

Their Eyes Were Watching God
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

1. Why does Hurston open the novel with this analogy/metaphor? What is the meaning of this metaphor, and how does it connect to Janie?
2. What conclusions can you draw about Janie Starks, her character, and the events in her life based on the dialogue of her neighbors?
3. In what sense does the novel begin at the end of Janie's story?

Chapter 2

4. How does the pear tree symbolize Janie's quest for self-fulfillment? What IS Janie's quest?
5. How does Hurston reveal Nanny's motivation for forcing Janie to marry? Is that motivation pure, malevolent, or something in between?
6. While Hurston achieved success in so-called "white publication" and received critical acclaim from white critics, her black contemporaries harshly criticized her and her work. What events in Janie's life parallel this situation? Support with details from the text.

Chapter 3

7. How and why do Janie and Nanny differ in their ideas of love?
8. Describe the prevailing tone of this chapter. Identify the elements that set the tone.

Chapter 4

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9. How does Jody's character begin to establish Hurston's theme of male dominance and aggression? Contrast this with Janie's first husband, Logan Killicks.
10. What symbolic meaning does the horizon begin to assume?

Chapter 5

11. What type of power does Jody come to represent in the scheme of the book? Where does this come through?
12. How does Jody attempt to control Janie? Does he ultimately succeed?
13. What does Janie's hair symbolize? When does this become somewhat obvious?

Chapter 6

14. What is the significance of Janie's verbal outbursts to the gathering on the porch?
15. What conflict does the conversation between Pheoby's husband and Lige Moss center around? How is this significant to the developing theme of the novel (how does this relate to Janie)?
16. What motivates Jody to suppress Janie?