

Their Eyes Were Watching God Study Guide

Guided Reading Questions

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.10**

CHAPTER ONE

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

1. Examine the way that Hurston develops the exposition of the novel. How does she establish the setting of the book? How are the characters of Janie Turner and Tea Cake introduced? Whose voices do you hear first?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

2. Based on the first chapter, what do you think some of the conflicts in the novel are going to be? What do you think the themes might be? Cite evidence from the text to support your predictions. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2

3. Describe the town's attitude towards Janie. Describe her attitude towards the town. How does the communal dialogue help establish the town as a character? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3**

4. On page 7, Janie tells Pheoby, "Unless you see de fur, a mink skin ain't no different from a coon hide." Based on context clues, what do you think this saying means? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.4a**

5. Hurston frequently uses personification in her descriptions of the natural world. Find one example of personification from the first chapter. How does the use of figurative language impact the tone of the novel?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4

CHAPTER TWO

1. Identify the simile that is used to describe the way that Janie views her life. Explain how this description might foreshadow Janie's future. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5a CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4**

2. In this chapter, what do you find out about Janie's parents and early childhood? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**

3. What does watching the blossoming pear make Janie realize? What does she do in response to this "awakening"? Why does her action upset her grandmother? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4**

4. Who does Nanny want Janie to marry? Why does she think this will be a good match? Why doesn't Janie agree? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**

5. Janie's grandmother tells her that she wanted her to "pick from a higher bush and a sweeter berry." What specific dream did Janie's grandmother have for her granddaughter? When contrasted with Janie's vision of her life as a tree, what is ironic about her grandmother's words? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6**

6. Describe Marse Robert's interaction with Nanny. What does the fact that his wife has to wait until her husband has left before she goes to see Nanny suggest about their relationship? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4

7. What name did Nanny give her daughter? What life did Nanny want for her daughter? What ended up happening to her? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**

8. Hurston reveals the events of this chapter primarily through the use of dialogue. How does this choice impact the reader's experience of the chapter? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5**

CHAPTER THREE

1. What did Janie hope she would discover once she was married? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**
2. When Nanny asks Janie if she is pregnant on page 22, Janie says, "Ah'm all right data way. Ah know 'tain't nothin' dere." What does her response suggest about her marriage? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4**
3. Paraphrase Nanny's comments about "foot kissin'" and "mouf kissin'" on page 23. Do you agree with her view of courtship and marriage?
4. Contrast Janie and Nanny's views of love. How have their life experiences impacted their perspectives? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3**
5. Consider Hurston's observation, "There is a basin in the mind where words float around on thought and thought on sound and sight. Then there is a depth of thought untouched by words, and deeper still a gulf of formless feelings untouched by thought." What do you think this means? Why do you think Hurston chose to use imagery related to water to describe thoughts and feelings? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5**
6. Examine the final paragraph of the chapter. What sorts of things does Janie instinctively know? Consider the last line of the chapter: "Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman." How does this statement relate to Hurston's observation on the first page of the novel, "Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth"? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3**

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Consider Janie's comment to her husband, "'Scuse my freezolity, Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip." What do you think the word "freezolity" means? What root words did Hurston combine to create this expression? What makes this term particularly effective? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3**
2. What is Killick's nickname for Janie? What does this suggest about his attitude towards her? What does Janie call her husband? What does this suggest about her feelings towards him? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4**
3. Describe the circumstances of the first meeting between Janie and Joe Starks. What was Janie doing before she met him? Describe your first impression of him. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3**
4. Analyze the figurative language that Hurston uses on page 29 to describe Janie's feelings about Joe: "Janie pulled back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon." What does this description suggest about the future of her relationship with Joe? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5a**
5. The morning after Janie talks about leaving him, how does Logan treat Janie? Why do you think he behaves this way? How does Janie respond to him? Do you think he could have done anything that would have changed her decision to leave him? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**
6. Consider the following passage from page 32: "The morning air was like a new dress. That made her feel the apron tied around her waist. She untied it and flung it on a low branch beside the road and walked on, picking flowers and making a bouquet." Explain why her actions are symbolic as well as literal. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5**
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3