

AP Literature & Composition

Brady

Your summer reading assignment is *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (1937). Many copies of the book are available through the Allen County Public Library. Unfortunately, we do not have copies to loan out. Please read the first 10 chapters and complete the questions for the first day of class this fall. You should have a hard copy of the assignment to turn in and also be prepared to submit the assignment electronically. If you have any questions, please email me at ebrady@bishopdwenger.com

Reading Guide for *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Their Eyes Were Watching God is a “coming of age” story focusing on the life Janie Crawford, a young girl and later a middle aged woman who grows up and comes of age in the rural south sometime between the 1890’s and 1920’s. The chronology of Janie’s life begins in southern, rural Georgia but then moves to Eatonville, Florida; then the Florida Everglades, and finally back to Eatonville. Early chapters also take the reader back into the histories of Janie’s mother and grandmother, the latter who was once a slave. As a reader, you would be very wise to keep the historical context in mind as you examine the various obstacles that Janie must overcome as she attempts to define herself throughout her life. Zora Neale Hurston wrote the novel in the 1930’s while she was doing anthropological research in Haiti. It was published in 1937.

According to Susan Hader, “*Bildungsroman* denotes a novel of all-around self-development. Used generally, it encompasses a few similar aspects: a story of general growth rather than self-culture; the training and formal education; and the development of an artist. (*The Space Between*, 13).” Hader discusses “the *Bildungsroman* genre as a whole and how it applies to all three.

- A *Bildungsroman* is, most generally, **the story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order**. The growth process, at its roots a quest story, has been described as both "an apprenticeship to life" and a **"search for meaningful existence within society."**
- To spur the protagonist on his or her journey, **some form of loss or discontent must jar them at an early stage away from the home or family setting**.
- The process of maturity is long, arduous, and gradual, consisting of **repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order**.
- Eventually, the spirit and values of the social order may become manifest in various forms of “discontent” of the protagonist, who is either forced to conform to social conventions, or who rejects society’s spirit and values in order to live a life which is fulfilling and meaningful. The coming-of-age-novel ends with a deep self-assessment by the protagonist, and this self-assessment will often reveal various forms of societal weakness, deficiency, hypocrisy or moral corruption.

Consider the definition above as you move toward the questions that follow.

Part I: Connecting to bildungsroman, discontentment & need: Consider these question:

1. What forms of “discontent” are evident early in Janie’s relationship with Nanny? --What specific needs are not being met in Janie’s relationship with Nanny?
2. What forms of “discontent” are evident in Janie’s relationship with Logan? --What specific needs are not being met in Janie’s relationship with Logan?
3. What forms of “discontent” are evident in Janie’s relationship with Joe? --What specific needs are not being met in Janie’s relationship with Joe?
4. What forms of “discontent” are evident in Janie’s relationships with the citizens of Eatonville, with the men who pursue her before and after Joe’s death?

Respond to each of the above with a paragraph.

Part II: Critical Quotations to Paraphrase & Analyze

- Before you read the novel, review in your own words, what you think the quotation means.
- When you encounter the quotation in its proper context within the novel, take note of who the speaker is, to whom he/she is speaking, and the circumstances that incited the speaker to say what he/she did.
- **Respond with a few sentences for each quote.**

1. “Now, woman forget all those things they don’t want to remember, and remember everything they don’t want to forget”(1).
2. " ‘Ah don't mean to bother wid tellin' 'em nothin', Pheoby. 'Tain't worth de trouble. You can tell 'em what Ah say if you wants to. Dat's just de same as me 'cause mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf' "(6).
3. “Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone”(8).
4. “ ‘Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything...de nigger woman is de mule uh de world’ “(14).
5. “ ‘I wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think’ “(24).
6. “ ‘You don’t need mah help out dere, Logan. You’s in yo’ place and Ah’m in mine.’ ‘You ain’t got no particular place. It’s wherever Ah need yuh. Git uh move on yuh, and dat quick’ “(31).
7. “Logan was accusing her of her mamma, her grandma, and her feelings, and she couldn’t do a thing about any of it”(32).

8. “ ‘My wife don’t know nuthin’ ‘bout no speech makin’ ...she’s a woman and her place is in de home’ “(43).
9. “A little war of defense for helpless things was going on inside her. People ought to have some regard for helpless things”(57).
10. “ ‘You have tuh have power tuh free things and dat makes you ud king uh something’ “(58).
11. " ‘Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me...how surprised y'all is goin' tuh be if you ever find out you don't know half as much 'bout us as you think yo do. It's so easy to make yo'self out God Almighty when you ain't got nothin' tuh strain against but women and chickens’ "(70-71).
12. “The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. She tore off the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair. The weight, the length, the glory was there”(83).
13. " ‘To my thinkin' mourning oughtn't tuh last no longer'n grief’ "(89).
14. “She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in search of people; it was important to all the world that she should find them and they find her. But she had been whipped like a cur dog and run off down the road after things”(89).
15. “...she found herself glowing inside. Somebody wanted her to play. Somebody thought it mattered for her to play. That was even nice”(96).

Part III: Questions for Chapters 1-10.

Respond with a sentence or two. Some responses will be a bit longer, and some may be brief.

1. According to Hurston in the opening paragraphs of the novel, how do men treat their dreams in contrast to women?
2. In the beginning of the novel, Janie has just returned from doing what?
3. What kind of clothing is Janie wearing at the beginning of the novel?
4. How is Janie wearing her hair?
5. What are the details mentioned in the answers to questions 4 and 5 intended to suggest about Janie’s character?
6. What does Hurston mean at the beginning of the chapter when she says the men of Eatonville were “saving with the mind what they lost with the eye”?
7. According to Sam Watson, why do many of the people of Eatonville look forward to the Day of Judgment?
8. According to Hurston, what is the oldest human longing?
9. What is the “muck”?
10. How did Janie learn for the first time in her life that she was not white?
11. Why and how did Johnny Taylor upset Nanny?
12. What specific episode marked the end of Janie’s childhood?

13. Why did Nanny favor Logan Killicks over Johnny Taylor?
14. What does the narrator mean when she says “The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree”?
15. According to Nanny, who or what is the “mule uh de world”?
16. How does Nanny’s background and history lead her to respect and admire somebody like Logan Killicks?
17. Why was Nanny whipped when she was younger?
18. How was Janie was conceived?
19. What were Nanny’s final words before she died?
20. How did Janie react to the physical appearance of Logan Killicks?
21. Under what circumstances did Janie first come to meet Jody?
22. How did Janie silence Hicks the first time he tried to flirt with her?
23. What item did Joe Starks buy from Sears and Roebuck that helped advance his fame in the town of Eatonville?
24. What did Joe Stark’s house look like?
25. ConnWhy did Joe make Henry Pitts leave town?
26. Why did the citizens of Eatonville frequently make fun of Matt Bonner?
27. What did Joe force Janie to wear while she worked in the store? Why?
28. Why did Janie once compare her husband to Abe Lincoln and George Washington?
29. Why wouldn’t Jody allow Janie to attend a mule’s funeral?
30. Why did Jody to strike Janie for the first time?
31. Approximately how old was Janie when she began to entertain the idea of running out on Joe?
32. How did Joe Starks change physically as he began to age?
33. What circumstances led Joe to strike Janie the second time -- the time that “drove her from the store”?
34. Why did Joe start to see a "root-doctor"?
35. What rumors were the people of Eatonville spreading about Janie’s treatment of her husband?
36. Why did the word “kidney” force Janie to think about death?
37. According to Janie, what did Joe Starks always deny her the opportunity to use?
38. What does Janie see in the looking glass at the end of chapter 8?
39. Why do scores of men begin to offer their services to Janie at the beginning of chapter 9?
40. Who was Hezekiah and how did he treat Janie?
41. What kind of relationship developed between Phoebe Watson, Janie, and the Sanford undertaker?
42. Who was Vergible Woods?
43. What specific circumstances led Vergible Woods to Janie?

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