

Their Eyes Were Watching God Book Notes

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

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Author/Context

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Eatonville, Florida in 1891. At the time she was born, Eatonville had only existed for five years. Much like the description in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Eatonville was the first incorporated all-black community in America. It was founded by a man named Joe Clarke, who was eventually elected mayor. This is very similar to Joe Starks, a character in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

There are many other characteristics of Eatonville that Hurston included as part of the setting in this book. Just like Joe Starks' store porch, people would sit outside of Joe Clarke's store porch and tell stories and have conversations about the neighbors. Similar to the pear tree under which Janie has her dreams, the outside of Hurston's house was surrounded by beautiful flowers and fruit trees.

When Hurston was 13, her mother became ill and died. Hurston had to leave Eatonville and move to Jacksonville where she started school. It was here that she was first exposed to white people and racism. This was a key point in Hurston's life, for, like Janie discovering she was black, Hurston had to grapple with her identity as a black person. Her imagination and intelligence went wild as she got older and excelled in school. She eventually moved back to Eatonville, but a fight with her new stepmother caused her to leave; she moved in with her brother, in another part of Florida. Hurston joined a traveling light-opera show and worked as a wardrobe girl for Miss M, an actress in the show. She left the troupe in Baltimore and started high school at Morgan Academy, where she excelled at science and math. Here, she wrote her first story, won a speech contest, and earned her diploma in June 1918. She then went on to Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she met and fell in love with Herbert Sheen.

Herbert eventually moved to New York, and then to Chicago for medical school. They wrote letters for over eight years before reuniting to marry. The marriage only lasted a few months, as Hurston was more interested in her writing and research.

In 1925, Hurston moved to New York City. She left Howard University without graduating due to illness and financial difficulty. Once in New York, she became part of the Great Migration, a movement of southern blacks to the north, and specifically Harlem. This was the backdrop for the Harlem Renaissance, a period from 1919-1930, that produced an outpouring of ideas through art, literature, and music from blacks. Hurston eventually earned a scholarship to Barnard College, the women's division of Columbia University. In December 1927, Hurston became the first African-American woman to graduate from Barnard. While there, Hurston's writing career blossomed. She developed an interest in African-American folklore. This was the start of many creative works to come.

During the years that followed, Hurston wrote novels, essays, articles, and plays. She was a spokeswoman for African-American women and a political activist. She traveled far and wide to conduct research for her folklore tales. Some of her books include: *Mules and Men*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, and her



autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. She married one more time, to a man named Albert Prince III, a playground worker in Jacksonville. Similar to Tea Cake and Janie, Albert was 23 and Hurston was 48. She left him when she got a job as the Director of Dramatic Productions at the North Carolina College for Negroes.

By the late 1950s, Zora had become very heavy, weighing over two hundred pounds. She had difficulty getting around, and in 1959 Hurston had a stroke. This stroke affected her so much that she no longer could write nor think very well at all. She finally died on January 28, 1960.

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Plot Summary

Janie Crawford arrives home after a long trip. She begins to tell the story of the last twenty years of her life to her best hometown friend, Pheoby.

Janie's story starts with her youth, as a girl in search of great things. Raised by her grandmother, a black woman raped by a white man, Janie never really has the chance to go out in search of her dreams. Her grandmother, having grown up during slavery, never had much of anything, including a voice. She was always repressed by white people, and never could have the kind of nice things that she wanted. When Janie's mother is raped, she runs away and leaves Janie to be taken care of by her grandmother. Her grandmother only wants Janie to have the kinds of things she never had the chance to have. So, despite Janie's refusal, she arranges for Janie to marry a man named Logan Killicks.

This marriage does not fulfill Janie like she imagines a marriage should. Logan makes Janie work hard and cares little about her opinions. Janie is in search of a husband and a love that make her feel wonderful all over, just like watching the bees sink into the pear tree blossom. When Joe Starks, a well-dressed man with big dreams comes along, Janie thinks this might be her chance at love and a better life. Thus, she leaves Logan and runs off with Joe Starks. They get married and move to a town called Eatonville, where Joe becomes a big voice as the mayor. He becomes such a big voice that he is always silencing Janie. She never has a chance to speak her mind, and her marriage to Joe is not what she had hoped for. After Joe dies, Tea Cake starts hanging around Janie. She falls in love with his carefree attitude and the way that he makes her feel like a pear tree in bloom. He allows her to speak and loves her for herself, and not the money she made while with Joe.

Tea Cake and Janie move to the Everglades to work on the muck where beans and sugar cane thrive. They live off the money they earn and are happy and in love. When a great hurricane comes, they are forced to flee for their lives. Tea Cake saves Janie's life from a rabid dog, but he gets bit in the process. Tea Cakes falls ill from the rabid dog, and, in his delirium, tries to kill Janie. She shoots first and kills Tea Cake. She is broken-hearted that she shot and killed the one man she ever loved, but she is happy she had the chance to love at all. Janie is put on trial, but found innocent.

Janie finishes her story to Pheoby. As Janie goes upstairs to bed she feels Tea Cake is still with her and is satisfied.



Major Characters

Janie Crawford: Main character of the novel. Janie leaves home and marries Logan Killicks. Then she leaves him for Joe Starks, and eventually leaves Joe for Tea Cake. Throughout the novel, she goes through a process of self-revelation and finds her identity and voice.

Porch Sitters: People of the town where Janie is from. They sit on their porches and talk about everyone, especially Janie. They are always judging others and want to hear as much as they can about everyone else's business.

Pheoby Watson: Janie's best friend and confidant. She listens to the story that Janie tells, which comprises the novel.

Grandma (Nanny): Raises granddaughter, Janie, in West Florida. Never had a voice because she was always suppressed by white people (grew up during slavery). She wants a better life for Janie and also wants Janie to have a voice (a say in her destiny).

Logan Killicks: Older man that Nanny arranges Janie to marry. He is Janie's first husband. He has smelly feet, a big belly, and a big head. He feels Janie doesn't do enough work around the house and thinks she's spoiled. Janie leaves him for Joe Starks.

Joe "Jody" Starks: Man with money who takes Janie away from her old life. Gives her money, fancy clothes, and the "high life." He is the mayor of Eatonville. He keeps Janie from speaking her mind and forces her to always be silent.

Tea Cake: Falls in love with Janie and runs off with her to the Everglades (in Florida). He makes Janie feel special. He is bitten by a rabid dog and falls ill. Janie is forced to shoot Tea Cake to save her own life.

Mrs. Turner: Black woman on the muck who doesn't like other black people. She has white features and thinks that blacks are beneath her. She tries to fix Janie up with her brother, because she doesn't care for Tea Cake. Her restaurant gets destroyed in a fight.

Minor Characters

The Washburns: White family in West Florida that raises Janie.

Johnny Taylor: He kisses Janie at the gate of Nanny's house. This makes Nanny want to marry Janie off because she feels Janie is now a woman.

Leafy: Janie's mother. She is raped by a white schoolteacher and conceives Janie. She becomes a drunk and runs away from home, leaving Janie with Nanny.



Matt Bonner: Member of the town of Eatonville. He owns a skinny mule. Porch sitters make fun of him and his mule. They say that he doesn't feed the mule and that is why he is so skinny.

Daisy Blunt: A black girl with white features, whom everyone considers beautiful.



Objects/Places

Blue satin dress: Dress picked out by Tea Cake for Janie. It is the last outfit that the town of Eatonville sees her in.

West Florida: This is where Nanny takes Leafy, her daughter, after she runs away from Georgia. She raises Janie here even after Leafy runs away from home.

Pear tree: Janie wants to be in bloom like a pear tree. She lay under this tree during her childhood years (while with Nanny).

Eatonville: Town that Janie and Joe move to – started and run all by blacks. Joe becomes the mayor of the town.

mule: An overworked, helpless animal--a situation Janie relates to while with Joe.

Everglades: These are swamplands in Florida which are now heavily protected by environmental protection. They contain a significant amount of wildlife. In the book, it is where Tea Cake takes Janie to work on the muck (picking beans and sugar cane).



Quotes

Quote 1: "These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment." Chapter 1, pg. 2

Quote 2: "Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches." Chapter 2, pg. 8

Quote 3: "'You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do . . . Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for me.'" Chapter 2, pg. 15

Quote 4: "'Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think. Ah . . .'" Chapter 3, pg. 23

Quote 5: "Janie pulled back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance." Chapter 4, pg. 28

Quote 6: "'Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech- makin'.. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home.'" Chapter 5, pg. 40-1

Quote 7: "Take for instance that new house of his. It had two stories with porches, with bannisters and such things. The rest of the town looked like servants' quarters surrounding the "big house." And different from everybody else in the town he put off moving in until it had been painted, in and out. And look at the way he painted it - a gloaty, sparkly white." Chapter 5, pg. 44

Quote 8: "Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories on the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge. He didn't want her talking after such trashy people." Chapter 6, pg. 50

Quote 9: "'Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves.'" Chapter 6, pg. 67

Quote 10: "Janie did what she had never done before, that is, thrust herself into the conversation." Chapter 6, pg. 70

Quote 11: "'When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life.'" Chapter 7, pg. 75



Quote 12: "It was so crazy digging worms by lamp light and setting out for Lake Sabelia after midnight that she felt like a child breaking rules. That's what made Janie like it." Chapter 11, pg. 98

Quote 13: "[Tea Cake] looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom - a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took. Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God." Chapter 11, pg. 101

Quote 14: "Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss." Chapter 17, pg. 140

Quote 15: "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*." Chapter 18, pg. 150

Quote 16: "'Once upon uh time, Ah never 'spected nothin', Tea Cake, but bein' dead from standin' still and tryin' tuh laugh. But you come 'long and made somethin' outa me. So Ah'm thankful fuh anything we come through together.'" Chapter 18, pg. 158

Quote 17: "Janie held his head tightly to her breast and wept and thanked him wordlessly for giving her the chance for loving service. She had to hug him tight for soon he would be gone, and she had to tell him for the last time. Then the grief of outer darkness descended." Chapter 19, pg. 175

Quote 18: "'So Ah'm back home agin and Ah'm satisfied tuh be heah. Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons.'" Chapter 20, pg. 182

Quote 19: "Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see." Chapter 20, pg. 184



Topic Tracking: Identity

Chapter 2

Identity 1: Since childhood, Janie has never had a firm grasp of her identity. She didn't realize she was black until she saw a picture of herself one day. Also, she didn't ever have a set name because everyone called her by so many names.

Identity 2: Janie is not raised with her mother and has very little knowledge of her family history. She knows that her grandmother and mother were both raped by white men. Janie also never knew her father.

Chapter 3

Identity 3: Janie has a realization that being married does not necessarily mean that there will be love. From learning this, she becomes a woman.

Chapter 5

Identity 4: Janie does not have much of a say when it comes to expressing herself. Joe makes her tie up her hair and he forbids her to just be herself. Hiding her hair, Janie does not have a strong grip on her identity.

Chapter 8

Identity 5: Janie argues with Joe that he never allowed her to show him who she really was because he was always restricting her. For example, he made her tie up her hair, and he never allowed her to speak.

Identity 6: Janie gains some sense of identity as she finally unties her hair, which Joe made her keep tied. This is a pivotal moment in terms of Janie gaining a hold of her identity.

Chapter 9

Identity 7: Janie feels free of the restrictions that Joe always placed on her now that he is dead. She is going to live her life as she pleases by doing what she wants to do.

Identity 8: She realizes that her grandmother had the wrong idea when it came to finding and fulfilling your dreams. Her grandmother wanted Janie to search for things, but Janie really just wanted people and most of all, love. She knows that now.

Chapter 11

Identity 9: Tea Cake makes Janie aware of how beautiful she really is. He tells her that he bets she never looked at herself in the mirror. It was true; she hadn't. When he leaves that night, she looks at herself in the mirror.



Chapter 12

Identity 10: Everyone in Eatonville starts to judge Janie about her spending so much time with Tea Cake. Janie does not care what anyone else thinks. She is going to do what makes her happy now. Her grandmother's idea about just making it up on a high chair does not fulfill Janie. Janie wants to search for a far horizon.

Chapter 18

Identity 11: Tea Cake makes Janie feel things she never thought she would ever get the chance to feel. She says that he made something out of her and she doesn't care what they go through together, as long as she is with him.

Chapter 20

Identity 12: Janie has been to the horizon and back. She has gone out and searched actively for her dreams.

Identity 13: Janie pulls in the horizon that she has spent her whole life searching for. She calls her soul to come in and see. Where once her soul was separate from her, it is now a part of her.



Topic Tracking: Nature

Topic Tracking: Nature

Chapter 2

Nature 1: Janie associates herself with the pear tree that was in Nanny's yard. She sees the tree in bloom, and she wants a similar experience for herself. She wants bees to come and fertilize her, like they do the tree. She thinks of marriage like the relationship between bee and tree.

Nature 2: Because Janie has negative feelings towards the idea of marrying Logan, the image of being married to him betrays the image she has of the pear tree in bloom.

Chapter 3

Nature 3: Janie looks to the pear tree when she needs to make a decision. She is the most in touch with herself when she is by the pear tree.

Nature 4: Janie wants marriage to feel like what she feels when sitting under the pear tree and just thinking. She thinks that the state of bliss she feels, when under the tree, should be felt in a marriage as well.

Nature 5: Janie understands nature in a way that not many people do. She can talk to nature and she thinks that it talks to her. She thinks that she knows things about God and nature that others do not know nor understand.

Chapter 4

Nature 6: Joe Starks does not represent the blooming pear tree with singing bees either. However, he does represent change and chance, and because of that, Janie decides to leave Logan for Joe.

Chapter 6

Nature 7: Joe Starks is not the husband Janie thought he could be and he definitely does not fulfill her. She says she is "not petal open with him anymore." She realizes that waiting for singing bees to greet her in this marriage is a waste of time.

Chapter 11

Nature 8: Tea Cake represents what Janie has always wanted in a marriage - singing bees to fill her blossoms. She says that he could be a bee to a pear tree blossom.



Topic Tracking: Voice

Chapter 2

Voice 1: Janie's grandmother was born during slavery. Black people, and especially women, could not voice their opinions. Nanny always wanted to make a great speech, but no one would listen. She wants Janie to be able to speak and have people listen.

Chapter 5

Voice 2: The town of Eatonville asks Janie to make a speech, after Joe has just been elected mayor, but Joe cuts in and says that she doesn't know anything about making speeches. He does not give her the chance to speak.

Chapter 6

Voice 3: Joe does not allow Janie to talk with the people of the town about Matt Bonner's mule. Sometimes, Janie had good stories to tell, but Joe forbids it because he doesn't want her associating with trashy people.

Voice 4: Joe frequently insults Janie. She learns to keep her mouth shut and doesn't fight back.

Chapter 7

Voice 5: As her marriage to Joe worsens, Janie speaks less and less.

Chapter 11

Voice 6: Tea Cake and Janie argue over whether or not he really wants to take her to the picnic. He tells her to have the nerve to say what she means. As opposed to Joe Starks, Tea Cake wants Janie to speak her mind.

Chapter 14

Voice 7: In the Everglades, Janie reflects on life in Eatonville. She realizes that in the Everglades, she feels like she can contribute to the stories people tell. She has a voice there.

Chapter 20

Voice 8: The fact that Janie tells this entire story to Pheoby suggests that she has gained a voice throughout the progression of the book and her life as well.



Chapter 1

Janie Crawford has returned to town after a trip of some sort. Janie is a full-figured woman with big breasts, firm buttocks, and long hair. The men look at her with desire. She is wearing overalls, which is quite different than the fancy blue satin dress the town last saw her in. The town is unnamed, but because of the dialect that is used, the reader can tell that the town is in the south, and the people are black.. It is dusk and people are sitting on their porches watching Janie walk back into town. These people, the porch sitters, sit on their porches and talk about everyone else's business. They are especially interested in Janie's business. They cannot wait to hear all about Janie's life while she has been away:

"These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment." Chapter 1, pg. 2

Janie's best friend, Pheoby Watson, also can't wait to talk to her also. She leaves the porch sitters to go and give Janie some of the mulatto rice that she cooked. The porch sitters want Pheoby to find out the information about Janie and then come back and tell them everything. Janie is tired and worn out from her long trip home and her feet ache. Pheoby gives her the rice, and Janie is grateful for it. In exchange, Janie says that she will tell Pheoby all about her life and what happened to her, and specifically, why she has returned to the town. Pheoby tells Janie that she will only tell the porch sitters what Janie says she can tell them. As dusk fades to darkness, Janie tells Pheoby her story.



Chapter 2

Janie begins telling Pheoby her story. She tells her all about how her grandma, Nanny, raised her in West Florida with white people, the Washburns. Because Janie was always around white people, she never knew that she was black. Mrs. Washburn dressed Janie in her children's old clothes (which were nicer than the clothes of Janie's black schoolmates). Janie was called "alphabet" because people called her all different sorts of names. It was only until she saw a picture one day of all of the children that she realized that she was the black little girl.

Topic Tracking: Identity 1

Janie describes herself as a pear tree in bloom (in her present life):

"Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches." Chapter 2, pg. 8

Topic Tracking: Nature 1

When she was a teenager, 16 years old, she used to sit under the pear tree and dream about being a tree in bloom. She longs for something more. When she is 16, she kisses Johnny Taylor to see if this is what she longs for. Nanny sees her kiss him, and says that Janie is now a woman. She wants her to marry now and suggests that Janie marry Logan Killicks because he has shown an interest in Janie by always coming around their house. Janie does not want to marry Logan because he is old and rotten and he ruins the image of the blooming pear tree that Janie dreams about.

Topic Tracking: Nature 2

Nanny talks to Janie about what it was like to be black and always suppressed by white people. She tells Janie that she never had a voice, a chance to say what she believed in. She wants Janie to have this voice that she never had:

"You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do . . . Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for me." Chapter 2, pg. 15

Topic Tracking: Voice 1

Nanny tells Janie about what happened to Janie's mother, Leafy and herself. Nanny lived in Georgia before moving to West Florida. The white woman in charge of her threatened to kill Nanny's baby, Leafy, because she was half white and half black and this was unacceptable then. Nanny ran away in fear, and moved to West Florida. There, Leafy grew up with white people, and then was raped by a white school teacher (who

disappears). This is how Janie was conceived. Leafy eventually becomes a drunk and runs away from home, leaving Janie to be raised by Nanny.

Topic Tracking: Identity 2

Nanny tells Janie that she is old now and her time is almost up. She wants to marry Janie off so that she knows Janie will be taken care of.



Chapter 3

Janie visits the pear tree of her childhood many times before deciding that marrying Logan is the right thing to do.

Topic Tracking: Nature 3

Janie and Logan Killicks get married on a Saturday in Nanny's parlor. Janie does not feel good about the marriage, but she has hope that it will get better. This hope comes from Janie's idea of what a marriage should be (given to her by Nanny), and she thinks that with marriage comes love. After about two months and two weeks of marriage, Janie does not feel the love that she thought would happen. She goes to visit Nanny and Mrs. Washburn to ask them some questions about marriage and love. Janie tells them that Logan chops wood all day and the water buckets are always full. In this respect, he is a good husband, but she just doesn't feel the love that Nanny said she would. Nanny tells her that she is crazy talking about love and that black women always get themselves caught up on love. Instead, she says, Janie should be happy with the house on the big road that's already paid for and the sixty acres of land she has. But, Janie insists that she wants to love him, and wants to feel that love; she doesn't want Logan, or any man, to be the one to do all of the wanting. Janie says that Logan's head is long one way and flat on the sides, he has fat under his neck, a big belly, toe-nails that look like mule feet, and smelly feet.

Janie again associates herself and marriage with that pear tree. She wants marriage to be like sitting under a great pear tree:

"Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think. Ah . . ." Chapter 3, pg. 23

Topic Tracking: Nature 4

Nanny begs God to take care of Janie, and a month later, Nanny dies.

Janie does not have love in her home with Logan, so she finds happiness with nature. She has a connection with nature; she understands nature. She realizes that marriage does not necessarily equal love, and from this realization, she matures into a woman.

Topic Tracking: Identity 3

Topic Tracking: Nature 5



Chapter 4

Janie and Logan have been married about a year now and things are not going well. Logan wants Janie to help more around the house and with the work that needs to be done, like cutting the wood. He says that he and Janie's grandma spoiled her rotten and that is why she feels she doesn't have to do that much work. He says he is going into town to see about buying a second mule, implying that this mule will be for Janie to work with. Janie is left to cut the potatoes in the barn.

While Janie is cutting the potatoes, she hears whistling coming from down the street. She looks into the distance and sees a stylishly dressed man. She is attracted to this man and his expensive, "citified" look. She pulls on the water pump really hard so that he'll notice her and he does. He comes over, asks for a drink, and introduces himself as Joe Starks. They talk for a while and he tells Janie that he came down to Florida from Georgia because he heard about a new town that is being built. This town is supposed to be built and run all by black people. He says that he saved up \$300 to go down there with plans to become a big voice in the town. He tells Janie how he never had a voice (a "sayso") because all of his life, white people never allowed him to, but now he finally will.

Janie and Joe talk for a while. He tells her that she shouldn't be cutting potatoes. He makes her feel special and feel like she deserves more than what Logan is providing .. He gets intimate and tells her to call him "Jody." He asks Janie to be his wife and to leave for the town with him in the morning; he wants her to meet him at the gate. Joe doesn't represent the marriage that Janie wants, the kind that feels like what it's like to be under a pear tree, but he does represent a change in lifestyle:

"Janie pulled back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance." Chapter 4, pg. 28

Topic Tracking: Nature 6

Janie talks about it that night with Logan while they are in bed. She tells Logan that she might leave him and he tells her that she would be back soon enough anyway.

The next morning, Janie is in the kitchen making breakfast. Logan tells her to come out to the barn and help him move manure. She says no and they exchange words. Logan threatens to kill her with his ax. This is the turning point for Janie and what makes her ready to leave him. She runs outside, throws off her apron, and goes to meet Jody. Jody and Janie are married before sundown and he buys her fancy clothes made of silk and wool. Janie feels like she has finally found the man to satisfy her.



Chapter 5

Janie and Jody arrive in the new town, Eatonville. Jody is surprised to find that there is no mayor. He starts telling two men he meets that they have to form a committee to get the town started. The two men tell Janie and Jody where they can sleep.

Jody meets with the owner of the land of Eatonville. He buys 200 more acres of land, and plans on building a store and a post office where Janie will work.. Jody really works hard to get things around the town started: he buys lumber, assigns carpenters, and goes to find more people to move to the town. The store gets stocked with canned goods and Jody calls for a town meeting/celebration that evening. It is important to him that Janie look better than all of the women who attend.

Some of the town members praise Janie and Jody for coming to the town and fixing it up so quickly and nicely. They ask Joe to make a speech. Jody starts by thanking everyone for the comments and he tells them that Eatonville needs a mayor if it is going to be like every other town. Everyone yells and elects Jody as their first official mayor. They ask Janie to make a speech, as the mayor's wife, but Joe cuts in and says that Janie doesn't know how to make a speech, for her place as a woman is in the home, not making speeches:

"Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home." Chapter 5, pg. 40-1

Janie feels cheated that she doesn't even get the chance to try and make a speech.

Topic Tracking: Voice 2

Jody buys a light for the town and they have a lamp-lighting ceremony and a barbecue. Janie and Jody talk that night in bed. Janie is unhappy about their situation because Jody is always running off and talking and trying to make himself a big voice. She feels like she is always waiting around for him; she is unhappy and lonely. This isn't what she expected nor what she wants. This is not the kind of life/marriage she always dreamed about.

Jody tells everyone what to do and he acts like a white man with slaves. Janie describes him as a white man:

"Take for instance that new house of his. It had two stories with porches, with bannisters and such things. The rest of the town looked like servants' quarters surrounding the "big house." And different from everybody else in the town he put off moving in until it had been painted, in and out. And look at the way he painted it - a gloaty, sparkly white." Chapter 5, Pg. 44



A couple of the town members talk about how Joe treats everyone, like they're all less than he is. And they even wonder about the way he treats Janie because they notice that she doesn't talk very much, and that Joe makes her wear her hair all tied up and hidden.

Topic Tracking: Identity 4



Chapter 6

Porch sitters in Eatonville sit and talk about Matt Bonner's mule. They make fun of him and say that he doesn't feed the mule, which explains why the mule is so thin. Janie tries to talk and have fun making fun of the mule too, but Jody doesn't allow her to; he silences her voice:

"Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories on the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge. He didn't want her talking after such trashy people." Chapter 6, pg. 50

Topic Tracking: Voice 3

Janie hates working in the store and post office. Jody makes Janie keep her hair tied up because he is jealous of the men who stare at it. It is there for him to stare at, not others. They make fun of Matt Bonner's mule more and decide to play a joke on Matt. Some of the town members stand around the mule and tease it. Janie gets very angry at this because she feels the mule is an overworked, helpless animal; she relates to the mule. Jody buys Matt's mule for \$5 (even though the mule isn't worth anything) so he can let the mule rest/die in peace. Everyone in the town praises him for doing such a noble thing, including Janie. Now, the mule is treated like any other citizen of the town, but eventually, he dies. Janie asks Jody if she can go with him to the burial, but Jody says no. He doesn't want Janie doing the kinds of things that normal people do.

The funeral is held for the mule. Joe and other town members make fun of the mule and Matt Bonner. Birds climb onto the mule and begin to eat the carcass.

Jody comes back to the store and he and Janie have a little argument about people liking to have fun.

The porch sitters get into a debate about what prevents people from touching hot stoves, nature or caution. The argument is never finished. There is an argument over the infamous Bog John de Conquer, a super-human type of man known for eating Pharaohs' tombstones and never taking a whipping.

A couple of pretty girls come walking by and they catch the attention of all of the men. One girl in particular, Daisy Blunt, is especially beautiful. She is described as having features like a white woman. Two of the men fight over who would do more for her. The porch talkers enjoy this kind of talk and find it humorous.

Janie and Jody are in the store and there is talk over a missing bill. Jodie insults Janie and says that she needs to be told what to do, because she is no smarter than a chicken or a cow:

"Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves." Chapter 6, pg. 67



Janie learns to not fight back when Joe insults her.

Topic Tracking: Voice 4

Janie is 24 now. One day, after Joe slaps her because the dinner doesn't turn out right, Janie realizes that her marriage is basically over. Jody isn't what she thought he was and he is not fulfilling her. He is not what she always dreamed of.

Topic Tracking: Nature 7

One of the women from the town comes to Joe and begs him for more food for her and her children. She says her husband doesn't feed them, which is a lie. Joe goes into the store and gives her a small piece of pork; she complains that it is so small. She leaves and everyone on the porch makes fun of her. Janie gets annoyed and does something she normally doesn't do - gives her opinion:

"Janie did what she had never done before, that is, thrust herself into the conversation."
Chapter 6, pg. 70

Jody gets angry and tells her that she is getting too mouthy.



Chapter 7

Janie becomes even more aware that the state of her marriage is not good. She is less and less satisfied with Jody and she speaks her mind less and less.

Topic Tracking: Voice 5

Jody continuously insults Janie. He tells her that she is getting old and she isn't what she used to be (even though he is older and in worse shape). Janie insults him in front of the porch sitters:

"When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life." Chapter 7, pg. 75

He feels stripped of his masculinity, slaps her, and makes her leave the store.



Chapter 8

Janie's marriage gets even worse. Jody moves out of their bedroom to sleep downstairs. Janie and her best friend Pheoby Watson talk about Janie's failing marriage. Janie is very hurt.

Jody has kidney failure and becomes ill. He does not have a lot of time left to live. He does not allow Janie to go into the sick room to visit him. Finally, Janie disobeys him and goes in, so that she can talk to him. They argue over whether or not Janie was a good wife. She tells him that she never had a chance to really show him who she was because he was always restricting her.

Topic Tracking: Identity 5

They argue more and Jody eventually dies. Janie feels bad for him, but she also feels free of him. She goes over to the mirror and pulls down her long hair that Joe always made her tie up. She no longer sees a little girl in the mirror, but a beautiful woman.

Topic Tracking: Identity 6

Chapter 9

Janie attends Joe's funeral. She feels free of him and the restrictions he placed on her.

Topic Tracking: Identity 7

Janie realizes that she hates her grandmother because she never allowed Janie to go out in search of a far horizon (her dreams). She always made Janie settle on things, and because of this, Janie is unfulfilled.

Topic Tracking: Identity 8

Now that Joe is dead, Janie notices that many men come around seeking her attention. They all want to marry her because she has money. Six months pass and she is still not married. She still manages the store, but doesn't like it. Men continue to come around, but Janie pays no attention to them and she doesn't care what anyone else thinks. She enjoys the freedom she has.

Chapter 10

Janie decides to close the store early because of a baseball game going on. A short while before Janie closes the store, a tall, lean man walks into the store to buy cigarettes. He talks to Janie and offers for the two of them to play a game of checkers. Janie says she doesn't know how, but the man wants to teach her. She is thrilled that someone wants to teach her how to play. Janie finds herself very attracted to this man.

They talk for a while and Janie finds out that his name is Vergible Woods, but people call him Tea Cake for short. They make small talk and he makes Janie laugh. They talk until Janie closes the store, and then he walks her home. He is a gentleman. He tips his hat at the door, says goodnight, and leaves.



Chapter 11

Tea Cake comes back to the store and he and Janie joke around and play checkers. He walks her home and stays a while on her porch. Even though it is midnight, Tea Cake suggests that they go fishing, and they do. Janie loves it:

"It was so crazy digging worms by lamp light and setting out for Lake Sabelia after midnight that she felt like a child breaking rules. That's what made Janie like it." Chapter 11, pg. 98

Tea Cake comes around the next night as well. He brings fish for their dinner. They sit together after eating. Tea Cake combs Janie's hair and he makes her feel so comfortable and relaxed. He has wanted to touch her hair for a long time. He compliments her on her hair, lips, and eyes, but tells her that she should look at herself in the mirror to appreciate them; they are there for her too, not just others. Tea Cake combing her hair makes Janie tired. She gets up to go to sleep and Tea Cake is left sitting on the sofa. Before Janie makes it up the stairs, he tells her how he feels about her. Janie thinks that he says and does this for all of the women and that he is also saying these things because it is late. They argue for a little while about their age difference. Tea Cake is around 25 and Janie is around 40. She thinks that she is too old for him, but he doesn't care. He tells Janie that he doesn't speak this way to every woman and it's not because it's late. He says he will still feel the same way in the morning. He leaves and Janie is left thinking about him. Before she goes up to bed, she looks at herself in the mirror.

Topic Tracking: Identity 9

The next day, Janie cannot help but think about Tea Cake. He represents the fulfillment of the dream that Janie has always had. She relates their relationship to the pear tree.

Topic Tracking: Nature 8

The next morning, Tea Cake shows up at Janie's door. He wants to tell her his daytime thoughts, so she knows that he wasn't just saying those words the night before only because it was late. He tells her and then leaves for work. When Janie comes home from the store that night, he is there waiting for her in the hammock. He sleeps there and leaves in the morning for work. He won't allow Janie to get up and make him breakfast, even though she wants to do it for him. He leaves and she thinks about him for a while. She is in love.

Tea Cake doesn't come back to see Janie for four days and she gets annoyed. It is torturous being without him. When he shows up on the fourth day, he has a car with him. He wants Janie to go with him to the Sunday School picnic. They argue for a while because Janie wants to be sure that Tea Cake really wants to take her. He tells her to have the nerve to say what she means.

Topic Tracking: Voice 6



Chapter 12

Janie and Tea Cake spend a lot of time together doing all sorts of things: going on trips; playing checkers; going to the movies; and gardening. The town has a lot to say about this. They think Janie is disrespecting Jody (who has only been dead nine months). They also think that Tea Cake just wants Janie's money. Pheoby says she'll have a talk with her.

Pheoby tells Janie that the town is concerned with her behavior (running around with Tea Cake and wearing bright colors, especially blue, when she should be wearing black to mourn Jody's death). Janie tells Pheoby not to worry because she trusts Tea Cake and he is not after her money. She says that they're planning on selling the store, moving away, and getting married. Pheoby still tries warning her more, but at this point in her life, Janie doesn't care what anyone else thinks. She is sick of living her life for others, especially her grandmother. Now, Janie is going to do what she wants. She is bored with her current life, and feels there is so much more to see and do. With Tea Cake, she can do those things. By just sitting high on porches, she can't:

"[Tea Cake] looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom - a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took. Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God." Chapter 11, Pg. 101

Topic Tracking: Identity 10

Janie gets a new blue satin dress that Tea Cake picked out for her to marry him in, earrings, high heels, and a necklace. She wants to make Tea Cake proud.



Chapter 13

Janie meets Tea Cake in Jacksonville. He has been working there. She takes the train there, and he is there waiting for her. They leave the station and get married that night. It is a night of making love. Janie takes Pheoby's advice and brings \$200 along with her, but she doesn't tell Tea Cake that she has it. Tea Cake spends his own money on Janie the whole time.

Tea Cake leaves early in the morning to get fish for Janie for breakfast. Janie wakes up, gets dressed, and has coffee with the land lady. It gets late and Janie goes back to her room. She realizes that her \$200 is gone. She worries all night long because Tea Cake still hasn't come home. In the morning, he comes home with a guitar. Tea Cake says he took the money because he wanted to know what it felt like to be a millionaire. He throws a free feast with dancing and singing for the people where he used to work. Janie says that she would have liked to go to the party, but Tea Cake says that he doesn't want her to see any commonness in him; she is too good for that. Janie doesn't care about that; she just wants to be with Tea Cake. He promises to win back her money by gambling.

That week, Tea Cake practices rolling dice and shuffling cards. He goes off to play and Janie waits for him to come home. When he arrives home, he is cut and bleeding. While Janie fixes him up, he tells her what happened. He won everyone's money, \$322, and one of the men got really angry and cut him. Tea Cake cut the man in defense. Janie tells him about the \$1200 she has in the bank, but he says he doesn't want her money. Whatever he makes will be fine for them to live on. He tells Janie that they're going to the Everglades to work on the muck, where they raise sugar cane, string beans, and tomatoes. On the muck, people make money and have fun. Janie is more in love with Tea Cake than ever.



Chapter 14

They arrive in the Everglades on the muck and Janie is overwhelmed by it all. Everything is so big to her. Tea Cake goes to see about getting a job and his boss tells him that there are houses down by the lake. Tea Cake and Janie go and get one of the houses; Janie makes it a home while Tea Cake works planting beans. While they're waiting for bean picking time, Tea Cake suggests that he teach Janie how to shoot a gun. They practice a lot and Janie eventually shoots better than Tea Cake.

Life on the muck is exciting. They pick beans during the day, and sing, dance, and gamble at night. Tea Cake plays his guitar, makes jokes, and his house becomes the meeting house on the muck.

Tea Cake tells Janie that he is lonely without her all day while he is in the fields and she is at home. He asks her to come and work with him in the fields. She says yes and they enjoy each other's company working together. The other workers enjoy Janie's company, too.

Janie thinks about her old life in Eatonville sometimes. This life is much better. Everyone is always laughing and telling stories. Janie even feels like she can contribute to the story telling.

Topic Tracking: Voice 7



Chapter 15

Janie notices a girl names Nunkie always trying to get Tea Cake's attention. Janie begins to feel jealous. One day, Janie finds Tea Cake and Nunkie struggling in the cane field. She yells at them and is hurt by Tea Cake. She thinks he likes Nunkie. At home, they have a fight about it. Janie is filled with anger and hurt so she hits Tea Cake. Their fighting turns into passion and they make love. Tea Cake assures Janie that he doesn't like Nunkie.



Chapter 16

The season ends on the muck and people leave. Janie and Tea Cake decide to stay for another season. Janie meets Mrs. Turner, a black woman with white features. Mrs. Turner looks, acts, and wants to be white. She only talks to Janie because Janie looks a little bit white too. Mrs. Turner doesn't understand how Janie could marry Tea Cake, being that he is so black. They talk for a while about whites and blacks. Mrs. Turner doesn't like black people and Janie is confused by her attitude. Mrs. Turner suggests that Janie marry her brother, a carpenter.

Mrs. Turner leaves and Janie realizes that Tea Cake has been home the whole time listening to their conversation. He isn't happy with what Mrs. Turner said about him and black people in general. He tells Janie that he doesn't want her coming to their house again.

Tea Cake sees Mr. Turner and his son on the street. He tells Mr. Turner to tell his wife that Janie is a busy woman and has no time for visitors. Tea Cake thinks Mr. Turner is controlled by his wife.

Mrs. Turner continues to come and visit Janie. Because Janie looks whiter than she does, Mrs. Turner thinks that Janie is better than her. Being around Janie makes her feel whiter.



Chapter 17

A new season starts on the muck. Mrs. Turner's brother comes to town. Tea Cake is nervous that he will try to win Janie over, so he hits Janie on purpose to show that he is in control of Janie.

"Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss." Chapter 17, pg. 140

Some of the other men and women are jealous over Tea Cake's and Janie's relationship. The men want a woman like Janie, who won't fight back when they hit them. The women want a man like Tea Cake, someone who will caress and care for them. Tea Cake tells his friend that he hit Janie to show the Turners who is boss, not because she did anything wrong.

Tea Cake and his buddies go over to the Turners' restaurant to eat. A fight breaks out, and Tea Cake jumps in to try to settle things. Things get worse, and dishes and tables are broken. Food is thrown everywhere. Mrs. Turner tries to stop it, but Tea Cake pushes her down. Eventually, the fight stops and they all leave to go get drinks at another place. Mrs. Turner is left in a rage with a bleeding hand, staring at her destroyed restaurant. She claims that she is moving to Miami where the people are civilized.



Chapter 18

Janie notices Indians leaving town and heading east. When she asks one of them where they're all heading, he says that a hurricane is coming. A couple of days go by and more Indians move out. The animals start to leave as well. Soon, people on the muck begin to leave. A friend of Tea Cake's and Janie's asks them if they need a ride, but Tea Cake refuses. He doesn't think the hurricane will ever come--it's just a little storm. People are most worried about the lake overflowing. Those that stay on the muck spend their time gambling, singing, dancing, and having fun. They are still making money from picking beans, too.

While a few of them are playing with the dice and having a good time, the wind and the lightening start to pick up. The weather worsens and everyone wonders about God and their fates.

"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." Chapter 18, pg. 150

The water starts to rise and come into the house. Tea Cake looks for a car to take them out of there, but there are none. He tells Janie to gather their money and insurance papers because they have to walk. They leave and begin to make their way through the wind and the rain. Everything is going well until big Lake Okechobee bursts through its walls. They find a tall house and go in for a while as a refuge. They fall asleep, but Janie wakes up to the sound of the lake coming. Tea Cake urges Janie and their other friend to leave to seek higher ground, but the friend stays; he's too tired to go on. Tea Cake and Janie leave and they have to swim because the water is too deep. Janie can barely make it and Tea Cake has to help her along. They reach dry ground and Tea Cake rests. Janie gets up to get a piece of roofing to cover Tea Cake with, but she gets swept away into the water. She grabs onto the tail of the cow, but a mean dog on the cow tries to attack her. She slides down the tail, away from the reach of the dog, and Tea Cake rushes into the water with his knife. He kills the dog, but is bitten on his cheekbone. They finally reach land again.

They make it to Palm Beach and the storm ends. With their saved money, they find a place to sleep. Tea Cake feels guilty about bringing Janie with him to the Everglades, but she doesn't care what she has to go through, as long as she's with him:

"Once upon uh time, Ah never 'spected nothin', Tea Cake, but bein' dead from standin' still and tryin' tuh laugh. But you come 'long and made somethin' outa me. So Ah'm thankful fuh anything we come through together." Chapter 18, pg. 158

Topic Tracking: Identity 11



Chapter 19

Janie and Tea Cake discuss what they should do now. Tea Cake goes out looking for anything, especially some of his old buddies from the Everglades. Two white men find him and make him help bury all of the dead bodies. The dead white people get coffins and the black people just get thrown into a ditch.

Tea Cake runs away from the job and makes it back to Janie. He suggests that they leave immediately and go back down to the Everglades. They make it back to the muck and Tea Cake finds many of his old buddies. He and Janie practice shooting more.

Odd things start happening to Tea Cake. He gets a bad headache, he's hungry one minute and not the next, has a nightmare, and throws a glass of water on the floor. Janie gets nervous and gets a doctor. The doctor thinks that Tea Cake was bit by a mad dog, and he warns Janie to stay out of his way when he gets in a fit of rage. He gives her some pills to give to Tea Cake and says that he's going to order the serum that Tea Cake should have had immediately after being bit. Janie will do or spend anything to make Tea Cake better.

Tea Cake's condition worsens. Janie leaves to see the doctor; he says that the medicine will be there in the morning. Tea Cake hears that Mrs. Turner's brother is in town again, and he thinks that Janie ran off to see him. Janie assures him that she just went to the doctor to see about his medicine.

When Janie goes to fix Tea Cake's bed, she feels a pistol under his pillow; he has never slept with a gun before. That night, he has two attacks. Janie is about to leave for the doctor again, but Tea Cake gets angry. He goes to the outhouse, and Janie quickly checks the gun. It is loaded with three bullets, and there are three blank shots. She fixes the gun so that if Tea Cake does happen to shoot the gun, he will shoot three blanks before actually shooting a bullet. She also gets the rifle and hides it in the kitchen, just to be safe.

Tea Cake, in a fit of rage, comes into the kitchen and questions Janie on why she doesn't sleep in the same bed as him anymore. He has the gun at his side. He aims at her breast and shoots three blanks. Before he fires the third shot, Janie grabs the hidden rifle and they both shoot at each other. Tea Cake's shot comes a second after her shot. She kills him and he falls into her arms. Janie thanks Tea Cake for giving her the chance to love.

"Janie held his head tightly to her breast and wept and thanked him wordlessly for giving her the chance for loving service. She had to hug him tight for soon he would be gone, and she had to tell him for the last time. Then the grief of outer darkness descended." Chapter 19, pg. 175

Janie is sent to jail that day and a trial is held for her. Whites and blacks from around the area fill the courthouse, all against her. She pleads for her innocence, and the jury finds



her not guilty, since the murder was accidental and justifiable. Later, at a boarding house, Janie overhears some of the men talking. They say that if she had killed a white man, she would have been hung.

Janie has a funeral for Tea Cake in West Palm Beach. All of their friends from the Everglades attend. Janie goes to the funeral in her overalls, not fancy robes and veils like at Joe Starks' funeral.



Chapter 20

Janie stays on the muck for a few weeks and then leaves. Without Tea Cake, it doesn't feel right to stay there.

Janie ends the story that she has been telling Pheoby from the beginning of the novel. Janie tells her that she is fulfilled because she's been to the horizon and back:

"So Ah'm back home agin and Ah'm satisfied tuh be heah. Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons." Chapter 20, pg. 182

Topic Tracking: Identity 12

Pheoby leaves and Janie makes her way upstairs to bed. She feels Tea Cake is still with her.

"Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see." Chapter 20, pg. 184

Topic Tracking: Identity 13

Topic Tracking: Voice 8