



## **Reading and Writing the Autobiography With a Study of Zora Neale Hurston**

Curriculum Unit 88.03.03  
by Marie Patricia Casey

This unit is written primarily for Junior classes. Much of the lesson plan material is geared to the middle or lower groups who need the greatest structure and guidance in learning the process of writing about themselves.

The focus of adolescence is the pursuit of identity. Of course, for many this is a life long pursuit, but adolescence is the stage of conscious beginning of this process. Who am I? Where have I come from? And more importantly, Where am I going? For many inner city youths, there is more of the difficult, dark side of life and there is a deep questioning and cynicism about themselves. It is my observation that reading autobiographical works by Black authors reassures inner city students about themselves. The experiences reflected in the readings and the feelings are very often reflected in the lives of inner city youths. Furthermore, while approving the events in a book, the students give approval to themselves.

I plan to select certain autobiographical readings for close reading and class discussion. Knowing content and discussing what has happened in a book is a stage at the heart of this unit. Learning about others, means learning more about ourselves. Hopefully, the student will understand the universality of human experience. First, we will read and think, then hopefully, we will begin to connect what we have read and make observations about the characters and ourselves. All of this is aimed at structuring and strengthening a positive identity process. The goals are entirely practical and life related. Using the writing process (making lists) and the clustering process (free thought association) the student will be asked to:

1. write about themselves. (where born? school?);
2. write a resume; I will work to clarify the distinction between these two activities.
3. write about a favorite person or describe a memorable incident;
4. write about their own dreams and wishes.
5. introduce the notion of fiction/and or fantasy that is present in autobiography through the writings of Zora Neale Hurston.

Through these writing exercises and autobiographical readings I hope to: improve self-concept and have the students share thoughts of the future with each other.

Every human being has the urge to try to make sense out of human experience, to give ourselves dignity, hope, and to give ourselves some feeling of control in an often chaotic life experience. Young people are often full of hope and anticipation, yet also downcast and depressed—lost in trying to identify life experience and seek a life for themselves. With the introduction of autobiographical reading material of other people’s lives, the feeling of aloneness is taken away and sometimes an identification of experience gives new understanding to the self.

The process of reading about and discussing other people’s lives, and other people’s problems, is really the process of discussing ourselves. However, it’s easier to discuss others, lives and—so much the better—when we are told this is a true incident—this really happened. There is a sense of safety in discussing issues belonging to people in books. The issues might also be personal but the distance is there and the speaker is not vulnerable to personal attack—only to opinion. The choices of others, the life goals and dreams of others can be self-consciousness.

A favorite book taught on the Sophomore level and on the Junior (if missed the year before) is *A Choice of Weapons* by Cordon Parks. In this autobiography he describes how many times he felt saved from a life of crime because of the teachings of his mother. He had such a variety of careers and an intense interest in everything he tried. Another issue, so prominent in the lower levels of high school, is the prison experience and the life of street crime. So many of these students know of people who are in prison. How can they interpret this experience? They speak with each other and exchange angry thoughts and perhaps lose hope, at times. However, I anticipate reading sections of the book *Brothers and Keepers* by John Wideman, just to ease the sense of isolation about the problem of prison is related to so many issues of importance to the young: luring frustrations, anger, danger; the problem of punishment; the pain of families; dreams, hopes and disillusionment.

Finally, autobiography can be used as an exercise in a study of the language. Zora Neale Hurston’s book of fiction *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is, by her own testament in *Dust Tracks on the Road* autobiographical. Janie is Zora and Tea Cake is her lover, who later becomes her husband. Zora’s ability to reproduce the southern dialect is always surprising to the students. To study this book is to appreciate the language of the rural South, especially of South Carolina and Florida, where so many of the students have relatives. To appreciate one’s culture and tradition is to take pride and self-confidence in oneself. Zora’s faithfulness to diction, metaphor and syntax is part of what has made this novel a classic. Hurston is a woman who labors to define herself, to write her own mind. Hurston celebrates the Afro-American oral culture. Talk is powerful.

Lastly, I hope to pursue again the self-portrait in this unit. In the following pages, I describe in detail what I plan to do in the Hurston portion of the unit.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* book opens as Janie returns to the town of Eatonville, walking in her overalls, passing by all the people who know her, to go alone to her house. Her friend of 20 years Phoeby follows her home with some dinner and the two women sit together while Janie tells her the story of her life—especially her life of the last two years. (Since the time she left Eatonville.)

Janie was raised by Nanny, her grandmother, who has suffered the abuses of slavery. Freed during the Civil War, Nanny raises her only child by working for a white family and living in a small house in their yard. She treasures her only daughter and hopes to see her become a schoolteacher. Instead, her daughter is raped by a local schoolteacher and gives birth to Janie. Janie’s young mother runs away soon after she is born and Janie is left to the care of her grandmother. She is raised lovingly—but her grandmother is more determined than ever that this new child should be protected from the troubles Nanny has seen. By the time Janie is seventeen,

her grandmother marries her to Logan Killicks who is old and unattractive but owns 60 acres and a house. For Nanny, financial security is enough. This is not enough for Janie and after a year with Logan, she meets and runs off with Joe Starks, a man who has dreams of self-importance and is going to Eatonville, an all Black town in Florida.

Joe becomes the mayor, the postmaster, the store owner. He gives Janie material things—a big house and position but he is chauvinistic and soon stifles her personality. He tries to isolate her and keeps her from participating in the story telling on the front porch of his store. Truly, this is the most interesting place in town. Joe belittles her intelligence and, finally, Janie submits to his ideas of what her behavior should be. But, only on the surface: she remains wishing for something better.

When Joe dies of a kidney ailment, Janie is left with property and money. She now meets Verigible “Tea Cake” Woods, a younger man who treats her like an equal. “Tea Cake” becomes the pear blossom in springtime, the man who takes her fishing and teaches her to play checkers. Against the disapproval of everyone in town, Janie goes off and marries “Tea Cake”. He is a gambler but he loves her and he in turn is surprised that she loves him and loves the company that he keeps. They move to the Everglades, where she works in the fields with him, not as a necessity or a burden but for the pleasure of sharing the whole day with him. Work is turned into play and love. Janie, at last, is a participant in the life that others before “Tea Cake” have felt was beneath her.

The story of Tea Cake takes a final turn when a hurricane comes through the glades and causes a flood. A mad dog bites Tea Cake while Janie and he are swimming to safety. He saves Janie from the dog but is bitten himself. The tragedy is that about three weeks later Tea Cake goes mad and raises a gun to kill Janie. She shoots him and he dies. There is a court case, but Tea Cake’s death is called accidental and justifiable. Janie buries Tea Cake and now the story has come full circle back to Eatonville, where she has returned and is telling her story to Phoeby. Tea Cake, the son of the Evening Star had to die for loving Janie. Now Janie is changed, her relationship and love for Tea Cake has matured and fulfilled her. Phoeby, her friend, is no longer satisfied with her own life. She wants things to be different with her husband Sam.

In any biography or autobiography, the real story of the person is found in attitudes, thoughts and feelings towards people, issues and experiences in life. These attitudes and issues are found in the works of art produced by the author whether they are paintings, music or books. The following exercise is structured to help students develop the skill of finding thoughts and ideas in a novel and then creating a relationship between the ideas or attitudes in the novel and the attitudes of the author found in personal writings or autobiography. (This exercise focuses on Zora Hurston’s best known novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*. This exercise strengthens critical thinking in the students and give practice to the important skill of taking a position and finding support for it in the literature.

## Lesson 1

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### **OBJECTIVE:**

To explore the possible relationships between characters in a novel.

## PREPARATION:

### Stage 1

Students read the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and answer all the questions on each chapter so that the characters and events are familiar to the students.

### Stage 2

Photocopy Chapter XII, "My People! My People!" from *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston's autobiography.

## ACTIVITIES:

Assign the reading of the chapter to the students for homework or class work. Consider what would be the best approach for your own students. Indicate that the author of this essay "My People! MY People!" is the author of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Ask the students to start making or finding connections between the attitudes expressed in "My People! My People!" and those found in the characters or events in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

## Day 2

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## PREPARATION:

The students have finished reading "My People! My People!" Ask the students to say what the essay is about. Write at least five thoughts on the board. Listing facts about the essay helps the students begin to develop a discussion and is a beginning of the process of thinking through their thoughts.

For example, write on the board-Thoughts on "My People! MY People!"

1. The essay is about the thoughts that Negroes have about one another and class district
2. The essay is about race.
3. The essay is about prejudice.
4. The essay is about the negative thoughts which increase prejudice.
5. The essay is about the way the author freed herself from prejudice.

## ACTIVITIES:

1. Divide the class into groups of four. Have them arrange their chairs or desks so that each group of people face each other. Ask each group to choose a recorder for their discussion. The discussion should last about fifteen minutes and the topic is to find the ideas which are expressed in the essay in the book *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Write on the board. "Find characters who express the author's attitudes found in the essay." The recorder lists the contributions of the students.

- After 15 minutes of discussion, reconvene the class to listen to the presentation of the ideas and thoughts discussed by each group. The presentation for each group is given by the recorder of the discussion and that person should also try to give the credit to the student who had the ideas.
2. The teacher or the recorder for each group should now list the ideas on a chart or large piece of paper taped to the board.

## Teachers Notes

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Answers will vary. However, if there is much confusion, the students should be given guidance in the following manner. The teacher is now free to approach groups and ask if the students remember the character of Mrs. Turner (Chapter 16, pg. 208, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* .) The following quotations should be found by students. Teacher's may use this as a guide.

## Day 3 Writing Activity

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### PREPARATION:

Open up a group discussion about situations of being or feeling discriminated against because of age, sex or race. Talk about an unfairness or injustice which has been brought against you.

### ACTIVITY:

Discuss and then write about an unfairness or injustice which has been brought against you. Perhaps the unfairness was in the form of a conversation such as Janie had with Mrs. Turner. Maybe the unfairness was in overhearing insults as Tea Cake did when Mrs. Turner talked with Janie. How was the situation resolved? How did you deal with it?

## LESSON 2

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Students gain much in enjoying literature by finding quotations and citing the text. The next few exercises are planned with this sort of pleasure in mind. I suggest giving page numbers, unless you are teaching an advanced class, because I have noticed that too much concentration and attention is lost by students leafing through books and feeling overly frustrated.

### OBJECTIVE:

To find a factual autobiographical basis for the plot of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* . Write on the board: Make a connection between the life of Zora Neale Hurston and the people and places in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* .

### **ACTIVITY 1:**

Read Chapter I “Birthplace” from autobiography *Dust Tracks on the Road* . Topic is (What do I know I can prove about Eatonville.) See page 10 for summary.

List at least 5 facts.

1. In August 15, 1886 the Negro town, Eatonville, after Captain Eaton received charter from Florida.
2. Eatonville made history by becoming the first Black Town of its kind in America.
3. It was an experiment in self government for Negroes.
4. It was settled in Lake country and ‘sprouted with life’-mostly Northerners.
5. The founders were people who had risked their lives ‘that Negroes might be free.’ <sup>1</sup>

### **ACTIVITY 2:**

Read Chapter II, “My Folks”, from *Dust Tracks* to find out about Zora’s parents. Note especially the information we are about her father on page 15.

“It was after his marriage that my father began to want things...He left his wife and three children behind and went to seek and see.

Months later he pitched into the hurly-burly of South Florida. So he heard about folks building a town all out of colored people. It seemed like a good place to go. Later on, he was to be elected Mayor of Eatonville for three terms, and to write the local laws. The village of Eatonville is still governed by the laws formulated by my father.” (DT 15)

### **ACTIVITY 3:**

Read Chapter V, “Figure and Fancy” in order to list facts found about Joe Clark’s store and the talk and life of the people on the porch of the store. See especially pages 61, 62, 63 and 69 in *Dust Tracks on the Road* .

## **Teacher Notes:**

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1. “Joe Clark’s store was the heart and spring of the town.” (DT 61)
2. “For me, the store porch was the most interesting place I could think of.” (DT 62)
3. “I was not allowed to sit around there, naturally.” (DT 62)
4. “What I really loved to hear was the menfolks holding a ‘lying’ session. That is, straining against each other in telling folk tales.” (DT 63)

#### ACTIVITY 4:

Divide the class into groups of three or four and select a recorder for each group. The assignment is to find quotations in the novel which support the following statements.

1. Joe Starks in the novel (*Their Eyes Are Watching God*) is a combination of Joe Clark and John Hurston, Zora's father. Prove this from *Dust Tracks on the Road*.  
When Joe Starks refused to let Janie participate in the gossip on the porch, Zora Hurston was
2. writing about something that actually happened to her. prove this from *Dust Tracks on the Road*.
3. Tony Taylor is a name used in *Dust Tracks*, pg. 9 and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, pg. 69. Who is he and what role does he play in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

## Lesson 2 Writing Activity

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#### PREPARATION:

In Hurston's novel, her father and the store owner Joe Clark (from autobiography) have become Janie's second husband—Jody Starks. Starks is an individual who would not let Janie participate with the common folk and the exciting life of the town. Joe makes Janie bind up her hair and stay away from the conversations on the porch. For Janie, this is a confining experience—something which causes her to keep her feelings hidden from others and to change in her feelings about her husband. She no longer loves him.

#### ACTIVITY:

Write about a significant being in your life and how this person's structure and dictates of rules and thoughts about you have affected you. You can do this positively and negatively.

## LESSON 3

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#### OBJECTIVE:

To relate the feelings of love expressed for Tea Cake in the novel. The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the story of the love between Janie and Tea Cake. In her autobiography, Hurston states that she actually ran away from a lover she had in New York to Haiti, to write and to try to live without him. "I wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in Haiti. It was dammed up in me, and I wrote it under internal pressure in seven weeks." (DT 212)@2H:ACTIVITY:

Find ten references to Tea Cake including metaphorical descriptions and write them down.

Explaining how she felt when she left New York, Hurston says: "But I freely admit that everywhere I set my feet down, there were tracks of blood. Blood from the very middle of my heart. I did not write because if I had

written and he answered my letter, everything would have broken down. So I pitched in to work hard on my research to smother my feelings. But the thing would not down. The plot was far from circumstances, but I tried to embalm all the tenderness of my passion for him in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* ." (DT 260)

## DAY 2 Autobiographical Writing Activity

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### PREPARATION:

Have you ever had a friendship or a loving relationship with someone, that everyone close to you criticized, found fault with and said that this person was not acceptable and was not on your level of society?

Janie's relationship with Tea Cake was disapproved of by the townspeople, yet, Tea Cake was the most loving person she had ever met.

### ACTIVITY:

Write about a memory of a situation or a relationship which was disapproved of by your peers or friends, yet something very good came out of it that was not apparent to everyone.

## Lesson 3 The Memory Journal

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### Week 1

The story, as told by Janie, has included the past, her young years of dreaming and feeling lonely while she sat under the pear blossom tree. Memory is given great importance.

I plan to assign a journal writing exercise on remembering a time when students were alone somewhere and thinking about life. Every journal entry should have the following:

DATE

PLACE

DAY

SETTING

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

TIME

WEATHER

PURPOSE OR OCCASION



## IMAGE

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

This journal should be kept for a week and each day those students who feel confident enough will be encouraged to share at least one part of their journal. For example: the place—a park, the swings, a field, a deserted train station, a bus, a room, a rooftop.

### Week 2

The Assignment is to try to make sense out of the remembered image. Ask three questions: Is it connected to a view I have about life? A current topic? or Is the image or memory connected to a concern that I have?

Present the class with Zora's essay on "Figure and Fancy". Ask the class if in an autobiography there is any fiction? What do they think?

Ask if memory is always reliable? Ask if this is a problem or a reality.

## Student's Bibliography

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Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* , Bantam Books, New York, 1985.

Angelou, Maya. *Gather Together In My Name* , Bantam Books, New York, 1985.

These two autobiographical novels are very popular with students and are both in the bookroom at Hillhouse High.

*Black American Literature : Essays, Poetry, Fiction, Drama* . Edited by Darwin T. Turner. Charles Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus, Ohio, 1970.

This collection contains essays by Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Eldridge Cleaver.

Fiction by Charles Chestnut, Richard Wright, Zora Hurston, James Baldwin and many others. There is a short introduction to each piece with information on the author. It is a wonderful collection and the essays can be used to study personal thoughts of authors of poetry and fiction.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass : An American Slave : written by himself* . Signet Books, New York, 1968.

This is a classic piece of writing. It is beautiful, not only in its form of rhetoric and style, but in its tribute to the human spirit of courage in the face of atrocity. The whole book or excerpts from it can be used in the classroom.

DuBois, W. E. Burghardt. *The Souls of Black Folk : Essays and Sketches* . Fawcett Publications, Inc. Greenwich, Ct, 1961.

Any student who is interested in writing on prejudice and who wishes to gain insight from a great heart and mind should read this book. I especially recommend "Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece".

Hellman, Lillian. *Pentimento*, Signet Books, New York, 1973.

This is an autobiography of Lillian Hellman. It is useful for classroom reference for those students interested in her drama and also because in writing her memories she reflects so often on her personal feelings. These reflections are what is truly valuable in autobiographical material and the section on "Bethe" is an excellent illustration.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Dust Tracks on a Road* . University of Illinois Press. Urbana and Chicago, 1984.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* . University of Illinois Press. Urbana 1976.

A work of fiction which is highly autobiographical. Used to teach this unit.

King, Jr., Martin Luther. *Why We Can't Wait* . Signet Books, New York, 1963.

This book contains the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" Chapter 5. This letter of protest against injustice-against racial prejudice has become a classic. It is also a model for rhetoric and logic to be used in writing.

Parks, Gondon. *The Learning Tree* . Fawcett Publications. Greenwich, C.T, 1963.

This is a fictionalized autobiography of Gondon Parks' younger years. It is popular with the students and should be in the classroom for reference in this unit.

Parks, Gondon. *A Choice of Weapons* . Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. New York, 1965.

This book is a continuation of *The Learning Tree* and is also very well liked. They become useful examples of autobiography in this unit.

Rico, Gabriele Lusser. *Writing the Natural Way : Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Creative Powers*, J. P. Tarcher, Inc. Los Angeles, 1983.

The technique of clustering is demonstrated in this book and is very useful to students in any writing assignment.

Rivera, Edward. *Family Installments : Memories of Growing Up Hispanic* . Penguin Books. New York, 1982.

The installments are autobiographical memories of the author,s childhood in New York. The work may be treated as short stories, as in "In Black Turf" or as a whole book.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* . Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Publishers, San Diego, 1983.

This book of essays by Alice Walker is a good reference for those students looking for her personal attitudes and feeling; see, for example "The Civil Rights Movement—What Good Was it?" There are two chapters on Zora Neale Hurston and they are an excellent "follow up" to the lessons in this unit.

Wideman, John Edgar. *Brothers and Keepers* . Penguin Books. New York, 1984.

The author writes in the voice of two men: his own and his brother's. The voices become like a chorus for the tragedy of the lives they tell. This book, too, may be used in parts as short stories. I suggest the story of Garth; (pages 59 to 66) and the summer of 1968. (pages 111 to 120)

*A World Unsuspected: Portraits of Southern Childhood* . Edited by Alex Harris. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

I recommend "Going Up to Atlanta" by James Allan McPherson. McPherson wrote this piece about his father. He used memories and writes with feeling about how he had once expected and believed the worst things about his father and found instead great goodness and beauty of spirit in him. It is a work filled with paradox and one which students will enjoy a great deal.

Wright, William. *Lillian Hellman: The Image, The Woman* . Ballantine Books. New York, 1986.

This biography is filled with what seems to be anti-sentiment for Lillian Hellman. It serves as an illustration for recognizing the place of fantasy and fiction even in so-called autobiography. In other words, perhaps Ms. Hellman was a liar at times but her story was very good.

## TEACHER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Adams, J. Donald. *Speaking of Books and Life* . Holt, Rinehart and Winston. New York, 1965.

This book is a collection of columns written for the *New York Times* . It is certainly useful for teachers and students when short models of writing might be helpful as examples of someone able to write about books and authors in great detail. I suggest "First and Last Pages", pg. 24. "Imperial Russia and the Old South", pg. 28. "Woman as Novelists" pg. 32. "Creative Writing" pg. 105.

Bowen, Catherine Drinker. *Biography : The Craft and The Calling* . Little, Brown and Company. Boston, 1969.

Since readers of autobiography also become biographers when they write and gather materials to write about authors, this book is helpful to teachers and students, especially in the chapters on "Quoted Material" and "Techniques of Revealing the Hero's Thought."

Cooley, Thomas. *Educated Lives: The Rise of Modern Autobiography in America* . Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 1976.

This book gives an historical perspective of autobiography written in the United States. It is a valuable reference for any teacher interested in the form. The book contains a bibliography after each chapter and an index.

Edel, Leon. *Writing Lives Principia Biographica* . W. W. Norton and Company, New York/London, 1984.

The task of writing about others, involvement, fact, fiction—the study of the truths of human behavior are all discussed in this book. I especially suggest the chapter on "Transference" and "Criticism".

Lomask, Milton. *The Biographer's Craft* : Practical advice on gathering, writing, shaping and polishing biographical material. Harper & Row. New York, 1986.

The chapters on “Discovering the Hero” “Autobiography” and “Psychobiography” can be especially useful to the teacher of autobiography. There are also several chapters on writing skills that are helpful. There are many biographies and autobiographies cited and an index.

Rico, Gabriele Lusser. *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Poers*. J. P. Tarcher, Inc. Los Angeles, 1983.

This book can be used by students and teachers. It is filled with ideas and activities on how to generate writing. The method of clustering is introduced with what the writer terms “a creative search” in one’s mind to enhance, enrich and personalize writing. Her ideas are readily adaptable to the classroom.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well : An informal guide to writing nonfiction*. Third edition: Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1976.

Often a student’s best writing is in the writing of experiences and this book is filled with information on: beginnings, endings, usage, audience, interviews. It certainly can be applied to student autobiography.

APPENDIX 1 Lesson Plans for *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston Close reading is needed so that the students can retain and accumulate the detail necessary for elaboration on the text.

The following questions serve as a practical study guide for initial reading of the novel. Reading of the novel and answering these questions may take as long as three weeks.

In keeping with the theme of autobiography, a brief outline of Zora Neale Hurston’s life is necessary. Hurston uses the town of her birth Eastonville, Florida as the setting of the story. In this story Hurston evokes the life styles of rural Blacks. “Something of the questing quality that characterized Zora’s own life informs the character of Janie.” pg.XI ..”In their desire and eventual insistence that their men accord them treatment due equals, they are one” pg.XI.

## **Zora Neale Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God**

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1. When was Their Eyes Were Watching God published?
2. What was significant about this time?
3. Zora uses the small black town where she was born as the setting for her novels. Where is the town located?
4. Who arranges Janie’s first marriage to whom and why?
5. Does Janie love Logan Killicks?
6. When the people in Town talked negatively of Janie, what did she do?
7. Who is Pheoby Watson?
8. What metaphor does Janie use to describe the experience of being out in the world?
9. When the story opens is Tea-Cake still around?

## Chapter 2

1. Who raised Janie?
2. Why was Janie called alphabet?
3. Why did Nanny slap Janie?
4. What did Nanny say about Negro women?
5. Whom did Nanny want Janie to marry?
6. What did Nanny do with her baby?

## Chapter 3 and 4

1. Describe the marriage dinner of Janie and Logan Killicks?
2. When Janie wants to wonder and think about love, where does she go?
3. Describe the way Janie criticized Logan Killicks.
4. What happened to Nanny?
5. What metaphor did Janie use to describe the world?
6. Describe Joe Starks when Janie first saw him.
7. What did Joe Starks speak for?
8. What does Janie do when she becomes fed up with Logan Killicks?

## Chapter 5

1. What does Joe Starks plan to do in Eastonville?
2. What does Hicks think about Joe Starks building a post-office and a store?
3. What was one of the first conflicts Jane had with Joe?
4. What took the bloom off Janie and Joe's marriage?
5. What did the townfolks do at the barbecue?
6. What were the folks celebrating?
7. Why didn't Janie like being Mrs. Mayor?
8. What did Joe Starks become in town?
9. What did Joe Starks do to Henry Pitts and why?

## Chapter 6

1. What was the main topic of conversation on the porch of the store?
2. Why didn't Joe want Janie to talk with the people?
3. Why didn't Janie enjoy working in the store?

4. Do you think Mayor Starks should have pressured Matt into selling the mule for 55.00?
5. Describe Mrs. Bogle.
6. What happened to the spirit of Joe Starks and Janie's marriage?
7. Why did Joe slap Janie?

## Chapter 7

1. Why is Janie feeling so stultified and unfulfilled at the opening of the chapter?
2. What changes have overtaken Joe?
3. Is Janie sympathetic to Joe's feelings? Explain.
4. Where does the omniscient narrator come in and what does it explain?
5. Why did Joe Starks strike Janie?

## Chapter 8

1. What did Jody do after he felt that Janie had insulted him? He moved his things and slept downstairs.
2. Do you think Jody was justified in being angry with Janie?
3. What was one of the symptoms of Jody's illness? He didn't eat his meals.
4. What is the cause of Joe's illness? Kidney failure.  
How does Janie describe death? "Death, that strange being with the huge square toes who lived way in the West. The great one who lived in the straight house like a platform without sides to it."
5. Why was Janie disturbed with living with Janie? He wouldn't allow her to be the way she wanted to be.
6. What happened to Jodie?
7. How did Janie feel about Jodie and what did she say after he died?

## Chapter 9

1. Describe Joe's funeral.
2. Explain the following expression: "She sent her face to Joe's funeral, and herself went rollicking with the springtime across the world."
3. What did Janie say she felt about her grandmother?
4. What does the following expression mean: "Some people could look at a mud puddle and see an ocean with ships."

5. Why didn't Janie enjoy working in the store and collecting rents after Joe died?

## Chapter 10

1. After many people go to Winter Park to see the game, who visits Janie in the store?
2. What is your first impression of Tea Cake?

## Chapter 11

1. Describe the way Tea Cake came to visit Janie the second time?
2. Why didn't Hezekiah want Janie going around with Tea Cake?  
How did Janie describe Tea Cake? He looked like the love thoughts of woman. He could be a  
bee to a blossom a pear tree blossom in the spring. He crushed herbs with every step he took.  
He was a glance from God.
4. How did Tea Cake visit Janie on the fourth day after no seeing her for three days?
5. How does Tea Cake feel about Janie? No one can hold a candle to you. You got the keys to the kingdom, he said.

## Chapter 12

1. What did the townspeople think about Tea Cake's and Janie's relationship? Give specific examples.
2. What does Janie mean by the following remark: "Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means to live mine."

## Chapter 13

1. At the opening of the chapter, where is Janie going?
2. When Janie went upstairs to dress at twelve o'clock, what did she discover?
3. What story came to mind when she couldn't find her money?
4. What story did Tea Cake tell Janie, about where he had been?
5. How does Tea Cake think he'll get Janie's money back?

## Chapter 14

1. Where are the Everglades located?

2. What did Tea Cake and Janie plan to do in the Everglades?
3. What does it mean to be “on the muck”?
4. Why was Tea Cake’s house so attractive to others?
5. What did Tea Cake and Janie do for entertainment?

## Chapter 15

1. How did Nunkie go about getting Tea Cake’s attention?
2. How did Janie react when Nunkie made a play for Tea Cake?

## Chapter 16

1. Describe Mrs. Turner’s personality. Why did Tea Cake hate her?  
What did Janie mean by the following remark about Tea Cake: “He kin take most any lil thing and make summertime out of it when times is dull. Then we lives off a dat happiness he made till some mo’ happiness comes along.”
- 2.
3. Why did Mrs. Turner admire and visit Janie?

## Chapter 17

1. What did the workers do Saturday afternoon when their work tickets were exchanged for cash?
2. How did the fight start in Mrs. Turner’s Restaurant?
3. What happened to Mrs. Turner during the melee (confused fight) in the restaurant?

## FINAL TEST THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD

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1. What is the relationship like between Janie and Logan Killicks?
2. Are you able to identify with one character in the novel? Explain.
3. What happens in the novel?
4. Does the story go straight ahead in time or are there flashbacks?
5. What conflicts does Janie experience?
6. What is the climax or turning point of the novel?
7. Where and when does the novel take place?



8. Does Zora Neale Hurston’s novel have an underlying idea? If so what is it?  
Is the author trying to show you a new, different or better way of looking at life?  
Does she say anything important about life or people?
9. Do the situations and characters seem convincing and believable? Give specific evidence for your answer.
10. Is the setting important to the story?

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Hurston, Zora Neale, *Dust Tracks on the Road*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, pg. 9.

After this all references to this book will appear with initials DT in this paper.

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