Howdy-do-well-I-thank-you-where-you-goin'?" Usually automobile or the horse paused at this, and after a queer exchange of compliments, I would probably "go a piece of the way" with them, as we say in farthest Florida. If one of my family happened to come to the front in time to see me, of course negotiations would be rudely broken off. But even so, it is clear that I was the first "welcome-to-our-state" Floridian, and I hope the Miami Chamber of Commerce will please take notice.

During this period, white people differed from colored to me only in that they rode through town and never lived there. They liked to hear me "speak pieces" and sing and wanted to see me dance the parse-me-la, and gave me generously of their small silver for doing these things, which seemed strange to me for I wanted to do them so much that I needed bribing to stop. Only they didn’t know it. The colored people gave no dimes. They deplored any joyful tendencies in me, but I was their Zora nevertheless. I belonged to them, to the nearby hotels, to the county—everybody’s Zora.

But changes came in the family when I was thirteen, and I was sent to school in Jacksonville. I left Eatonville, the town of the oleanders, as Zora. When I disembarked from the river-boat at Jacksonville, she was no more. It seemed that I had suffered a sea change. I was not Zora of Orange County any more, I was now a little colored girl. I found it out in certain ways. In my heart as well as in the mirror, I became a fast brown warranted not to rub nor run.

But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

Someone is always at my elbow reminding me that I am the grand-daughter
of slaves. It fails to register depression with me. Slavery is sixty years in the past. The operation was successful and the patient is doing well, thank you. The terrible struggle that made me an American out of a potential slave said “On the line!” The Reconstruction said “Get set!”; and the generation before said “Go!” I am off to a flying start and I must not halt in the stretch to look behind and weep. Slavery is the price I paid for civilization, and the choice was not with me. It is a bully adventure and worth all that I have paid through my ancestors for it. No one on earth ever had a greater chance for glory. The world to be won and nothing to be lost. It is thrilling to think—to know that for any act of mine, I shall get twice as much praise or twice as much blame. It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage, with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or to weep.

The position of my white neighbor is much more difficult. No brown specter pulls up a chair beside me when I sit down to eat. No dark ghost thrusts its leg against mine in bed. The game of keeping what one has is never so exciting as the game of getting.

I do not always feel colored. Even now I often achieve the unconscious Zora of Eatonville before the Hegira. I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.

For instance at Barnard. “Beside the waters of the Hudson” I feel my race. Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, overswept by a creamy sea. I am surged upon and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself. When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again.

Sometimes it is the other way around. A white person is set down in our midst, but the contrast is just as sharp for me. For instance, when I sit in the drafty basement that is The New World Cabaret with a white person, my color comes. We enter chatting about any little nothing that we have in common and are seated by the jazz waiters. In the abrupt way that jazz orchestras have, this one plunges into a number. It loses no time in circumlocutions, but gets right down to business. It constricts the thorax and splits the heart with its tempo and narcotic harmonies. This orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks the tonal veil with primitive fury, rending it, clawing it until it breaks through to the jungle beyond. I follow those heathen—follow them exultingly. I dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop; I shake my assegai above my head, I hurl it true to the mark yeeewwww! I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way. My face is painted red and yellow and my body is painted blue. My pulse is throbbing like a war drum. I want to slaughter something—give pain, give death to what, I do not know. But the piece ends. The men of the orchestra wipe their lips and rest their fingers. I creep back slowly to the veneer we call civilization with the last tone and find the white friend sitting motionless in his seat, smoking calmly.

“Good music they have here,” he remarks, drumming the table with his fingertips.

Music! The great blobs of purple and red emotion have not touched him, He has only heard what I felt. He is far away and I see him but dimly across the ocean and the continent that have fallen between us. He is so pale with his whiteness then and I am so colored.

At certain times I have no race, I am me. When I set my hat at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City, feeling as snooty as the lions in front of the Forty-Second Street Library, for instance. So far as my feelings are concerned, Peggy Hopkins Joyce on the Boule Mich with her gorgeous raiment, stately carriage; knees knocking together in
a most aristocratic manner, has nothing on me. The cosmic Zora emerges. I belong to no race nor time. I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads.

I have no separate feeling about being an American citizen and colored. I am merely a fragment of the Great Soul that surges within the boundaries. My country, right or wrong.

Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It’s beyond me.

But in the main, I feel like a brown bag of miscellany propped against a wall. Against a wall in company with other bags, white, red and yellow. Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small things priceless and worthless. A first-water diamond, an empty spool, bits of broken glass, lengths of string, a key to a door long since crumbled away, a rusty knife-blade, old shoes saved for a road that never was and never will be, a nail bent under the weight of things too heavy for any nail, a dried flower or two still a little fragrant. In your hand is the brown bag. On the ground before you is the jumble it held—so much like the jumble in the bags, could they be emptied, that all might be dumped in a single heap and the bags refilled without altering the content of any greatly. A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter. Perhaps that is how the Great Stuffer of Bags filled them in the first place—who knows?
“How It Feels To Be Colored Me” Reading Guide

Directions: As you respond to the following questions, justify your responses with evidence from the text or other resources.

Paragraphs 1–5

1. What does Hurston mean in the first sentence? What is the tone of her remark? What evidence leads you to this conclusion?

2. Explain what Hurston means in the second sentence, “I remember the very day I became colored.” What is the effect of the sentence?

3. How did the people of Eatonville view Northern whites and Southern whites differently? Why do you think this might be?

4. How did Hurston interact with the white tourists who came through Eatonville? How might the fact that she grew up in “exclusively a colored town” have affected her attitude/behavior toward them?

5. How does Hurston characterize herself as a little girl? How did she seem to feel about the people of Eatonville?

6. In paragraph 5, Hurston says, “In my heart as well as in the mirror, I became fast brown—warranted not to rub nor run.” What does this mean, and why did this happen?

Paragraphs 6–10

7. What does Hurston mean by “the sobbing school of Negrohood” in paragraph 6?
8. What does Hurston mean by “I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife”? What is the tone of this remark? What evidence leads you to this conclusion?

9. This essay was written in 1928. Why might Hurston’s ideas have been unpopular with other African American writers of the time?

10. What does Hurston think of the legacy of slavery that African Americans live with?

11. What is the purpose of paragraph 8? Explain the last three sentences of the paragraph.

12. Explain the metaphor in paragraph 10: “I am a dark rock surged upon, and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself. When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again.”

**Paragraphs 11–13**

13. Describe the effect of the figurative language that Hurston uses to explain the jazz orchestra’s playing. What does jazz music do for Hurston? How does it make her feel? How does she take you with her into the music?

14. In paragraphs 12–13, what does Hurston imply about how whites and African Americans respond to jazz?

**Paragraphs 14–17**

15. When Hurston has “no race,” she is Zora. What is it like to be Zora? Who is the “cosmic Zora”?

16. Explain the stuffed bag metaphor. What do the different bags represent? What are the bags stuffed with, and what does it represent? Who is the Great Stuffer of Bags? What is Hurston’s point in this paragraph?
The revival of interest in the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston is largely due to the efforts of Alice Walker. She chronicled her search for Hurston’s unmarked grave in her essay “Looking for Zora,” first published in Ms. magazine. ©1975 by Alice Walker.

On January 16, 1959, Zora Neale Hurston, suffering from the effects of a stroke and writing painfully in longhand, composed a letter to the “editorial department” of Harper & Brothers inquiring if they would be interested in seeing “the book I am laboring upon at present—a life of Herod the Great.” One year and twelve days later, Zora Neale Hurston died without funds to provide for her burial, a resident of the St. Lucie County, Florida, Welfare Home. She lies today in an unmarked grave in a segregated cemetery in Fort Pierce, Florida, a resting place generally symbolic of the black writer’s fate in America.

Zora Neale Hurston is one of the most significant unread authors in America, the author of two minor classics and four other major books.

—Robert Hemenway, “Zora Hurston and the Eatonville Anthropology”

In the Harlem Renaissance Remembered

* * *

On August 15, 1973, I wake up just as the plane is lowering over Sanford, Florida, which means I am also looking down on Eatonville, Zora Neale Hurston’s birthplace. I recognize it from Zora’s description in Mules and Men: “the city of five lakes, three croquet courts, three hundred brown skins, three hundred good swimmers, plenty guavas, two schools, and no jailhouse.” Of course I cannot see the guavas, but the five lakes are still there, and it is the lakes I count as the plane prepares to land in Orlando.

From the air, Florida looks completely flat, and as we near the ground this impression does not change. This is the first time I have seen the interior of the state, which Zora wrote about so well, but there are the acres of orange groves, the sand, mangrove trees, and scrub pine that I know from her books. Getting off the plane I walk through the humid air of midday into the tacky but air-conditioned airport. I search for Charlotte Hunt, my companion on the Zora Hurston expedition. She lives in Winter Park, Florida, very near Eatonville, and is writing her graduate dissertation on Zora. I see her waving—a large, pleasant-faced white woman in dark glasses. We have written to each other for several weeks, swapping our latest finds (mostly hers) on Zora, and trying to make sense out of the mass of information obtained (often erroneous or simply confusing) from Zora herself—through her stories and autobiography—and from people who wrote about her.

Eatonville has lived for such a long time in my imagination that I can hardly believe it will be found existing in its own right. But after twenty minutes on the expressway, Charlotte turns off and I see a small settlement of houses and stores set with no particular pattern in the sandy soil off the road. We stop in front of a neat gray building that has two fascinating signs: EATONVILLE POST OFFICE and EATONVILLE CITY HALL.

Inside the Eatonville City Hall half of the building, a slender, dark-brown-skin woman sits looking through letters on a desk. When she hears we are searching for anyone who might have known Zora Neale
Hurston, she leans back in thought. Because I don’t wish to inspire foot-dragging in people who might know something about Zora they’re not sure they should tell, I have decided on a simple, but I feel profoundly useful, lie.

“I am Miss Hurston’s niece,” I prompt the young woman, who brings her head down with a smile.

“I think Mrs. Moseley is about the only one still living who might remember her,” she says.

“Do you mean Mathilda Moseley, the woman who tells those ‘woman-is-smarter-than-man’ lies in Zora’s book?”

“Yes,” says the young woman. “Mrs. Moseley is real old now, of course. But this time of day, she should be at home.”

I stand at the counter looking down on her, the first Eatonville resident I have spoken to. Because of Zora’s books, I feel I know something about her; at least I know what the town she grew up in was like years before she was born.

“Tell me something,” I say. “Do the schools teach Zora’s books here?”

“No,” she says, “they don’t. I don’t think most people know anything about Zora Neale Hurston, or know about any of the great things she did. She was a fine lady. I’ve read all of her books myself, but I don’t think many other folks in Eatonville have.”

“Many of the church people around here, as I understand it,” says Charlotte in a murmur aside, “thought Zora was pretty loose. I don’t think they appreciated her writing about them.”

“Well,” I say to the young woman, “thank you for your help.” She clarifies her directions to Mrs. Moseley’s house and smiles as Charlotte and I turn to go.

The letter to Harper’s does not expose a publisher’s rejection of an unknown masterpiece, but it does reveal how the bright promise of the Harlem Renaissance deteriorated for many of the writers who shared in its exuberance. It also indicates the personal tragedy of Zora Neale Hurston: Barnard graduate, author of four novels, two books of folklore, one volume of autobiography, the most important collector of Afro-American folklore in America, reduced by poverty and circumstance to seek a publisher by unsolicited mail.

—Robert Hemenway

Zora Hurston was born in 1901, 1902, or 1903—depending on how old she felt herself to be at the time someone asked.

—Librarian, Beinecke Library, Yale University

The Moseley house is small and white and snug, its tiny yard nearly swallowed up by oleanders and hibiscus bushes. Charlotte and I knock on the door. I call out. But there is no answer. This strikes us as peculiar. We have had time to figure out an age for Mrs. Moseley—not dates or a number, just old. I am thinking of a quivery, bedridden invalid when we hear the car. We look behind us to see an old black-and-white Buick—paint peeling and grillwork rusty—pulling into the drive. A neat old lady in a purple dress and with white hair is straining at the wheel. She is frowning because Charlotte’s car is in the way.

Mrs. Moseley looks at us suspiciously. “Yes, I knew Zora Neale,” she says, unsmilingly and with a rather cold stare at Charlotte (who, I imagine, feels very white at that moment), “but that was a long time ago, and I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Yes, ma’am,” I murmur, bringing all my sympathy to bear on the situation.
“Not only that,” Mrs. Moseley continues, “I’ve been sick. Been in the hospital for an operation. Ruptured artery. The doctors didn’t believe I was going to live, but you see me alive, don’t you?”

“Looking well, too,” I comment.

Mrs. Moseley is out of her car. A thin, sprightly woman with nice gold-studded false teeth, uppers and lowers. I like her because she stands there straight beside her car, with a hand on her hip and her straw pocketbook on her arm. She wears white T-strap shoes with heels that show off her well-shaped legs.

“I’m eighty-two years old, you know,” she says. “And I just can’t remember things the way I used to. Anyhow, Zora Neale left here to go to school and she never really came back to live. She’d come here for material for her books, but that was all. She spent most of her time down in South Florida.”

“You know, Mrs. Moseley, I saw your name in one of Zora’s books.”

“You did?” She looks at me with only slightly more interest. “I read some of her books a long time ago, but then people got to borrowing and borrowing and they borrowed them all away.”

“I could send you a copy of everything that’s been reprinted,” I offer. “Would you like me to do that?”

“No,” says Mrs. Moseley promptly. “I don’t read much any more. Besides, all of that was so long ago . . .”

Charlotte and I settle back against the car in the sun. Mrs. Moseley tells us at length and with exact recall every step in her recent operation, ending with: “What those doctors didn’t know—when they were expecting me to die (and they didn’t even think I’d live long enough for them to have to take out my stitches)—is that Jesus is the best doctor, and if He says for you to get well, that’s all that counts.”

With this philosophy, Charlotte and I murmur quick assent: being Southerners and church bred, we have heard that belief before. But what we learn from Mrs. Moseley is that she does not remember much beyond the year 1938. She shows us a picture of her father and mother and says that her father was Joe Clarke’s brother. Joe Clarke, as every Zora Hurston reader knows, was the first mayor of Eatonville; his fictional counterpart is Jody Starks of Their Eyes Were Watching God. We also get directions to where Joe Clarke’s store was—where Club Eaton is now. Club Eaton, a long orange-beige nightspot we had seen on the main road, is apparently famous for the good times in it regularly had by all. It is, perhaps, the modern equivalent of the store porch, where all the men of Zora’s childhood came to tell “lies,” that is, black folk tales, that were “made and used on the spot,” to take a line from Zora. As for Zora’s exact birthplace, Mrs. Moseley has no idea.

After I have commented on the healthy growth of her hibiscus bushes, she becomes more talkative. She mentions how much she loved to dance, when she was a young woman, and talks about how good her husband was. When he was alive, she says, she was completely happy because he allowed her to be completely free. “I was so free I had to pinch myself sometimes to tell if I was a married woman.”

Relaxed now, she tells us about going to school with Zora. “Zora and I went to the same school. It’s called Hungerford High now. It was only to the eighth grade. But our teachers were so good that by the time you left you knew college subjects. When I went to Morris Brown in Atlanta, the teachers there were just teaching me the same things I had already learned right in Eatonville. I wrote Mama and told her I was going to come home and help her with her babies. I wasn’t learning anything new.”
“Tell me something, Mrs. Moseley,” I ask. “Why do you suppose Zora was against integration? I read somewhere that she was against school desegregation because she felt it was an insult to black teachers.”

“Oh, one of them [white people] came around asking me about integration. One day I was doing my shopping. I heard 'em over there talking about it in the store, about the schools. And I got out of the way because I knew if they asked me, they wouldn’t like what I was going to tell ‘em. But they came up and asked me anyhow. ‘What do you think about this integration?’ one of them said. I acted like I thought I had heard wrong. ‘You’re asking me what I think about integration?’ I said. ‘Well, as you can see, I’m just an old colored woman’—I was seventy-five or seventy-six then—‘and this is the first time anybody ever asked me about integration. And nobody asked my grandmother what she thought, either, but her daddy was one of you all.’” Mrs. Moseley seems satisfied with this memory of her rejoinder. She looks at Charlotte. “I have the blood of three races in my veins,” she says belligerently, “white, black, and Indian, and nobody asked me anything before.”

“Do you think living in Eatonville made integration less appealing to you?”

“Well, I can tell you this: I have lived in Eatonville all my life, and I’ve been in the governing of this town. I’ve been everything but mayor and I’ve been assistant mayor. Eatonville was and is an all-black town, We have our own police department, post office, and town hall. Our own school and good teachers. Do I need integration?

“They took over Goldsboro, because the black people who lived there never incorporated, like we did. And now I don’t even know if any black folks live there. They built big houses up there around the lakes. But we didn’t let that happen in Eatonville, and we don’t sell land to just anybody. And you see, we’re still here.”

When we leave, Mrs. Mosley is standing by her car, waving. I think of the letter Roy Wilkins wrote to a black newspaper blasting Zora Neale for her lack of enthusiasm about the integration of schools. I wonder if he knew the experience of Eatonville she was coming from. Not many black people in America have come from a self-contained, all-black community where loyalty and unity are taken for granted. A place where black pride is nothing new.

There is, however, one thing Mrs. Mosley said that bothered me.

“Tell me, Mrs. Moseley,” I had asked, “Why is it that thirteen years after Zora’s death, no marker has been put on her grave?”

And Mrs. Moseley answered: “The reason she doesn’t have a stone is because she wasn’t buried here. She was buried down in South Florida somewhere. I don’t think anybody really knew where she was.”

Only to reach a wider audience, need she ever write books—because she is a perfect book of entertainment in herself. In her youth she was always getting scholarships and things from wealthy white people, some of whom simply paid her just to sit around and represent the Negro race for them, she did it in such a racy fashion. She was full of sidesplitting anecdotes, humorous tales, and tragicomic stories, remembered out of her life in the South as a daughter of a traveling minister of God. She could make you laugh one minute and cry the next. To many of her white friends, no doubt, she was a perfect “darkie,” in the nice meaning they give the term—that is, a naïve,
childlike, sweet, humorous, and highly colored Negro.

But Miss Hurston was clever, too—a student who didn’t let college give her a broad “a” and who had great scorn for all pretensions, academic or otherwise. That is why she was such a fine folklore collector, able to go among the people and never act as if she had been to school at all. Almost nobody else could stop the average Harlemite on Lenox Avenue and measure his head with a strange-looking, anthropological device and not get bawled out for the attempt, except Zora, who used to stop anyone whose head looked interesting, and measure it.

—Langston Hughes,
The Big Sea

What does it matter what white folks must have thought about her?
—Student black women writers class
Wellesley College

Mrs. Sarah Peek Patterson is a handsome, red-haired woman in her late forties, wearing orange slacks and gold earrings. She is the director of Lee-Peek Mortuary in Fort Pierce, the establishment that handled Zora’s burial. Unlike most black funeral homes in Southern towns that sit like palaces among the general poverty, Lee-Peek has a run-down, small look. Perhaps this is because it is painted purple and white, as are its Cadillac chariots. These colors do not age well. The rooms are cluttered and grimy, and the bathroom is a tiny, stale-smelling prison, with a bottle of black hair dye (apparently used to touch up the hair of the corpses) dripping into the face bowl. Two pine burial boxes are resting in the bathtub.

Mrs. Patterson herself is pleasant and helpful.

“As I told you over the phone, Mrs. Patterson,” I begin, shaking her hand and looking into her penny-brown eyes, “I am Zora Neale Hurston’s niece, and I would like to have a marker put on her grave. You said, when I called you last week, that you could tell me where the grave is.”

By this time I am, of course, completely into being Zora’s niece, and the lie comes with perfect naturalness to my lips. Besides, as far as I’m concerned, she is my aunt—and that of all black people as well.

“She was buried in 1960,” exclaims Mrs. Patterson. “That was when my father was running this funeral home. He’s sick now or I’d let you talk to him. But I know where she’s buried. She’s in the old cemetery, the Garden of the Heavenly Rest, on Seventeenth Street. Just when you go in the gate there’s a circle, and she’s buried right in the middle of it. Hers is the only grave in that circle—because people don’t bury in that cemetery any more.”

She turns to a stocky, black-skinned woman in her thirties, wearing a green polo shirt and white jeans cut off at the knee.

“This lady will show you where it is,” she says.

“I can’t tell you how much I appreciate this,” I say to Mrs. Patterson, as I rise to go. “And could you tell me something else? You see, I never met my aunt. When she died, I was still a junior in high school. But could you tell me what she died of, and what kind of funeral she had?”

“I don’t know exactly what she died of,” Mrs. Patterson says. “I know she didn’t have any money. Folks took up a collection to bury her . . . . I believe she died of malnutrition.”

“Malnutrition?”

Outside, in the blistering sun, I lean my head against Charlotte’s even more blistering car top. The sting of the hot metal
only intensifies my anger. “*Malnutrition,*” I manage to mutter.

“Hell, our condition hasn’t changed *any* since Phillis Wheatley’s time. *She* died of malnutrition!”

“Really?” says Charlotte. “I didn’t know that.”

One cannot overemphasize the extent of her commitment. It was so great that her marriage in the spring of 1927 to Herbert Sheen was short-lived. Although divorce did not come officially until 1931, the two separated amicably after only a few months, Hurston to continue her collecting, Sheen to attend Medical School. Hurston never married again.

—Robert Hemenway

“What is your name?” I ask the woman who has climbed the back seat.

“Rosalee,” she says. She has a rough, pleasant voice, as if she is a singer who also smokes a lot. She is homely, and has an air of ready indifference.

“Another woman came by here wanting to see the grave,” she says, lighting up a cigarette. “She was a little short, dumpty white lady from one of these Florida schools. Orlando or Daytona. But let me tell you something before we gets started. All I know is where the cemetery is. I don’t know one thing about that grave. You better go back in and ask her to draw you a map.”

A few moments later, with Mrs. Patterson’s diagram of where the grave is, we head for the cemetery.

We drive past blocks of small, pastel-colored houses and turn right onto Seventeenth Street. At the very end, we reach a tall curving gate, with the words “Garden of the Heavenly Rest” fading into the stone. I expected, from Mrs. Patterson’s small drawing, to find a small circle—which would have placed Zora’s grave five or ten paces from the road. But the “circle” is over an acre large and looks more like an abandoned field. Tall weeds choke the dirt road and scrape against the sides of the car. It doesn’t help either that I step out into an active ant hill.

“I don’t know about y’all,” I say, “but I don’t even believe this.” I am used to the haphazard cemetery-keeping that is traditional in most Southern black communities, but this neglect is staggering. As far as I can see there is nothing but bushes and weeds, some as tall as my waist. One grave is near the road, and Charlotte elects to investigate it. It is fairly clean, and belongs to someone who died in 1963.

Rosalee and I plunge into the weeds; I pull my long dress up to my hips. The weeds scratch my knees, and the insects have a feast. Looking back, I see Charlotte standing resolutely near the road.

“Aren’t you coming?” I call.

“No,” she calls back. “I’m from these parts and I know what’s out there.” She means snakes.

“Shit,” I say, my whole life and the people I love flashing melodramatically before my eyes. Rosalee is a few yards to my right.

“How’re you going to find anything out here?” she asks. And I stand still a few seconds, looking at the weeds. Some of them are quite pretty, with tiny yellow flowers. They are thick and healthy, but dead weeds under them have formed a thick gray carpet on the ground. A snake could be lying six inches from my big toe and I wouldn’t see it. We move slowly, very slowly, our eyes alert, our legs trembly. It is hard to tell where the center of the circle is since the circle is not really round, but more like half of something round. There are things crackling and hissing in the grass.
Sandspurs are sticking to the inside of my skirt. Sand and ants cover my feet. I look toward the road and notice that there are, indeed, two large curving stones, making an entrance and exit to the cemetery. I take my bearings from them and try to navigate to exact center. But the center of anything can be very large, and a grave is not a pinpoint. Finding the grave seems positively hopeless. There is only one thing to do:

“Zora!” I yell, as loud as I can (causing Rosalee to jump). “Are you out here?”

“If she is, I sho hope she don’t answer you. If she do, I’m gone.”

“Zora!” I call again. “I’m here. Are you?”

“If she is,” grumbles Rosalee, “I hope she’ll keep it to herself.”

“Zora!” Then I start fussing with her. “I hope you don’t think I’m going to stand out here all day, with these snakes watching me and these ants having a field day. In fact, I’m going to call you just one or two more times.” On a clump of dried grass, near a small bushy tree, my eye falls on one of the largest bugs I have ever seen. It is on its back, and is as large as three of my fingers. I walk toward it, and yell “Zo-ra!” and my foot sinks into a hole. I look down. I am standing in a sunken rectangle that is about six feet long and about three or four feet wide. I look up to see where the two gates are.

“Well,” I say, “this is the center, or approximately anyhow. It’s also the only sunken spot we’ve found. Doesn’t this look like a grave to you?”

“For the sake of not going no farther through these bushes,” Rosalee growls, “yes, it do.”

“Wait a minute,” I say, “I have to look around some more to be sure this is the only spot that resembles a grave. But you don’t have to come.”

Rosalee smiles—a grin, really—beautiful and tough.

“Naw,” she says, “I feels sorry for you. If one of these snakes got ahold of you out here by yourself I’d feel real bad.” She laughs. “I done come this far, I’ll go on with you.”

“Thank you, Rosalee,” I say. “Zora thanks you too.”

“Just as long as she don’t try to tell me in person,” she says, and together we walk down the field.

The gusto and flavor of Zora Neal[e] Hurston’s storytelling, for example, long before the yarns were published in “Mules and Men” and other books, became a local legend which might. . . have spread further under different conditions. A tiny shift in the center of gravity could have made them best-sellers.

—Arna Bontemps, Personals

Bitter over the rejection of her folklore’s value, especially in the black community, frustrated by what she felt was her failure to convert the Afro-American world view into the forms of prose fiction, Hurston finally gave up.

—Robert Hemenway

When Charlotte and I drive up to the Merritt Monument Company, I immediately see the headstone I want.

“How much is this one?” I ask the young woman in charge, pointing to a tall black stone. It looks as majestic as Zora herself must have been when she was learning voodoo from those root doctors down in New Orleans.
“Oh, that one,” she says, “that’s our finest. That’s Ebony Mist.”

“Well, how much is it?”

“I don’t know. But wait,” she says, looking around in relief, “here comes somebody who’ll know.”

A small, sunburned man with squinty green eyes comes up. He must be the engraver, I think, because his eyes are contracted into slits, as if he has been keeping stone dust out of them for years.


“How much is it?” I ask, beginning to realize I probably can’t afford it.

He gives me a price that would feed a dozen Sahelian drought victims for three years. I realize I must honor the dead, but between the dead great and the living starving, there is no choice.

“I have a lot of letters to be engraved,” I say, standing by the plain gray marker I have chosen. It is pale and ordinary, not at all like Zora, and makes me momentarily angry that I am not rich.

We go into his office and I hand him a sheet of paper that has:

ZORA NEALE HURSTON
“A GENIUS OF THE SOUTH”
NOVELIST FOLKLOРИST
ANTHROPOLOGIST
1901 1960

“A genius of the South” is from one of Jean Toomer’s poems.

“Where is this grave?” the monument man asks. “If it’s in new cemetery, the stone has to be flat.”

“Well, it’s not a new cemetery and Zora—my aunt—doesn’t need anything flat, because with the weeds out there, you’d never be able to see it. You’ll have to go out there with me.”

He grunts.

“And take a long pole and ‘sound’ the spot,” I add. “Because there’s no way of telling it’s a grave, except that it’s sunken.”

“Well,” he says, after taking my money and writing up a receipt, in the full awareness that he’s the only monument dealer for miles, “you take this flag” (he hands me a four-foot-long pole with a red-metal marker on top) “and take it out to the cemetery and put it where you think the grave is. It’ll take us about three weeks to get the stone out there.”

“At least send me a photograph when it’s done, won’t you?”

He says he will.

Hurston’s return to her folklore—collecting in December of 1927 was made possible by Mrs. R. Osgood Mason, an elderly white patron of the arts, who at various times also helped Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Richmond Barthe, and Miguel Covarrubias. Hurston apparently came to her attention through the intercession of Locke, who frequently served as a kind of liaison between the young black talent and Mrs. Mason. The entire relationship between this woman and the Harlem Renaissance deserves extended study, for it represents much of the ambiguity involved in white patronage of black artists. All her artists were instructed to call her “Godmother”; there was a decided emphasis on the “primitive” aspects of black culture, apparently a holdover from Mrs. Mason’s interest in the Plains Indians. In Hurston’s case there were special
restrictions imposed by her patron: although she was to be paid a handsome salary for her folklore collecting, she was to limit her correspondence and publish nothing of her research without prior approval.

—Robert Hemenway
You have to read the chapters Zora left out of her autobiography.
—Student; Special Collections Room
Beinecke Library, Yale University

Dr. Benton, a friend of Zora’s and a practicing M.D. in Fort Pierce, is one of those old, good-looking men whom I always have trouble not liking. (It no longer bothers me that I may be constantly searching for father figures; by this time, I have found several and dearly enjoyed knowing them all.) He is shrewd, with steady brown eyes under hair that is almost white. He is probably in his seventies, but doesn’t look it. He carries himself with dignity, and has cause to be proud of the new clinic where he now practices medicine. His nurse looks at us with suspicion, but Dr. Benton’s eyes have the penetration of a scalpel cutting through skin. I guess right away that if he knows anything at all about Zora Hurston, he will not believe I am her niece. “Eatonville?” Dr. Benton says, leaning forward in his chair, looking first at me, then at Charlotte. “Yes, I know Eatonville; I grew up not far from there. I knew the whole bunch of Zora’s family.” (He looks at the shape of my cheekbones, the size of my eyes, and the nappiness of my hair.) “I knew her daddy. The old man. He was a hard-working, Christian man. Did the best he could for his family. He was the mayor of Eatonville for a while, you know.

“My father was the mayor of Goldsboro. You probably never heard of it. It never incorporated like Eatonville did, and has just about disappeared. But Eatonville is still all black.”

He pauses and looks at me. “And you’re Zora’s niece,” he says wonderingly.

“Well” I say with shy dignity, yet with some tinge, I hope, of a nineteenth-century blush, “I’m illegitimate. That’s why I never knew Aunt Zora.”

I love him for the way he comes to my rescue. “You’re not illegitimate!” he cries, his eyes resting on me fondly. “All of us are God’s children! Don’t you even think such a thing!”

And I hate myself for lying to him. Still, I ask myself, would I have gotten this far toward getting the headstone and finding out about Zora Hurston’s last days without telling my lie? Actually, I probably would have. But I don’t like taking chances that could get me stranded in central Florida.

“Zora didn’t get along with her family. I don’t know why. Did you read her autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road?”

“Yes, I did,” I say. “It pained me to see Zora pretending to be naïve and grateful about the old white ‘Godmother’ who helped finance her research, but I loved the part where she ran off from home after falling out with her brother’s wife.”

Dr. Benton nods. “When she got sick, I tried to get her to go back to her family, but she refused. There wasn’t any real hatred; they just never had gotten along and Zora wouldn’t go to them. She didn’t want to go to the county home, either, but she had to, because she couldn’t do a thing for herself.”

“I was surprised to learn she died of malnutrition.”

Dr. Benton seems startled. “Zora didn’t die of malnutrition,” he says indignantly. “Where did you get that story from? She had a stroke and she died in the welfare home.” He seems peculiarly upset, distressed, but sits back reflectively in his
“Sometimes she would run out of groceries—after she got sick—and she’d call me. ‘Come over here and see ’bout me,’ she’d say. And I’d take her shopping and buy her groceries.

“She was always studying. Her mind—before the stroke—just worked all the time. She was always going somewhere, too. She once went to Honduras to study something. And when she died, she was working on that book about Herod the Great. She was so intelligent! And really had perfect expressions. Her English was beautiful.” (I suspect this is a clever way to let me know Zora herself didn’t speak in the “black English” her characters used.) “I used to read all of her books,” Dr. Benton continues, “but it was a long time ago. I remember one about . . . it was called, I think, ‘The Children of God’ [Their Eyes Were Watching God], and I remember Janie and Teapot [Teacake] and the mad dog riding on the cow in that hurricane and bit old Teapot on the cheek . . . .”

I am delighted that he remembers even this much of the story, even if the names are wrong, but seeing his affection for Zora I feel I must ask him about her burial. “Did she really have a pauper’s funeral?”

“She didn’t have a pauper’s funeral!” he says with great heat. “Everybody around here loved Zora.”

“We just came back from ordering a headstone,” I say quietly, because he is an old man and the color is coming and going on his face, “but to tell the truth, I can’t be positive what I found is the grave. All I know is the spot I found was the only grave-size hole in the area.”

“I remember it wasn’t near the road,” says Dr. Benton, more calmly. “Some other lady came by here and we went out looking for the grave and I took a long iron stick and poked all over that part of the cemetery but we didn’t find anything. She took some
pictures of the general area. Do the weeds still come up to your knees?”

“And beyond,” I murmur. This time there isn’t any doubt. Dr. Benton feels ashamed.

As he walks us to our car, he continues to talk about Zora. “She couldn’t really write much near the end. She had the stroke and it left her weak; her mind was affected. She couldn’t think about anything for long.

She came here from Daytona, I think. She owned a houseboat over there. When she came here, she sold it. She lived on that money, then she worked as a maid—for an article on maids she was writing—and she worked for the Chronicle writing the horoscope column.

“I think black people here in Florida got mad at her because she was for some politician they were against. She said this politician built schools for blacks while the one they wanted just talked about it. And although Zora wasn’t egotistical, what she thought, she thought; and generally what she thought, she said.”

“When we leave Dr. Benton’s office, I realize I have missed my plane back home to Jackson, Mississippi. That being so, Charlotte and I decide to find the house Zora lived in before she was taken to the county welfare home to die. From among her many notes, Charlotte locates a letter of Zora’s she has copied that carries the address: 1734 School Court Street. We ask several people for directions. Finally, two old gentlemen in a dusty gray Plymouth offer to lead us there. School Court Street is not paved, and the road is full of mud puddles. It is dismal and squalid, redeemed only by the brightness of the late afternoon sun. Now I can understand what a “block” house is. It is a house shaped like a block, for one thing, surrounded by others just like it. Some houses are blue and some are green or yellow. Zora’s is light green. They are tiny—about fifty by fifty feet, squatty with flat roofs. The house Zora lived in looks worse than the others, but that is its only distinction. It also has three ragged and dirty children sitting on the steps.

“Is this where y’all live?” I ask, aiming my camera.

“No, ma’am” they say in unison, looking at me earnestly. “We live over yonder. This Miss So-and-So’s house; but she in the hospital.”

We chatter inconsequentially while I take more pictures. A car drives up with a young black couple in it. They scowl fiercely at Charlotte and don’t look at me with friendliness, either. They get out and stand in their doorway across the street. I go up to them to explain. “Did you know Zora Hurston used to live right across from you?” I ask.

“Who?” They stare at me blankly, then become curiously attentive, as if they think I made the name up. They are both Afroed and he is somberly dashikied.

I suddenly feel frail and exhausted. “It’s too long a story,” I say, “but tell me something: is there anybody on this street who’s lived here for more than thirteen years?”

“That old man down there,” the young names says, pointing. Sure enough, there is a man sitting on his steps three houses down. He has graying hair and is very neat, but there is a weakness about him. He reminds me of Mrs. Turner’s husband in Their Eyes Were Watching God. He’s rather “vanishing”-looking, as if his features have been sanded down. In the old days, before black was beautiful, he was probably considered attractive, because he has wavy hair and light-brown skin; but now, well, light skin has ceased to be its own reward.

After the preliminaries, there is only one thing I want to know: “Tell me
something,” I begin, looking down at Zora’s house. “Did Zora like flowers?”

He looks at me queerly. “As a matter of fact,” he says, looking regretfully at the bare, rough yard that surrounds her former house, “she was crazy about them. And she was a great gardener. She loved azaleas, and that running and blooming vine [morning-glories], and she really loved that night-smelling flower [gardenia]. She kept a vegetable garden year-round, too. She raised collards and tomatoes and things like that.

“Everyone in this community thought well of Miss Hurston. When she died, people all up and down this street took up a collection for her burial. We put her away nice.”

“Well, you know, one was never requested. Her and her family didn’t get along. They didn’t even come to the funeral.”

“And she live down there by herself?”

“Yes, until they took her away. She lived with—just her and her companion, Sport.”

My ears perk up. “Who?”

“Sport, you know, her dog. He was her only companion. He was a big brown-and-white dog.”

When I walk back to the car, Charlotte is talking to the young couple on their porch. They are relaxed and smiling. “I told them about the famous lady who used to live across the street from them,” says Charlotte as we drive off. “Of course they had no idea Zora ever lived, let alone that she lived across the street. I think I’ll send some of her books to them.”

That’s real kind of you,” I say.

I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negerhood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. . . . No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

—Zora Neale Hurston,
“How It Feels To Be Colored Me,”
World Tomorrow, 1928

There are times—and finding Zora Hurston’s grave was one of them—when normal responses of grief, horror, and so on do not make sense because they bear no real relation to the depth of the emotion one feels. It was impossible for me to cry when I saw the field full of weeds where Zora is. Partly this is because I have come to know Zora through her books and she was not a teary sort of person herself; but partly, too, it is because there is a point at which even grief feels absurd. And at this point, laughter gushes up to retrieve sanity.

It is only later, when the pain is not so direct a threat to one’s own existence, that what was learned in that moment of comical lunacy is understood. Such moments rob us of both youth and vanity. But perhaps they are also times when greater disciplines are born.
“Looking for Zora” Reading Guide

Name: _________________________________________  Period: ________  Date: ________________

Directions: As you respond to the questions in your notebook, justify your responses with evidence from the text or other resources.

1. Robert Hemenway’s *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*, was named a *New York Times* Best Book of 1978. In the introduction to Alice Walker’s essay, Hemenway writes, “Zora Neale Hurston is one of the most significant unread authors in America, the author of two minor classics and four other major books.” How would you define the word “classic”? In your definition, include three to five specific criteria. As you read the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* determine how well this novel fits your definition of a classic.

2. As you read the essay, take brief notes on how Alice Walker sees Hurston and how the residents of Eatonville and others remember her.
   - Walker
   - Residents of Eatonville, Florida
   - Quoted scholars and researchers
   - Dr. Benton
   - Residents of Fort Pierce, Florida

3. Hurston based much of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* on her life in Eatonville. As Alice Walker and Charlotte Hunt interview Mrs. Moseley, what are some examples of the connections between the real Eatonville and its inhabitants, and those in Hurston’s novel?

4. Keeping in mind that Mrs. Moseley was interviewed in 1973, are you surprised about her attitude toward integration? Explain your answer.

5. Walker describes the funeral home that handled Hurston’s burial as a grimy, cluttered, run-down establishment and her grave as being in what appeared to be a weed-covered, abandoned field. What conclusions can you draw about Hurston from this information?

6. Snakes are mentioned a number of times in this essay, as they are in Hurston’s works. Besides the real danger that a snake can pose with its bite, what else does a snake symbolize?

7. Why is Walker disappointed with the headstone she buys for Hurston? What has compelled her to buy it in the first place?

8. Explain the effect that finding Hurston’s grave had on Walker, as described in the essay’s final paragraphs.

References

Zora Neale Hurston Introductory Lecture

Providing students with biographical information about Zora Neale Hurston will give them some context for the author whose works they will be reading. Keep the lecture brief, but include these details:

- She did more to preserve the cultural heritage of African Americans than any other writer of her generation; the Smithsonian regularly finds recordings and documents she collected from interviewing southern workers and storytellers.
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, as a story of a woman’s search for happiness, is groundbreaking in its presentation of female consciousness.
- She uses southern African American dialect and language customs of her day extensively and weaves African American folk culture and heritage into her fiction.
- Post or distribute paragraph four of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Point out the syntax and figurative language. If possible or plausible, compare this passage to one from an author previously studied.
- Some fellow African American writers were harshly critical of her work; their criticism wrecked her career.

The following three general comments have been made about Hurston. Tell the students that as they read, they should look for evidence of why Hurston and her work might be described with the following statements and add this information to their journals:

- Hurston is called a “genius of the South.”
- Her work confounds definition and categorization.
- Her style is powerful; the beauty of her descriptions is lyrical and memorable. Her prose is musical.

### Biographical Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 7, 1891*</td>
<td>Born in Eatonville, Florida, (the first African American incorporated town in the United States; see <em>Dust Tracks on the Road</em>, pp. 5–6) the fifth of eight children, to John Hurston, a carpenter, Baptist preacher, and brother to the town’s mayor, and Lucy Potts Hurston, a former schoolteacher who taught her children to read and write and to “jump at the sun” (have high ambition).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925–1927</td>
<td>Attends Barnard College, studying anthropology with Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 1926</td>
<td>Organizes <em>Fire!</em> with Langston Hughes and Wallace Thurman; they publish only one issue, in November 1926. The issue includes Hurston’s short story “Sweat.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1927</td>
<td>Goes to Florida to collect folklore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1928</td>
<td>Publishes “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” in the <em>World Tomorrow.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1935</td>
<td>Folklore collection <em>Mules and Men</em> published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September–March 1937</td>
<td>In Haiti; writes <em>Their Eyes Were Watching God</em> in seven weeks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1937</td>
<td>Returns to the United States; <em>Their Eyes Were Watching God</em> published, September 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring–July 1941</td>
<td>Writes <em>Dust Tracks on a Road</em>, an autobiography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1942</td>
<td><em>Dust Tracks on a Road</em> published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Suffers a stroke and is forced to enter the St. Lucie County Welfare Home, Florida.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 28, 1960</td>
<td>Dies of “hypertensive heart disease” and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Garden of Heavenly Rest, Fort Pierce, Florida.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1973</td>
<td>Alice Walker, author of the 1982 novel <em>The Color Purple</em>, which was heavily influenced by Hurston’s work, discovers and marks Hurston’s grave; she places a tombstone there that reads “Zora Neale Hurston, A Genius of the South, 1901–1960, Novelist, Folklorist, Anthropologist.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1975</td>
<td>Walker begins a Hurston revival when she publishes “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston,” in <em>Ms.</em> magazine.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
In the summer of 1926, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Wallace Thurman organized the African American literary magazine *Fire!* The only issue was published in November, 1926, and included Hurston's short story "Sweat." ©1926 by Zora Neale Hurston.

It was eleven o’clock of a Spring night in Florida. It was Sunday. Any other night, Delia Jones would have been in bed for two hours by this time. But she was a washwoman, and Monday morning meant a great deal to her. So she collected the soiled clothes on Saturday when she returned the clean things. Sunday night after church, she sorted them and put the white things to soak. It saved her almost a half day’s start. A great hamper in the bedroom held the clothes that she brought home. It was so much neater than a number of bundles lying around.

She squatted in the kitchen floor beside the great pile of clothes, sorting them into small heaps according to color, and humming a song in a mournful key, but wondering through it all where Sykes, her husband, had gone with her horse and buckboard.

Just then something long, round, limp and black fell upon her shoulders and slithered to the floor beside her. A great terror took hold of her. It softened her knees and dried her mouth so that it was a full minute before she could cry out or move. Then she saw that it was the big bull whip her husband liked to carry when he drove.

She lifted her eyes to the door and saw him standing there bent over with laughter at her fright. She screamed at him.

“Sykes, what you throw dat whip on me like dat? You know it would skeer me—looks just like a snake, an’ you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes.”

“Course Ah knowed it! That’s how come Ah done it.” He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. “If you such a big fool dat you got to have a fit over a earth worm or a string, Ah don’t keer how bad Ah skeer you.”

“You aint got no business doing it. Gawd knows it’s a sin. Some day Ah’m gointuh drop dead from some of yo’ foolishness. ’Nother thing, where you been wid mah rig? Ah feeds dat pony. He aint fuh you to be drivin’ wid no bull whip.”

“You sho is one aggravatin’ nigger woman!” he declared and stepped into the room. She resumed her work and did not answer him at once. “Ah done tole you time and again to keep them white folks’ clothes outa dis house.”

He picked up the whip and glared down at her. Delia went on with her work. She went out into the yard and returned with a galvanized tub and set it on the washbench. She saw that Sykes had kicked all of the clothes together again, and now stood in her way truculently, his whole manner hoping, praying, for an argument. But she walked calmly around him and commenced to re-sort the things.

“Next time, Ah’m gointer kick’em outdoors,” he threatened as he struck a match along the leg of his corduroy breeches.

Delia never looked up from her work, and her thin, stooped shoulders sagged further.
“Ah aint for no fuss t’nigh Sykes. Ah just come from taking sacrament at the church house.”

He snorted scornfully. “Yeah, you just come from de church house on a Sunday night, but heah you is gone to work on them clothes. You aint nothing but a hypocrite. One of them amen-corner Christians—sing, whoop, and shout; then come home and wash white folks clothes on the Sabbath.”

He stepped roughly upon the whitest pile of things, kicking them helter-skelter as he crossed the room. His wife gave a little scream of dismay, and quickly gathered them together again.

“Sykes, you quit grindin’ dirt into these clothes! How can Ah git through by Sat’day if Ah don’t start on Sunday?”

“Ah don’t keer if you never git through. Anyhow, Ah done promised Gawd and a couple of other men, Ah aint gointer have it in mah house. Don’t gimme no lip neither, else Ah’ll throw ’em out and put mah fist up side yo’ head to boot.”

Delia’s habitual meekness seemed to slip from her shoulders like a blown scarf. She was on her feet; her poor little body, her bare knuckly hands bravely defying the strapping hulk before her.

“Looka heah, Sykes, you done gone too fur. Ah been married to you fur fifteen years, and Ah been takin’ in washin’ fur fifteen years. Sweat, sweat, sweat! Work and sweat, cry and sweat, pray and sweat!”

“What’s that got to do with me?” he asked brutally.

“What’s it got to do with you, Sykes? Mah tub of suds is filled yo’ belly with vittles more times than yo’ hands is filled it. Mah sweat is done paid for this house and Ah reckon Ah kin keep on sweatin’ in it.”

She seized the iron skillet from the stove and struck a defensive pose, which act surprised him greatly, coming from her. It cowed him and he did not strike her as he usually did.

“Well, you better quit gittin’ me riled up else they’ll be totin’ you out sooner than you expect. Ah’m so tired of you Ah don’t know what to do. Gawd! how Ah hates skinny wimmen!”

A little awed by this new Delia, he sidled out of the door and slammed the back gate after him. He did not say where he had gone, but she knew too well. She knew very well that he would not return until nearly daybreak also. Her work over, she went on to bed but not to sleep at once. Things had come to a pretty pass!

She lay awake, gazing upon the debris that cluttered their matrimonial trail. Not an image left standing along the way. Anything like flowers had long ago been drowned in the salty stream that had been pressed from her heart. Her tears, her sweat, her blood. She had brought love to the union and he had brought a longing after the flesh. Two months after the wedding, he had given her the first brutal beating. She had the memory of his numerous trips to Orlando with all of his wages when he had returned to her penniless, even before the first year had passed. She was young and soft then, but now she thought of her knotty, muscled limbs, her harsh knuckly hands, and drew herself up into an unhappy little ball in the middle of the big feather bed. Too late now to hope for love, even if it were not Bertha it would be someone else. This case differed from the others only in that she was bolder than the others. Too late for everything except her little home. She had built it for her old days, and planted one by one the trees and flowers there. It was lovely to her, lovely.

Somehow, before sleep came, she found herself saying aloud: “Oh well,
whatever goes over the Devil’s back, is got to come under his belly. Sometime or ruther, Sykes, like everybody else, is gointer reap his sowing.” After that she was able to build a spiritual earthworks against her husband. His shells could no longer reach her. Amen. She went to sleep and slept until he announced his presence in bed by kicking her feet and rudely snatching the covers away.

Gimme some kivah heah, an’ git yo’ damn feet over on yo’ own side! Ah oughter mash you in yo’ mouf fuh drawing dat skillet on me.”

Delia went clear to the rail without answering him. A triumphant indifference to all that he was or did.

The week was as full of work for Delia as all other weeks, and Saturday found her behind her little pony, collecting and delivering clothes.

It was a hot, hot day near the end of July. The village men on Joe Clarke’s porch even chewed cane listlessly. They did not hurl the caneknots as usual. They let them dribble over the edge of the porch. Even conversation had collapsed under the heat.

“Heah come Delia Jones,” Jim Merchant said, as the shaggy pony came ’round the bend of the road toward them. The rusty buckboard was heaped with baskets of crisp, clean laundry.

“Yep,” Joe Lindsay agreed. “Hot or col’, rain or shine, jes ez reg’lar ez de weeks roll roun’ Delia carries ’em an’ fetches ’em on Sat’day.”

“She better if she wanter eat,” said Moss. “Syke Jones aint wuth de shot an’ powder hit would tek tuh kill ’em. Not to huh he aint.”

“He sho’ aint,” Walter Thomas chimed in. “It’s too bad, too, cause she wuz a right pritty lil trick when he got huh. Ah’d uh mah’ied huh mahseff if he hadnter beat me to it.”

Delia nodded briefly at the men as she drove past.

“Too much knockin’ will ruin any ’oman. He done beat huh ’nough tuh kill three women, let ’lone change they looks,” said Elijah Moseley. “How Syke kin stommuck dat big black greasy Mogul he’s layin’ roun’ wid, gits me. Ah swear dat eight-rock couldn’t kiss a sardine can Ah done thowed out de back do’ ‘way las’ yeah.”

“Aw, she’s fat, thass how come. He’s allus been crazy ’bout fat women,” put in Merchant. “He’d a’ been tied up wid one long time ago if he could a’ found one tuh have him. Did Ah tell yuh ’bout him come sidlin’ roun’ mah wife—bringin’ her a basket uh peecans outa his yard fuh a present? Yeah, mah wife! She tol’ him tuh take ’em right straight back home, cause Delia works so hard ovah dat washtub she reckon everything on de place taste lak sweat an’ soap suds. Ah jus’ wisht Ah’d a’ caught ’im ’roun’ dere! Ah’d a’ made his hips ketch on fiah down dat shell road.”

“Ah know he done it. Ah sees ’im grinnin’ at every ’oman dat passes,” Walter Thomas said. “But even so, he useter eat some mighty big hunks uh humble pie tuh git dat lil’ ’oman he got. She wuz ez pritty ez a speckled pup! Dat wuz fifteen yeahs ago. He useter be so skeered uh losin’ huh, she could make him do some parts of a husband’s duty. Dey never wuz de same in de mind.”

“There oughter be a law about him,” said Lindsay. “He aint fit tuh carry guts tuh a bear.”

Clarke spoke for the first time. “Taint no law on earth dat kin make a man be decent if it aint in ’im. There’s plenty men dat takes a wife lak dey do a joint uh sugar-cane. It’s round, juicy an’ sweet when dey
gits it. But dey squeeze an’ grind, squeeze an’ grind an’ wring tell dey wring every drop uh pleasure dat’s in ’em out. When dey’s satisfied dat dey is wrung dry, dey treats ’em jes lak dey do a cane-chew. Dey thows ’em away. Dey knows whut dey is doin’ while dey is at it, an’ hates theirselves fuh it but they keeps on hangin’ after huh tell she’s empty. Den dey hates huh fuh bein’ a cane chew an’ in de way.”

“We oughter take Syke an’ dat stray ’oman uh his’n down in Lake Howell swamp an’ lay on de rawhide till they cain’t say Lawd a’ mussy.’ He allus wuz uh ovahbearin’ niggah, but since dat white ’oman from up north done teached ’im how to run a automobile, he done got too biggety to live—an’ we oughter kill ’im,” Old Man Anderson advised.

A grunt of approval went around the porch. But the heat was melting their civic virtue and Elijah Moseley began to bait Joe Clarke.

“Come on, Joe, git a melon outa dere an’ slice it up for yo’ customers. We’se all sufferin’ wid de heat. De bear’s done got me!”

“Thass right, Joe, a watermelon is jes’ whut Ah needs tuh cure de eppizudicks,” Walter Thomas joined forces with Moseley. “Come on dere, Joe. We all is steady customers an’ you aint set us up in a long time. Ah chooses dat long, bowlegged Floridy favorite.”

“A god, an’ be dough. You all gimme twenty cents an’ slice way,” Clarke retorted. “Ah needs a col’ slice m’self. Heah, everybody chip in. Ah’ll lend y’ll mah meat knife.”

The money was quickly subscribed and the huge melon brought forth. At that moment, Sykes and Bertha arrived. A determined silence fell on the porch and the melon was put away again.

Merchant snapped down the blade of his jackknife and moved toward the store door.

“Come on in, Joe, an’ gimme a slab uh sow belly an’ uh pound uh coffee—almost fuhgot ’twas Sat’day. Got to git on home.” Most of the men left also.

Just then Delia drove past on her way home, as Sykes was ordering magnificently for Bertha. It pleased him for Delia to see.

“Git whutsoever yo’ heart desires, Honey. Wait a minute, Joe. Give huh two bottles uh strawberry soda-water, uh quart uh parched ground-peas, an’ a block uh chewin’ gum.”

With all this they left the store, with Sykes reminding Bertha that this was his town and she could have it if she wanted it.

The men returned soon after they left, and held their watermelon feast.

“Where did Syke Jones git da ’oman from nohow?” Lindsay asked.

“Ovah Apopka. Guess dey musta been cleanin’ out de town when she left’. She don’t look lak a thing but a hunk uh liver wid hair on it.”

“Well, she sho’ kin squall,” Dave Carter contributed. “When she gits ready tuh laff, she jes’ opens huh mouf an’ latches it back tuh de las’ notch. No ole grandpa alligator down in Lake Bell ain’t got nothin’ on huh.”

Bertha had been in town three months now. Sykes was still paying her room rent at Della Lewis’—the only house in town that would have taken her in. Sykes took her frequently to Winter Park to “stomps.” He still assured her that he was the swellest man in the state.

“Sho’ you kin have dat lil’ ole house soon’s Ah kin git dat ’oman outa dere.
Everything b’longs tuh me an’ you sho’ kin have it.’ Ah sho’ ‘bominates uh skinny ‘oman. Lawdy, you sho’ is got one portly shape on you! You kin git anything you wants. Dis is mah town an’ you sho’ kin have it.”

Delia’s work-worn knees crawled over the earth in Gethsemane and up the rocks of Calvary many, many times during these months. She avoided the villagers and meeting places in her efforts to be blind and deaf. But Bertha nullified this to a degree, by coming to Delia’s house to call Sykes out to her at the gate.

Delia and Sykes fought all the time now with no peaceful interludes. They slept and ate in silence. Two or three times Delia had attempted a timid friendliness, but she was repulsed each time. It was plain that the breaches must remain agape.

The sun had burned July to August. The heat streamed down like a million hot arrows, smiting all things living upon the earth. Grass withered, leaves browned, snakes went blind in shedding and men and dogs went mad. Dog days!

Delia came home one day and found Sykes there before her. She wondered, but started to go on into the house without speaking, even though he was standing in the kitchen door and she must either stoop under his arm or ask him to move. He made no room for her. She noticed a soap box beside the steps, but paid no particular attention to it, knowing that he must have brought it there. As she was stooping to pass under his out stretched arm, he suddenly pushed her backward, laughingly.

“Look in de box dere Delia, Ah done brung yuh somthin’!”

She nearly fell upon the box in her stumbling, and when she saw what it held, she all but fainted outright.

“Syke! Syke, mah Gawd! You take dat rattlesnake ’way from heah! You gotuh. Oh, Jesus, have mussy!”

“Ah aint gut tuh do nuthin’ uh de kin’—fact is Ah aint got tuh do nothin’ but die. Taint no use uh you puttin’ on airs makin’ out lak you skeered uh dat snake—he’s gointer stay right heah tell he die. He wouldn’t bite me cause Ah knows how tuh handle ’im. Nohow he wouldn’t risk breakin’ out his fangs ’gin yo’ skinny laigs.’

“Naw, now Syke, don’t keep dat thing ’roun’ heah tuh skeer me tuh death. You knows Ah’m even feared uh earth worms. Thass de biggest snake Ah evah did see. Kill ’im Syke, please.”

“Doan ast me tuh do nothin’ fuh yuh. Goin’ ’roun’ tryin’ tuh be so damn asterperious. Naw, Ah aint gonna kill it. Ah think uh damn sight mo’ uh him dan you! Dat’s a nice snake an’ anybody doan lak ’im kin jes’ hit de grit.”

The village soon heard that Sykes had the snake, and came to see and ask questions.

“How de hen-fire did you ketch dat six-foot rattler, Syke?” Thomas asked.

“He’s full uh frogs so he caint hardly move, thass how Ah eased up on ’m. But Ah’m a snake charmer an’ knows how tuh handle ’em. Shux, dat aint nothin’. Ah could ketch one eve’y day if Ah so wanted tuh.”

“What he needs is a heavy hick’ry club leaned real heavy on his head. Dat’s de bes’ way tuh charm a rattlesnake.”

“Naw, Walt, y’ll jes’ don’t understand dese diamon’ backs lak Ah do,” said Sykes in a superior tone of voice.
The village agreed with Walter, but the snake stayed on. His box remained by the kitchen door with its screen wire covering. Two or three days later it had digested its meal of frogs and literally came to life. It rattled at every movement in the kitchen or the yard. One day as Delia came down the kitchen steps she saw his chalky-white fangs curved like scimitars hung in the wire meshes. This time she did not run away with averted eyes as usual. She stood for a long time in the doorway in a red fury that grew bloodier for every second that she regarded the creature that was her torment.

That night she broached the subject as soon as Sykes sat down to the table.

“Syke, Ah wants you tuh take dat snake 'way fum heah. You done starved me an' Ah put up widcher, you done beat me an' Ah took dat, but you done kilt all mah insides bringin' dat varmint heah.”

Sykes poured out a saucer full of coffee and drank it deliberately before he answered her.

“A whole lot Ah keer 'bout how you feels inside uh out. Dat snake aint goin’ no damn wheah till Ah gits ready fuh 'im tuh go. So fur as beatin’ is concerned, yuh aint took near all dat you gointer take ef yuh stay 'roun' me.”

Delia pushed back her plate and got up from the table. “Ah hates you, Sykes,” she said calmly. “Ah hates you tuh de same degree dat Ah useter love yuh. Ah done took an’ took till mah belly is full up tuh mah neck. Dat’s de reason Ah got mah letter fum de church an’ moved mah membership tuh Woodbridge—so Ah don’t haftuh take no sacrament wid yuh. Ah don’t wantuh see yuh ‘roun’ me atall. Lay ‘roun’ wid dat ‘oman all yuh wants tuh, but gwan ‘way fum me an’ mah house. Ah hates yuh lak uh suck-egg dog.”

Sykes almost let the huge wad of corn bread and collard greens he was chewing fall out of his mouth in amazement. He had a hard time whipping himself up to the proper fury to try to answer Delia.

“Well, Ah’m glad you does hate me. Ah’m sho’ tiahed uh you hangin’ on tuh me. Ah don’t want yuh. Look at yuh stringey ole neck! Yo’ rawbony laigs an’ arms is enough tuh cut uh man tuh death. You looks jes’ lak de devvul’s doll-baby tuh me. You cain’t hate me no worse dan Ah hates you. Ah been hatin’ you fuh years.”

“Yo’ ole black hide don’t look lak nothin’ tuh me, but uh passle uh wrinkled up rubber, wid yo’ big ole yeahs flappin’ on each side lak uh paih uh buzzard wings. Don’t think Ah’m gointuh be run ‘way fum mah house neither. Ah’m goin’ tuh de white folks about you, mah young man, de very nex’ time you lay yo’ han’ on me. Mah cup is done run ovah.” Delia said this with no signs of fear and Sykes departed from the house, threatening her, but made not the slightest move to carry out any of them.

That night he did not return at all, and the next day being Sunday, Delia was glad she did not have to quarrel before she hitched up her pony and drove the four miles to Woodbridge.

She stayed to the night service—“love feast”—which was very warm and full of spirit. In the emotional winds her domestic trials were borne far and wide so that she sang as she drove homeward,

“Jurden water, blackan’col’. Chills de body, not de soul. An’ Ah wantah cross Jurden in uh calm time.”

She came from the barn to the kitchen door and stopped.

“Whut’s de mattah, ol’ satan, you aint kickin’ up yo’ racket?” She addressed the snake’s box. Complete silence. She went on into the house with a new hope in its birth
struggles. Perhaps her threat to go to the white folks had frightened Sykes! Perhaps he was sorry! Fifteen years of misery and suppression had brought Delia to the place where she would hope anything that looked towards a way over or through her wall of inhibitions.

She felt in the match safe behind the stove at once for a match. There was only one there.

“Dat niggah wouldn’t fetch nothin’ heah tuh save his rotten neck, but he kin run thew whut Ah brings quick enough. Now he done toted off nigh on tuh haff uh box uh matches. He done had dat ’oman heah in mah house, too.”

Nobody but a woman could tell how she knew this even before she struck the match. But she did and it put her into a new fury.

Presently she brought in the tubs to put the white things to soak. This time she decided she need not bring the hamper out of the bedroom; she would go in there and do the sorting. She picked up the pot-bellied lamp and went in. The room was small and the hamper stood hard by the foot of the white iron bed. She could sit and reach through the bedposts—resting as she worked.

“Ah wantah cross Jurden in uh calm time.” She was singing again. The mood of the “love feast” had returned. She threw back the lid of the basket almost gaily. Then, moved by both horror and terror, she sprang back toward the door. There lay the snake in the basket! He moved sluggishly at first, but even as she turned round and round, jumped up and down in an insanity of fear, he began to stir vigorously. She saw him pouring his awful beauty from the basket upon the bed, then she seized the lamp and ran as fast as she could to the kitchen. The wind from the open door blew out the light and the darkness added to her terror. She sped to the darkness of the yard, slamming the door after her before she thought to set down the lamp. She did not feel safe even on the ground, so she climbed up in the hay barn.

There for an hour or more she lay sprawled upon the hay a gibbering wreck.

Finally she grew quiet, and after that, coherent thought. With this, stalked through her a cold, bloody rage. Hours of this. A period of introspection, a space of retrospection, then a mixture of both. Out of this an awful calm.

“Well, Ah done de bes’ Ah could. If things aint right, Gawd knows taint mah fault.”

She went to sleep—a twitch sleep—and woke up to a faint gray sky. There was a loud hallow sound below. She peered out. Skyes was at the woodpile, demolishing a wire-covered box.

He hurried to the kitchen door, but hung outside there some minutes before he entered, and stood some minutes more inside before he closed it after him.

The gray in the sky was spreading. Delia descended without fear now, and crouched beneath the low bedroom window. The drawn shade shut out the dawn, shut in the night. But the thin walls held back no sound.

“Dat ol’ scratch is woke up now!” She mused at the tremendous whirr inside, which every woodsman knows, is one of the sound illusions. The rattler is a ventriloquist. His whirr sounds to the right, to the left, straight ahead, behind, close under foot—everywhere but where it is. Woe to him who guesses wrong unless he is prepared to hold up his end of the argument! Sometimes he strikes without rattling at all.

Inside, Sykes heard nothing until he knocked a pot lid off the stove while trying
to reach the match safe in the dark. He had emptied his pockets at Bertha’s.

The snake seemed to wake up under the stove and Sykes made a quick leap into the bedroom. In spite of the gin he had had, his head was clearing now.

“Mah Gawd!” he chattered, “ef Ah could on’y strack uh light!”

The rattling ceased for a moment as he stood paralyzed. He waited. It seemed that the snake waited also.

“Oh, fuh de light! Ah thought he’d be too sick”—Sykes was muttering to himself when the whirr began again, closer, right underfoot this time. Long before this, Sykes’ ability to think had been flattened down to primitive instinct and he leaped—onto the bed.

Outside Delia heard a cry that might have come from a maddened chimpanzee, a stricken gorilla. All the terror, all the horror, all the rage that man possibly could express, without a recognizable human sound.

A tremendous stir inside there, another series of animal screams, the intermittent whirr of the reptile. The shade torn violently down from the window, letting in the red dawn, a huge brown hand seizing the window stick, great dull blows upon the wooden floor punctuating the gibberish of sound long after the rattle of the snake had abruptly subsided. All this Delia could see and hear from her place beneath the window, and it made her ill. She crept over to the four-o’clocks and stretched herself on the cool earth to recover.

She lay there. “Delia, Delia!” She could hear Sykes calling in a most despairing tone as one who expected no answer. The sun crept on up, and he called. Delia could not move—her legs were gone flabby. She never moved, he called, and the sun kept rising.

“Mah Gawd!” She heard him moan, “Mah Gawd fum Heben!” She heard him stumbling about and got up from her flower-bed. The sun was growing warm. As she approached the door she heard him call out hopefully, “Delia, is dat you Ah heah?”

She saw him on his hands and knees as soon as she reached the door. He crept an inch or two toward her—all that he was able, and she saw his horribly swollen neck and his one open eye shining with hope. A surge of pity too strong to support bore her away from that eye that must, could not, fail to see the tubs. He would see the lamp. Orlando with its doctors was too far. She could scarcely reach the Chinaberry tree, where she waited in the growing heat while inside she knew the cold river was creeping up and up to extinguish that eye which must know by now that she knew.
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# Discussion Leader Rubric

Name: _________________________________________  Period: ________  Date: __________

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<th>Trait</th>
<th>Exemplary: 3 points</th>
<th>Proficient: 2 points</th>
<th>Developing: 1 point</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Ten interpretive discussion questions, each with two follow-up questions; questions submitted for approval two class sessions before assigned discussion</td>
<td>Fewer than ten interpretive discussion questions, each with two follow-up questions; questions submitted for teacher approval two class sessions before assigned discussion</td>
<td>Fewer than ten interpretive discussion questions, each with two or fewer follow-up questions, submitted for approval after the deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader Role</strong></td>
<td>Does not dominate the conversation or interrupt participants</td>
<td>Sometimes dominates the conversation or interrupts participants</td>
<td>Continually dominates the conversation or interrupts participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiation of Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Begins with a short statement describing the kinds of questions brought to the discussion</td>
<td>Begins with a long statement describing the kinds of questions brought to the discussion</td>
<td>Begins with a very long statement describing the kinds of questions brought to the discussion; lectures or tries to prove an interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honoring Student Participation</strong></td>
<td>Maintains a nonthreatening, collaborative tone; listens when others speak; encourages all to participate; treats all participants with equity; ensures everyone can see and hear clearly; repeats or rephrases questions and statements, as needed</td>
<td>Usually maintains a nonthreatening, collaborative tone; usually listens when others speak; encourages most to participate; treats most participants with equity; ensures most can see and hear clearly; repeats or rephrases questions and statements occasionally, but not according to need</td>
<td>Seldom maintains a nonthreatening collaborative tone; seldom listens to participants; seldom encourages all to participate; treats few participants with equity; does not ensure some can see and hear clearly; repeats questions and statements, but not according to need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time on Topic</strong></td>
<td>Ensures that conversation sticks to topics; acknowledges comments, but steers conversation back to topic</td>
<td>Usually ensures that conversation sticks to topics; usually steers irrelevant conversation back to topic</td>
<td>Often allows conversation to drift; makes little or no attempt to redirect conversation back to topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Exemplary: 3 points</td>
<td>Proficient: 2 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Timing the Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Conducts discussion for 20–25 minutes; does not rush pace of conversation or let it drag; allows participants wait-time; lets the topic dictate the flow of talk</td>
<td>Conducts the discussion for more or less than 20–25 minutes; rushes pace of conversation or lets it drag; usually allows participants wait-time; usually lets the topic dictate the flow of talk</td>
<td>Conducts the discussion for far more or less than 20–25 minutes; rushes pace of conversation or lets it drag; does not allow participants wait-time; does not let the topic dictate the flow of talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Matter</strong></td>
<td>Asks questions from a wide-ranging set of concerns; ensures almost all of the assigned text is included in the discussion; questions address many areas of the writer’s craft</td>
<td>Usually selects questions from a wide-ranging set of concerns; ensures most of the assigned text is included in the discussion; questions address most areas of the writer’s craft</td>
<td>Selects questions from a narrow set of concerns; does not ensure most of the assigned text is included in the discussion; questions address few areas of the writer’s craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note-Taking and Text Reference</strong></td>
<td>Consults notes and prepared discussion questions, but does not rely upon them exclusively; consults the text and reads along when necessary, or calls on a participant to read; takes notes on discussion</td>
<td>Consults notes and prepared discussion questions, but relies upon them too much; usually consults the text and reads along when necessary, or calls on a participant to read; usually takes notes</td>
<td>Relies too much on notes and prepared discussion questions; consults the text but appears unfamiliar with it; neglects to read along when necessary or call upon a participant to read; does not take notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding to Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledges, clarifies, challenges, or agrees with participants; encourages speakers to explain and expand their ideas; asks multiple participants to respond to same question</td>
<td>Usually acknowledges, clarifies, challenges, or agrees with participants; usually encourages speakers to explain and expand their ideas; often asks multiple participants to respond to same question</td>
<td>Sometimes acknowledges, clarifies, challenges, or agrees with participants; sometimes encourages speakers to explain and expand their ideas; neglects to ask multiple participants to respond to same question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closing the Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Asks participants to recap important points; allows others to summarize discussion</td>
<td>May ask participants to recap important points; may neglect some content; allows others to summarize discussion</td>
<td>Does not ask participants to recap important points; does not allow others to summarize discussion</td>
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| Total |  |  |  |  |
Their Eyes Were Watching God Glossary

Chapter 1

- Porch sitters: Farmers and laborers who work for someone else and gain control of their time only in the evening.
- Banter log: Possibly a long log where people sat and talked, joked, and gossiped.
- “An envious heart makes a treacherous ear”: An aphorism to describe gossipy women.
- A mink skin...a coon hide: One thing looks pretty much like another until both can be studied carefully.

Chapter 2

- Bore the burden in the heat of the day: The allusion is to Matthew 20:12: “These latecomers did only one hour’s work, yet you have treated them on the same level as us, who have sweated the whole day long in the blazing sun.”
- Angel with the sword: This phrase is a metaphor for death and is an allusion to Numbers 22:23.
- School out...high bush and sweeter berry: Take time to explore and think about what you want to do. Picking a good husband is like knowing which part of a berry bush has the sweetest fruit.

Chapter 5

- Isaac and Rebecca at de well: This is an incorrect allusion to Genesis. Isaac never met Rebecca at a well; rather, it was Isaac’s father’s servant who encountered Rebecca at the well after he had prayed for divine guidance in finding a wife for Isaac.
- Bell-cow: The leader of the herd or, in this case, the most important woman in town.
- Protolapsis uh de cutinary linin’: Something that upsets the stomach and makes a person nervous. Hurston is characterizing the men as fond for impressive words, without regard to their meaning.

Chapters 6–8

- and yo’ feet ain’t mates: Matt is saying that Sam is not put together right and therefore cannot be believed.
- Before de ornery varmit could tack: A sailing and boating term, “tack” means to turn the bow to the wind. The mule was not fast enough to turn and pursue the children.
- Dat great big ole scoundrel-beast up dere: This refers to the dinosaur on a billboard advertising the Sinclair Oil Company. A dinosaur was the Sinclair logo and was prominently displayed at their filling stations.
- Y’all really playin’ de dozens tuhnigh: Trading insults, usually in a predictable way, and often based on the exaggeration of personal traits or involving derogatory statements about members of each other’s family.
- The thing that Saul’s daughter had done to David: In 1 Samuel: 18–19, Saul has two daughters, Merab and Michal. Saul was jealous of David because of his youth, beauty, intelligence, and potential power. Saul wanted to kill him, but Michal thwarted the plot.
- Well, if she must eat out of a long-handled spoon, she must: This is an allusion to Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors: “He must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.” Jody has become almost evil as a result of his illness, and so Janie must treat him carefully.
- Last summers dat multipled cork-roach wuz round headed heah trying’ tuh sell gophers!: Janie and Pheoby have no time for the charlatan, a “two-headed” doctor. “Gopher” might be a mispronunciation of “goopher,” a well-known conjure mixture believed to have great power.
He’d be all right just as soon as the two-headed man found what had been buried against him: If indeed Janie has “fixed” Joe, then the conjure man has to discover the “fix” and where it is buried. His next task would be to concoct something that would counteract the “fix.”

Chapter 9

Gold and red and purple, the gloat and glamour of secret orders: Joe evidently belonged to several lodges or fraternal orders, each of which had a different ritual to perform when a member dies.

Chapters 10–12

Cold-cocked her a look: Looked her straight in the eye.

Run our conversation from grassroots to pine trees: They have gone has far as they can with this conversation.

Chapter 14

Dyke . . . Indians: Details that foreshadow events in the plot.

Chapter 19

Give it uh poor man’s trial: A poor man takes any respectable job he can find and does his best with it.

De Jim Crow law: Jim Crow laws enforced strict racial segregation.

Motherless chile: Tea Cake feels as though he does not belong to anyone, like a child in slavery taken away from its mother. The song “Sometimes I Feel Like Motherless Child” is also a well-known spiritual.

Six months behind de United States privy house at hard smellin’: A metaphor for difficult and hard work.

Watchin’ de job: Waiting for Tea Cake to die.
Their Eyes Were Watching God Cast of Characters

Doctor Simmons
The doctor who diagnoses Tea Cake’s rabies.

Ed Dockery
A man in the Everglades whom Janie likes to listen to.

Hezekiah (‘Kiah) Potts
The delivery boy for Joe’s store who helps Janie after Joe’s death.

Janie Mae Crawford
The heroine of the novel; she is sixteen at the beginning of the story and past forty at the end. She has three husbands, Logan Killicks, Joe (Jody) Starks, and Tea Cake (Vergible) Woods. Her mother Leafy was raped by a schoolteacher and left Janie with Nanny, Janie’s grandmother. Her father escaped from the sheriff and the dogs that were hunting for him.

Joe (Jody) Starks
Janie’s second husband; she meets him as he is on his way to establish an all-African American town. He asks Janie to accompany him and she leaves Logan to go with Joe. Over time, Joe treats Janie like an employee and a precious commodity.

Johnny Taylor
A boy who kisses Janie over the gatepost when she is sixteen.

Leafy
Nanny’s daughter by the man who owned her; she is Janie’s mother. After she is raped by the schoolteacher, she becomes pregnant with Janie and then abandons her.

Logan Killicks
The man Nanny arranges for Janie to marry. Janie does not want to marry him because he seems old, but Nanny says he owns sixty acres and the only organ in town.

Matt Bonner
He owns the mule that others ridicule.

Mayrella
A child that Janie knew when she was young.

Mistis Robert
The wife of Nanny’s owner. When she realizes that Leafy is her husband’s daughter by Nanny, she threatens Nanny’s life.

Motor Boat
A man in the Everglades who tries to outrun a flood with Tea Cake and Janie.

Mr. Prescott
The prosecutor at Janie’s trial.

Mrs. Turner
An African American woman who believes that the lighter a person’s skin, the better; she praises Janie for her light brown skin and beautiful hair. She owns a restaurant (referred to as an eating house) in the Everglades that is damaged in a fight.

Mrs. Turner’s brother
He comes to stay with the Turners and work.
Mrs. Washburn
The white mother of the family Nanny cares for; she has four grandchildren, two boys and two girls, whom Janie plays with as a small child.

Nanny Crawford
Janie’s grandmother; she and Janie lived with the Washburns, a white family in West Florida. A former slave, Nanny wants to have land and a house of her own, and she wants Janie to have a better life than she did. The man who owned Nanny is Janie’s grandfather.

Nunkie
A woman who works on the muck with Tea Cake. Janie becomes jealous when she believes that Nunkie is flirting too much with him.

Pheoby Watson
Janie’s best friend, Pheoby listens to Janie’s story as they sit on Janie’s back porch. Janie asks Pheoby to pass her story on to the others.

Sam Watson
Pheoby’s husband; He, Lige, and Walter are the primary storytellers about Matt Bonner’s mule.

Sop-de-Bottom
He plays cards with Ed Dockery.

Vergible (Tea Cake) Woods
Janie’s third and last husband. She is nearly twelve years older than he is. They move from Eatonville to the Everglades, and Janie works alongside Tea Cake on the muck.

Who Flung
A stranger who stole Annie Tyler’s money and left her behind.

Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapter Settings

Eatonville, Florida
In 1921, in the incorporated African American town of Eatonville, north of Orlando in central Florida, the recently widowed forty-year-old Janie Crawford Woods strides back to the house in which she used to live as wife of Mayor Joe “Jody” Starks. She had left Eatonville two years previously.

West Florida
Nanny, Janie’s maternal grandmother, reared her in west Florida after Janie’s mother Leafy left home. She arranges a marriage with a well-off farmer, Logan Killicks, who owns sixty acres, a house near the road, and the town’s only organ.

Savannah, Georgia
Nanny recalls Civil War times when she belonged to Marse Robert and Mistis, his wife, near Savannah, an Atlantic port on Georgia’s eastern coast. Nanny, who was the concubine of Marse Robert, gave birth to Leafy a week before General William T. Sherman of the Union Army captured Atlanta, Georgia.

West Florida
Settled among good white people, Nanny purchases a small piece of land and rejects suitors so that Leafy can get an education and become a teacher. After giving birth to Janie, Leafy disappears. Eventually, Janie gives in to her grandmother and marries Logan Killicks. The couple moves to a dismal house on his sixty acres.

Green Cove Springs, Florida
Joe hires a buggy to take them to Green Cove Springs, on Florida’s northeast coast. After their wedding, they spend the night in a local boarding house.

Maitland, Florida
Traveling by train, Joe and Janie arrive at Maitland, northwest of Orlando. Joe hires a buggy to take them east to Eatonville.

Jacksonville, Florida
Janie takes the train northeast to Jacksonville on the Atlantic coast, where Tea Cake has been promised a job. After their wedding, they live in his rented room.

The Everglades, Florida
Janie and Tea Cake live between Clewiston and Belle Glade, northeast of Lake Okeechobee.

Palm Beach, Fort Myers, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Tea Cake and Janie withdraw to Palm Beach, Fort Myers, and Fort Lauderdale for fun.

Palm Beach, Florida
Janie arranges Tea Cake’s funeral in Palm Beach.

Eatonville, Florida
Janie returns to tell her story; after telling Pheoby, she feels somewhat at peace with herself.
Janie’s Genealogy Chart

- **Mistis Robert**
- **Marse Robert**
- **Nanny**

**Son** (killed at Chickamauga)

**Leafy** (born near time of surrender; raped at 17)

**Janie Mae Crawford-Starks-Woods**
(Also called “Alphabet” and “Lil-Bit”)

**Logan Killicks**
(married to Janie in 1888)

**Joe “Jody” Starks**
(married to Janie in 1889; died 1929)

**Vergible “Tea-Cake” Woods**
(married to Janie after Joe Starks)
Appendix D: Days 5–11

Contents

Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation ................................................................. D-2
  Prompt
Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation Rubric ................................................... D-3
  Rubric
Zora Neale Hurston Persuasive Essay ...................................................................... D-5
  Prompt
Persuasive Essay Rubric .......................................................................................... D-6
  Rubric
Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation

Name: _______________________________ Period: ________ Date: ________________

Directions: Mark which question your group has been assigned and read the “Hurston Research Presentation Rubric.” Refer to it as you organize your presentation. In your small group plan a 10–15 minute interactive presentation for the class. The exact nature of the presentation is up to you, but it must contain these elements:

- Each group member must provide a list of references. This list should be typed as a work-cited page.
- Group members will teach what they have learned while researching.
- Presentations will engage the class in active learning.
- All group members must take part in all parts of the presentation.
- A multimedia component such as a slideshow or video clip less than two minutes long, music, choreography, paintings, photographs, and/or posters.

1. What was the Harlem Renaissance? How, where, and why did it begin? Who were some of the notable figures? What effect did it have on later intellectual and cultural development?

2. What is known about Zora Neale Hurston’s life before 1925? Where did she live? Where did she go to school? What jobs did she hold? Who were her friends and acquaintances? What were her interests and activities? Are there any discrepancies in the information you find? If so, what?

3. What is known about Zora Neale Hurston’s life after 1925? Where did she live? What did she write? What other jobs did she hold? Who were her friends and acquaintances? What were the circumstances of her death and burial?

4. What did Hurston write? Are there stories and essays that come up regularly in your research? If so, name and summarize them. How would you characterize Hurston’s range of genres, topics, and writing styles?

5. Who was Richard Wright? Describe his literary contributions and the portrayal of African Americans in his stories. What did he think about Hurston’s work?

6. Who was Alice Walker? Describe her literary contributions and the portrayal of African Americans in her stories. What did she think about Hurston’s work? How did Hurston’s writing influence Walker’s life and writing?
Zora Neale Hurston Research Presentation Rubric

Directions: Use the following criteria to guide the development of your group’s presentation and to evaluate your own and others’ performances.

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<td>Transitions are obvious and aid in understanding</td>
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<td>Information is novel and engaging</td>
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<td>Information is complete and as in-depth as time allows</td>
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<td>Information is accurate</td>
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<td>Visual aids (posters/handouts) are error-free</td>
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<td>Conclusion</td>
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<td>Eye contact is consistent and all inclusive</td>
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<td>Poise is evidenced by body control and voice control</td>
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<td>Attitude is positive/enthusiasm level is appropriate for purpose</td>
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<td>- Are ready when called upon</td>
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<td>- Have audio/visual aids ready</td>
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<td>- Are equally responsible for presentation</td>
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<td>- Are attentive listeners for others’ presentations</td>
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Comments
Zora Neale Hurston Persuasive Essay

Name: _________________________________________  Period: ________  Date: ________________

Directions: In response to one of the prompts below, write a 2–3 page essay. Your essay will be assessed using the “Persuasive Essay Rubric.”

Purpose
The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate your understanding of Hurston’s writing by using your own research and notes to respond to one of the following prompts. Support or refute the prompt.

Procedure
When you have finished your first draft, ask someone to read your paper and comment on its content.

- Does the reader understand what you are saying?
- Are any questions left unanswered or is information repeated?
- Is the paper complete and logical?

Ask the reader to mark your errors, and then comment on your writing strategies in general, giving you both positive reactions and suggestions for revision. Finally, rewrite your essay. Submit both drafts when you turn it in. You will receive a grade only if a full, marked-up draft is attached.

Prompts
1. “Miss Hurston voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition which was forced upon the Negro in the theatre, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the ‘white folks’ laugh. Her characters eat and laugh and cry and work and kill; they swing like a pendulum eternally in that safe and narrow orbit in which America likes to see the Negro live: between laughter and tears.”
   —Richard Wright

2. “The sensory sweep of her [Hurston’s] novel carries no theme, no message, no thought. In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy.”
   —Richard Wright

3. Alice Walker, after watching and hearing her African American relatives react to one of Hurston’s books, said, “they could not hold back the smiles, the laughter, the joy over who she was showing them to be: descendants of an inventive, joyous, courageous, and outrageous people; loving drama, appreciating wit, and, most of all, relishing the pleasure of each other’s loquacious and bodacious company. This was my first indication of the quality I feel is most characteristic of Zora’s work: racial health; a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings.”
   —“Zora Neal Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View”
# Persuasive Essay Rubric

Name: _________________________________________  Period: _______  Date: ________________

**Directions:** Use the criteria to guide the writings of your persuasive essay. The rubric will be used to evaluate your writing process and final paper.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Score Points</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Requirements:</strong> Contains all notes, drafts, and final drafts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> The persuasive essay clearly and effectively establishes its thesis (or position) early and maintains focus throughout. Each paragraph is logically linked to the thesis and all sentences within the paragraphs serve to further develop and maintain this focus. The essay includes at least three powerful statements of fact, value, or policy as well as examples, stories, quotations from experts, and visual images to argue its position. Evidence is from multiple sources.</td>
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<td><strong>Conventions:</strong> The essay’s prose is written in grammatically correct English; it has few spelling or grammatical errors; it shows a sound understanding of the structure of a good sentence and paragraph.</td>
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<td><strong>Organization:</strong> The ideas follow and relate to each other in a logical and effective way. Information is organized within the sentence and paragraph, as well as in the paper itself, for maximum rhetorical effectiveness, with the most powerful arguments at the end of the piece. Also, ideas and topics within the piece are well balanced.</td>
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<td><strong>Development:</strong> The essay uses specific, concrete examples to illustrate the ideas or events it develops or describes and elaborates on the different arguments presented. Each paragraph contains at least four sentences. The essay acknowledges the other position’s point of view fairly; and anticipates counterarguments.</td>
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<td><strong>Process:</strong> The work reveals evidence of revision, planning, and careful work, and it does not look as if it were written at the last minute. You worked well in writing-response groups throughout the different stages of the process.</td>
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<td><strong>Benchmark:</strong> The work reflects the quality of work that I expect you to be able to do in this class at this time on such an assignment.</td>
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Total: _____

Comments:
Contents

Their Eyes Were Watching God Project ................................................................. E-2
  Project

Their Eyes Were Watching God Project Rubric..................................................... E-4
  Rubric
Their Eyes Were Watching God Project

Name: ___________________________ Period: ________ Date: ______________

Directions: Choose one of the options or devise your own and develop a project to present to the class. (The project must be approved before you begin.) Projects may be completed individually or in small groups.

With the project, write a one-page critique that summarizes the process you used to create the project and assesses your work. In your critique, be sure to answer the following questions:

- Why did you choose this project?
- What did you learn from the project?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the final project?
- What would you do differently if you had to do it again?

Project presentations must include a summary of the critique’s essay and will be evaluated using the “Their Eyes Were Watching God Project Rubric.”

Projects

1. Study the musical genre of the blues. Using the form of a blues song, write lyrics that convey the plot of Their Eyes Were Watching God. Perform the song for the class or record and play it.

2. Write a poem based on Their Eyes Were Watching God. The poem needs to show deep understanding of the novel and be a significant product, one that is a result of time and effort. When presenting your poem describe the thinking that went into it.

3. Create a piece of art that explains, focuses, or extends the scenes, themes, symbols, or figurative language of Their Eyes Were Watching God.

4. Write a script and act out a significant scene from Their Eyes Were Watching God. As an alternative to acting in class, create a video. Consider both critical scenes, such as Janie shooting Tea Cake, and minor scenes, such as Janie’s discussion with her grandmother about marriage.

5. Write the next chapter or epilogue to Their Eyes Were Watching God. Would Janie marry again? Would she leave Eatonville and continue to grow? The chapter should continue the narrative as a logical extension of the end of the novel.

6. Design a graphic novel or comic book based on Their Eyes Were Watching God. Limit the focus of your graphic novel to one segment of Janie’s life.
7. Write a five-act play based on the five distinct time periods of Janie’s life in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Be sure the play has a consistent point of view, clear scene changes, and similar use of language throughout.

8. Write a dramatic monologue of Janie sitting on her porch. This monologue should expand on one episode in Janie’s life that might resonate with a contemporary adolescent who feels she cannot speak to her own mother about a problem she has.

9. Compose a folk song in the mode of a particular historical singer or group. For example, you could listen to 1950s and 1960s music by The Kingston Trio, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, John Denver, or Judy Collins, then write a song in a similar style.
### Their Eyes Were Watching God Project Rubric

**Names:** ____________________________________________________________

**Period:** _____________________ **Date:** ______________ **Type of Project:** _________________

**Directions:** Use the criteria to guide the development of your project. The rubric will be used to assess your project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
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<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Project applies knowledge of the text to a new situation in an accurate and appropriate manner.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project is easy to follow and, if it includes a storyline, does not confuse the audience.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project is based on main ideas in the text and does not focus on insignificant details.</td>
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<td>Project shows thorough preplanning.</td>
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<td>Organization aids audience understanding.</td>
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<td>Project indicates a clear understanding of the original text.</td>
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<td>Information is complete and accurate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expression is grammatically/mechanically correct.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Project is a display of unique and interesting original ideas.</td>
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<td>Scenery, props, and costuming show attention to detail and are consistent in terms of time and place.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project is neatly done. If the project is a video or computer presentation, the sound is clear and the technical aspects of making the video have not interfered with the final product.</td>
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<td>If students assume roles, they stay in character and remain “professional.”</td>
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<td>Voices are loud enough for the audience to hear and are clear.</td>
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<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Project is handed in on time.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Each group member has been reliable and has shared equally in the work that was done for the project (as reported by group members).</td>
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<td>Project demonstrates reasonable effort for the amount of time allotted to the project.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students did not endanger themselves or others while creating the project.</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>All members contribute equally to the in-class presentation of the project.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students tell why they chose the project, what obstacles they had to overcome to create it, what they like and do not like about the final project, and what they learned from doing the project.</td>
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**Total**
Contents

Hurston’s Use of Language ........................................................................................................... F-2
Homework
Hurston’s Use of Language

Directions: First, define each literary device. Then review chapter 6 of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to find as many examples of each device as you can. For each example quote the relevant passage, give the page number on which it is found, and interpret the meaning of the passage. Finally, write your own example of the literary device. If necessary, write examples on the back of the worksheet.

1. Hyperbole

2. Irony

3. Metaphor

4. Teasing language

5. Draw a conclusion about the effect the literary devices have on the characterization and imagery in the novel.
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Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–5 Quiz ................................................................. G-2
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Key

Glossary of Porch Talk ............................................................................................................ G-5
Handout
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–5 Quiz

Name: _________________________________________  Period: ________  Date: ______________

Part I

Directions: Identify the character described. (14 points)

_________________ 1. Janie’s best friend who listens to her story as they sit on the back porch.
_________________ 2. The man that Janie does not want to marry.
_________________ 3. A former slave who wants to have land and a house of her own.
_________________ 4. The woman who is raped by a schoolteacher and abandons her daughter.
_________________ 5. The person who was called “Alphabet” because she had so many names as a child.
_________________ 6. The white man who was Janie’s grandfather.
_________________ 7. Janie’s second husband.

Part II

Directions: Writing in complete sentences, answer each question. (16 points)

8. What event causes Janie’s grandmother to decide that it is time for Janie to get married at the age of sixteen?

9. Why does Janie’s grandmother choose the husband that she does for Janie?

10. In what state does this story take place?
11. In what year does Janie tell her story to her friend?

12. What does Janie realize by watching the bees in the pear tree?

13. How is Janie treated by her first husband? How does his behavior change? Cite at least one specific example in your response.

14. How is Janie’s second marriage different from her first? Cite at least one specific example in your response.

15. Why is Eatonville a unique town?
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–5 Quiz Key

Part I
1. Pheoby Watson
2. Logan Killicks
3. Nanny Crawford
4. Leafy
5. Janie Crawford
6. Mr. Washburn
7. Joe (Jody) Starks

Part II
8. Janie’s grandmother sees Janie kissing Johnny Taylor over the gatepost.
9. She considers him to be a “good man” who can protect Janie. She thinks Logan Killicks can keep her safe because he owns sixty acres of land, has a house bought and paid for, and has the only organ in town.
10. The story takes place in Florida.
11. The story is told in 1921.
12. She realizes that the natural, ecstatic, sweet delight of the bee pollinating the pear blossom is what marriage should be like.
13. Janie is treated well. Logan says he has no intention of laying a hand on her in malice. He does the heavy work, such as chopping the wood and bringing in water. Toward the end of the first year, however, he starts making more demands on her to do farm work, such as shoveling manure, and says she is spoiled.
14. She is treated like a lady. Janie’s husband buys nice things for her, takes time to talk to her, and dreams with her. Specific examples may vary.
15. African Americans comprise its entire population.
# Glossary of Porch Talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playin’ the dozens, Playin’ house, Rankin’ moms</td>
<td>This game of insults involves saying negative things about another’s family members, usually female, especially the mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signifyin’, Ribbin’ up</td>
<td>In an attempt to cause conflict, the youngster(s) separately tells two people that each said something undesirable about the other. A milder version is often used against teachers (“Mr. Smith wants you to let me go down to help him with a project.”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor mouthin’</td>
<td>When caught by an authority figure, continuous talking, excuses, and pleas for mercy result despite directions to be quiet or attempts by the authority figure to speak. The youngster hopes to avoid punishment by frustrating or distracting the adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud mouthin’, Loud talking’</td>
<td>These hurtful utterances involve saying something personal to someone so loudly that others hear the comments, thus embarrassing the person to whom they are directed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jivin’, Puttin’ one over, Jazzin’ Called Shuckin’</td>
<td>If subservient and placating behavior is also shown, this clever tactic incorporates the telling of an ad-libbed fictitious story/excuse spontaneously created to fool a stronger opponent or authority figure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hustlin’, Runnin’/Workin’/Whuppin’</td>
<td>A game. Any questionable or illegal activity designed to obtain money or desired objects from trusting and unsuspecting others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cat and the gorilla, Showin’ out, Goin’ off</td>
<td>To obtain a desired privilege or escape an undesired consequence, the student “sweet talks” a teacher (the cat). If unsuccessful, the student then yells and vigorously storms around the room (the gorilla) until the request is granted. The gorilla does not directly intimidate others as in Woofin’ (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woofin’, Punkin’ ‘em down, Gettin’ in your face, Bogartin’</td>
<td>This menacing behavior involves using one’s voice, threats, and/or body language to intimidate another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildin’, Gettin’ paid</td>
<td>Peer pressure, group contagion of behavior, and the adolescent desire for excitement and belonging, all combine to produce a roving band of misbehaving, bullying youth.</td>
</tr>
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## Additional Resources


From Tom McIntyre, “Earning the Respect of Streetwise Youngsters.” ©1996 by Tom McIntyre.
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Key
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz

Name: _________________________________________  Period: ________  Date: ____________

Part I

Directions: Writing in complete sentences, explain the meaning of each quotation. (15 points)

1. “She sits high, but she looks low.”

2. “An envious heart makes a treacherous ear.”

3. “School out . . . high bush and sweeter berry.”

4. “Drag him out to the edge of the hammock.”

5. “Like a pack of cheesy cats.”

Part II

Directions: The following questions deal specifically with the relationship between Janie and Joe. Answer each question as completely as possible, using supporting examples. (10 points)

6. What attracts Janie to Joe Sparks when they first meet?
7. What does Joe do to establish himself as an important figure in Eatonville?

8. How has the relationship between Janie and Joe changed by the time Joe dies?

9. What prompts Janie to say, “When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change of life.” What effect does the statement have on Janie’s audience?

10. What does Janie mean when she says to Pheoby that “mourning oughtn’t tuh last no longer’n grief”?
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–9 Quiz Key

Part I

1. This means that a woman (Janie) may act proud or high-class, but be low-class. It also means that Janie is putting on a mask of composure, but it is obviously a mask, such that everyone sees her sadness behind it.

2. A person who is jealous may take what he or she hears and do something evil with it.

3. (Grandmother) wanted Janie to choose a husband who had something to offer her; she wanted him to be higher in society and, therefore, more desirable. The best berries were considered to be those at the top of the bush.

4. Sitting on the edge of a hammock is unstable or unsafe. To be drug to the edge of the hammock would mean to be put in a precarious position.

5. This is a reference to the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland. People with cheesy smiles have an all-knowing look and cannot always be trusted.

Part II

6. Joe offered Janie change and dreams. He listened to her and treated her with respect.

7. He buys 200 acres of land to add to the town, builds a store, and is chosen mayor.

8. When Joe first meets Janie, he does not appear to be self-centered. He focuses attention on her and makes her feel as though she is important by buying her nice things. Janie becomes a token wife. She looks good; she does what is needed to enhance her husband’s situation. She becomes what he has created. He uses her and does not let her have her own voice. She has no identity of her own and becomes lonely, while he is out building his own dreams.

9. Janie is reacting to Joe’s claim that no man would be interested in a woman as old as she is. Joe’s friends laugh because Janie had “robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness.”

10. Janie is saying that true grief does not last as long as the social convention of “mourning,” which was the outward expression of grief. In other words, the outward expressions (such as wearing black) should not last any longer than actual inward grieving. She implies that she is not sorry to see Joe dead.
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Key
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–15 Quiz

Name: ________________________________ Period: _______ Date: ____________

Part I

Directions: Identify the character described. (5 points)

1. Janie’s second husband, who establishes Eatonville and becomes its first mayor.
2. The delivery boy who helps Janie around the store after Joe’s death.
3. Janie’s third husband; people believe he is after her money.
4. This man says, “De name mah mama gimme is Vergible Woods. Dey call me _________________ for short.”
5. The woman Janie worries is flirting too much with her husband.

Part II

Directions: Writing in complete sentences, answer each question. (25 points; 1 point each unless otherwise noted)

6. How does Janie meet Tea Cake?

7. What are two leisure activities that Tea Cake teaches Janie? (2 points)

8. At what social event in Eatonville do the townspeople start to notice Tea Cake’s interest in Janie?
9. In chapter 11 Janie and Tea Cake discuss daytime and nighttime thoughts. What is the significance of that conversation? (2 points)

10. What is Pheoby’s reaction to Janie’s decision to leave town with Tea Cake? (2 points)

11. When Tea Cake takes Janie’s $200 and throws a party for his friends, why does he not ask Janie to be there with him?

12. How does Tea Cake return the money he took from Janie?

13. What is Tea Cake accused of doing before he is cut with the razor?

14. What and where is “the muck”? (2 points)

15. How are the gatherings at Janie and Tea Cake’s house different from those that were held on Janie and Jody’s porch? (3 points)
16. Before Tea Cake teaches Janie to shoot, he says, “Tain’t no need uh you not knowin’ how tuh handle shootin’ tools. Even if you didn’t never find no game, it’s always some trashy rascal dat need uh good killin.” What does this foreshadow?

17. In at least what three ways are Tea Cake and Joe Starks different? (3 points)

18. How does Janie change the itinerant workers’ preconceptions of her? (2 points)

19. In chapter 15 Tea Cake says, “What would Ah do wid dat lil chunk of a woman wid you around? She ain’t good for nothin’ exceptin’ tuh set up in uh corner by de kitchen stove and break wood over her head. You’se something tuh make uh man forgit tuh git old and forgit tuh die.” a) What prompts him to say that? b) What does the last line mean? c) Do you think he is serious? Why or why not? (3 points)
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 1–15 Quiz Key

Part I
1. Joe Starks
2. Hezekiah Potts
3. Tea Cake (Vergible Woods)
4. Tea Cake
5. Nunkie

Part II
6. Janie meets Tea Cake when he comes into her store to buy cigarettes.
7. Tea Cake teaches Janie to play checkers and to fish.
8. It is after the Sunday School picnic that people notice a relationship is developing between them.
9. Janie implies that Tea Cake says things to her at night, when he is romantically inclined, that he would not say to her during the day. Consequently, he shows up early one morning to prove that he always desires her.
10. Pheoby is afraid that Janie is making a bad decision. She thinks that Tea Cake may be after her money and is taking advantage of her. Ultimately, she realizes that since Janie has already made up her mind and warns her to be careful. She also says that she would like to have a similar adventure for just one year.
11. Tea Cake tells Janie that the people he had been with were not “high mucky mucks.” He believes she is not accustomed to railroad hands and their wives. He believes that if he had taken her along, she might have left him.
12. He wins the money gambling. In fact, he wins back more than he took.
13. He was accused of cheating by switching the dice.
14. The muck refers to the Everglades in southern Florida.
15. When Janie was married to Joe she was never allowed to take part in the socializing that took place among the men on her porch. When she married Tea Cake, however, she was part of the fun and camaraderie of singing and storytelling.
16. Answers will vary; however, the implication is that Janie may need to protect herself from someone who could harm her. At the end of the novel the irony of the remark is apparent because Janie shoots Tea Cake.
17. Tea Cake is more fun loving, while Joe is focused on business. Tea Cake allows Janie to be and speak for herself, while Joe represses Janie’s spirit and encourages silence. Tea Cake makes enough money to live on. Joe is materialistic and wants more. Tea Cake loves Janie for who she is, while Joe loves Janie for how she makes him look and who he has molded her into. (A number of other responses are possible.)
18. They see that Janie does not feel she is too good to work like the rest of the women and that her “romping and playing” makes her popular with the rest of the workers.
19. a) Janie has accused Tea Cake of “messin’ around” with a girl who is also working in the fields. b) The last sentence indicates that Tea Cake thinks Janie is so wonderful that she could keep a man young and make him forget about dying. c) Tea Cake is probably serious because he has previously seemed to be very much in love with Janie and has treated her with respect and kindness. There has been no indication that he is interested in other women.
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Key
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 16–20 Quiz

Name:  _________________________________________  Period:  ________  Date:  ________________

Part I

Directions:  Identify the character described. (15 points)

____________________  1. An African American woman who believes that Janie should not have married a man as dark-skinned as Tea Cake.
____________________  2. A man in the Everglades who tries to outrun the flood with Jane and Tea Cake, but later decides to stay behind.
____________________  3. The woman who is the subject of Janie and Tea Cake’s first major fight.
____________________  4. The woman with whom Mrs. Turner would like to “fix up” her brother.
____________________  5. After being bitten by a rabid dog, this man is shot as a result of his hydrophobia.

Part II

Directions:  Writing in complete sentences, respond to each question or statement. (30 points)

6. To whom is Mrs. Turner referring when she says, “He didn’t do nothin’ but hold us back—talkin’ ’bout work when de race ain’t never done nothin’ else. He wuz uh enemy tuh us, dat’s whut. He wuz uh white folks’ nigger”?

7. How might the quotation in question 6 be considered ironic?

8. Why does Tea Cake whip Janie?

9. What motivated Tea Cake and some of his friends to break up Mrs. Turner’s restaurant?

10. Why are the field workers not worried when the Seminole Indians, moving ahead of threatening weather, pass by?
11. Why do Janie and Tea Cake not evacuate, at first?

12. Paraphrase the following: They “huddled closer and stared at the door. They just didn’t use another part of their bodies, and they didn’t look at anything but the door. The time was past for asking the white folks what to look for through that door. Six eyes were questioning God.”

13. During the hurricane Tea Cake indicates guilt for putting Janie into this dangerous situation. She responds, “We been tuhgether round two years. If you kin see de light at daybreak, you don’t keer if you die at dusk. It’s so many people never seen de light at all. Ah wuz fumblin’ round and God opened de door.” Apply this remark generally to Janie’s life.

14. The man who accompanies Janie and Tea Cake on their flight from the hurricane later decides that he is too exhausted to continue running. What happens to him?

15. Explain how Tea Cake saves Janie’s life and what effect that has on his own fate.

16. How are the bodies of the dead treated differently?

17. Why does the doctor instruct Janie not to sleep in the same bed with her husband?

18. What event makes Tea Cake accuse Janie of being interested in another man?

19. What does Janie do to Tea Cake’s pistol that allows her to kill him before he kills her?

20. At Janie’s trial, why are the African American people against her?
Their Eyes Were Watching God Chapters 16–20 Quiz Key

Part I
1. Mrs. Turner
2. Motor Boat
3. Nunkie
4. Janie
5. Tea Cake

Part II
7. Mrs. Turner says that Booker T. Washington was an enemy of African Americans because he held them back by encouraging them to work and by implication to fit into the white economic structure. The irony is that Mrs. Turner, in a different way, wants to fit into white society by emphasizing the importance of being a light-skinned African American, like herself.
8. Tea Cake whips Janie to reassure himself that she is still his.
9. Tea Cake says that because Mrs. Turner hates “black folk so, she don’t need our money in her ol’eatin’ place.”
10. The field workers believe the Indians are “dumb.” In addition, the weather is good and the beans were bringing a good price, so the field workers did not want to believe there might be a hurricane coming.
11. Tea Cake says the money is too good and the boss has not left yet. Furthermore, he thinks the hurricane will be minor and gone by the next day.
12. Janie, Tea Cake, and Motor Boat stayed close together, not moving, watching the door to see what would happen next. It was too late to ask the white people what to expect, so in their minds they were asking God what was planned for them.
13. Jane implies that until Tea Cake came into her life, she did not see the good things in life. As long as she has experienced the good (the light) it would not matter to her if she died. She feels that God has opened the door for her and given her an opportunity to live.
14. Motor Boat decides to stay and rest in a house they have sheltered in. While he sleeps the house is moved by flood waters, but he survives.
15. In her attempt to stay afloat after falling into the flood waters, Janie grabs onto a cow that is already a refuge for a rabid dog. To save Janie, Tea Cake fights the dog and kills it, but in the process contracts rabies. This eventually leads to his madness and ultimate death when he attacks Janie and she shoots him.
16. The white people are buried in coffins and the African Americans are dumped together in a mass grave.
17. The doctor is afraid Tea Cake might bite Janie and give her rabies.
18. Tea Cake’s friend (Sop) tells him that Mrs. Turner’s brother is back in town. Tea Cake thinks that Janie might be interested in him. When Janie goes to town to find out about Tea Cake’s medicine, he gets suspicious of where she has gone.
19. Janie spins the cylinder so that the bullet is not in the firing chamber. She fixes it so that it would snap three times before firing. This would serve as a warning that would allow her to protect herself.
20. The African Americans who loved Tea Cake could not accept the truth about his illness. They accused Janie of taking up with another man as soon as Tea Cake became ill. They could not understand how she could kill someone who had taken such good care of her and had loved her so much.
Secondary Course Objectives

A primary course objective
- is the central focus of the unit and
- is explicitly assessed in an embedded assessment and/or in the summative assessment.

A secondary course objective
- is less important to the focus of the unit, but is one that students need to know and use when completing activities for this unit and
- may or may not be explicitly assessed by the summative assessment or an embedded assessment.

Course objectives considered primary for this unit are listed on pp. 1–2. Below is a list of secondary course objectives associated with this unit.

Selected Secondary Course Objectives

A.1. Reading Across the Curriculum
a. Choose materials for independent reading on the basis of specific criteria (e.g., personal interest, own reading level, knowledge of authors and literary or nonliterary forms)
b. Read independently for a variety of purposes (e.g., for enjoyment, to gain information, to perform a task)
c. Read increasingly challenging whole texts in a variety of literary (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction) and nonliterary (e.g., textbooks, news articles, memoranda) forms

A.4. Influences on Texts
c. Explain the effects of the author’s life upon his or her work (e.g., Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s experience in the gulag as reflected in his novel One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich)

A.6. Persuasive Language and Logic
b. Summarize and paraphrase information in increasingly challenging texts, identifying key ideas, supporting details, inconsistencies, and ambiguities

A.7. Literary Criticism
b. Evaluate a work of literature from a variety of perspectives (e.g., applying a feminist perspective to Kate Chopin’s novel The Awakening)

A.8. Words and Their History
g. Describe and provide examples of the ways past and present events (e.g., cultural, political, technological, scientific) have influenced the English language
**Course Objectives Measured by Assessments**

This table presents at a glance how the course objectives are employed throughout the entire unit. It identifies those objectives that are explicitly measured by the embedded and unit assessments. The first column lists course objectives by a two- or three-character code (e.g., A.2.a.), and the remaining columns list the assessments.

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<tr>
<th>Coded Course Objectives</th>
<th>Embedded Assessments</th>
<th>Unit Assessment</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Quick-Writes</td>
<td>Leading Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.2.b.</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.2.c.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.4.a.</td>
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<td>A.5.e.</td>
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<tr>
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