

# *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

**Actor Ruby Dee reads the opening lines of the novel:**

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) In this YouTube video (2:17)

## Critical Essays

**In Search of Janie: Tracking Character Development and Literary Elements in Their Eyes Were Watching God**

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/old-WILLA/fall99/berridge.html>

**Contains:** Character Analysis

**Author:** Judi Berridge

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"The Kiss of Memory": The Problem of Love in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

**Defeating the False God:** Janie's Self-Determination in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* [In this excerpt, Wilentz looks at *Their Eyes Were Watching God* "as a broader type of folk tale," casting Hurston herself in "the role of the folk trickster."]

**Living by Comparisons:** Jane and Her Discontents [Sheppard takes the position that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a wish-fulfillment dream, that of Hurston rewriting her own life as Janie. He identifies Janie's second husband as Hurston's father, John Hurston, and her third husband as her own former lover, Arthur W. Price.]

"[J]us' listenin' tuh you": Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the gospel impulse

## Instructional Resources

**Anticipation Guide** This anticipation guide activity focuses on gender roles.

**Com'on Down To Eatonville, Florida** You are Mayor Joe Starks from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and you want more people to relocate to Eatonville, Florida. Identify five amenities that may make Eatonville attractive to African-Americans looking for a place to establish themselves. Using these amenities, draft a thirty to sixty second audio advertisement or draft a one-hundred word advertisement to be published in the Orlando *Sentinel*.

**Folklore in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God*** This lesson plan focuses on the way Hurston incorporates, adapts, transforms, and comments on black folklife in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The idea is to understand, both as formal analysts of voice and style and as historians of literature, the crucial role of oral folklore in Hurston's written canon.

***Their Eyes Were Watching God*** The learning activities in this 9-page handout focus on relationships: power, control, abuse, and respect. Adobe Reader required for access.

**Literature-based newspaper: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*** Students will create an Eatonville newspaper depicting the characters and events in the novel.

[Their Eyes Were Watching God: Folk Speech and Figurative Language](#) Students observe how Hurston creates a unique literary voice by combining folklore, folk language, and traditional literary techniques. They will examine the role that folk groups play in their own lives and in the novel. They will undertake a close reading of passages in the novel that reveal Hurston's literary techniques and determine their impact on the novel.

[Style: Defining and Exploring an Author's Stylistic Choices](#) In this activity, students will find examples of specific stylistic devices in sample literary passages then search for additional examples and explore the reasons for the stylistic choices that the author has made. Examples for this lesson plan include passages from *Their Eyes were Watching God*; however, passages from any literary work can be used for the activities.

[Suggestions for Pairing Contemporary Music and Canonical Literature](#) A list of songs that were inspired by reading literature. Organized by the last name of the author (e.g. Chinua Achebe, William Butler Yeats), the list includes song title, performer, year of release, and more. The list includes 4 songs inspired by *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) Book-club-style discussion questions.

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) A variety of reading strategies to support the novel, including an anticipation guide, a Magic Square activity to assist with academic vocabulary, and a Think-Aloud model.

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) Worksheets and discussion questions for specific chapters, passages for close reading, and a writing prompt.

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) Historical background, author biography, related works, discussion questions, related resources, and a thorough teacher's guide. These materials were prepared as part of the NEA Big Read.

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) Discussion questions.

[Unmarked but not unmourned, 1928 Hurricane's victims get memorial 80 years later](#) This newspaper article discusses the storm and efforts to have the mass grave of the African-American victims memorialized.

[Vocabulary from Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) Words are presented in context and with definitions. Click on a word for pronunciation, synonyms, examples of use, more.

- See more at: <http://www.webenglishteacher.com/hurston.html#sthash.Fp3j1GXL.dpuf>

## **Biography and the Harlem Renaissance**

[A Guide to Harlem Renaissance Materials](#) The Library of Congress presents a variety of materials on Hurston and other Harlem Renaissance artists.

[Harlem Renaissance Authors and the Impact on the 21st Century](#) As part of a study of the Harlem Renaissance, students will do research on a Harlem Renaissance author. Individually, students will use websites to gain information about the author and the author's impact in literature and society. Students will relate writings from the author to issues found in the 21st century. Students will then create a photostory of the author to be shared with the class.

[Heroes of Harlem: Learning About the Harlem Renaissance](#) In this lesson from the New York Times, students learn about the artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Their research culminates in a Harlem Renaissance Fair celebrating the movement's cultural and artistic contributions to society.

[Zora Neale Hurston](#) The official website. Biography, timeline, and links to other resources. Don't miss [Ruby Dee's reading](#) of the opening passage of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

[Zora Neale Hurston: Jump at the Sun](#) Biographical information, including portraits and a letter to Countee Cullen.

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