



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Their Eyes Were Watching God

based on the book by  
Zora Neale Hurston

Written by  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Introduction	5
Unit Objectives	7
Unit Outline	8
Reading Assignment Sheet	9
Study Questions	13
Quiz/Study Questions (Multiple Choice)	23
Pre-Reading Vocabulary Worksheets	39
Lesson One (Introductory Lesson)	55
Nonfiction Assignment Sheet	59
Oral Reading Evaluation Form	61
Writing Assignment 1	63
Writing Evaluation Form	64
Writing Assignment 2	67
Extra Writing Assignments/Discussion ?s	69
Writing Assignment 3	73
Vocabulary Review Activities	74
Unit Review Activities	77
Unit Tests	83
Unit Resource Materials	123
Vocabulary Resource Materials	143

A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR  
ZORA NEALE HURSTON

HURSTON, Zora Neale (1903 ?-1960) Zora Neale Hurston was born in Eatonville, Florida, on January 7, 1901 (some say 1903.) She wrote four novels as well as two books of black mythology, legends, and folklore.

Hurston traveled with a theater company in her teenage years and then attended Barnard College, where she studied anthropology. During several years of field service after college she studied African American folklore in her native Florida. One result of this study was the book *Mules and Men* (1935), a collection of folklore presented within the framework of a unifying narrative.

Hurston's background was also reflected in her novels, most of which incorporated elements of folklore to some degree. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), which was widely praised as her finest novel, told the story of a young black woman's growth toward self-awareness and independence. Hurston's other novels were *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), the tale of a black preacher; the allegorical *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), and *Seraph on the Suanee* (1948).

In the early 1930s Hurston became involved in the Harlem Renaissance movement, where she represented the black experience of the rural South. Her work subsequently influenced Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, and other black authors. She also wrote *Tell My Horse* (1938), which was originally published as *Voodoo Gods: An Inquiry into Native Myths and Magic in Jamaica and Haiti*. *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), was her autobiography. Her book *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing* was published posthumously in 1979. It contained a selection of stories, novels, and essays. She died on January 28, 1960, in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Courtesy of Compton's Learning Company

## INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, listening and speaking skills through exercises and activities related to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. It includes nineteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to one main theme of the novel (Janie's development through a bulletin board activity). Following the introductory activity, students are given an explanation of how the activity relates to the book they are about to read.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. It might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II gives students dictionary definitions of the words and has them match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete extra discussion questions, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the separate vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the reading of the book, two lessons are devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel. These questions are done

as a **group activity**. Using the information they have acquired so far through individual work and class discussions, students get together to further examine the text and to brainstorm ideas relating to the themes of the novel.

The group activity is followed by a **reports and discussion** session in which the groups share their ideas about the book with the entire class; thus, the entire class gets exposed to many different ideas regarding the themes and events of the book.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to **inform**: students will write a public service announcement outlining what to do if there is a hurricane. The second assignment is to **persuade**: students will take the role of a sales representative and make a presentation to Joe Starks, convincing him to stock their product in his store. The third assignment is to express a personal **opinion**: students will add a chapter to the novel, detailing what they think should happen next in Janie's life .

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: all multiple choice-matching-true/false or with a mixture of matching, short answer, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **resource section** includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

1. Through reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, students will analyze characters and their situations to better understand the themes of the novel.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
4. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the autobiography through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with it.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
6. Students will practice writing through a variety of writing assignments.
7. The writing assignments in this are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - b. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - c. To make students put those ideas into perspective
  - d. To encourage critical and logical thinking
  - e. To provide the opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

UNIT OUTLINE - *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

<b>1</b> Unit Intro PV 1-4	<b>2</b> Read 1-4 Study ?s 1-4	<b>3</b> PVR 5-6 Oral Reading Evaluation	<b>4</b> Quiz 1-6 PVR 7-11	<b>5</b> Writing Assignment 1
<b>6</b> Study ?s 7-11 PVR 12-15	<b>7</b> Study ?s 12-15 PVR 16-18	<b>8</b> Study ?s 16-18 Writing Assignment 2	<b>9</b> Writing Conferences	<b>10</b> PVR 19-20 Study ?s 19-20
<b>11</b> Extra Discusson ?s	<b>12</b> Writing Assignment 3	<b>13</b> Library	<b>14</b> Vocab Review	<b>15</b> Group Work
<b>16</b> Movie/Audio Cassette & Discussion	<b>17</b> Non-Fiction Assignment	<b>18</b> Review	<b>19</b> Test	

Key: P = Preview Study Questions    V = Vocabulary Work    R = Read

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET  
*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Date Assigned	Chapters	Complete By
	1-4	
	5-6	
	7-11	
	12-15	
	16-18	
	19-20	



## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To introduce the *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unit
2. To relate students' prior knowledge to the new material
3. To distribute books and other related materials (study guides, reading assignments)
4. To introduce the use of dialect
5. To do the prereading work for Chapters 1-4

### Activity #1

Show some pictures of rural Florida in the 1930s. If possible, show pictures of an all-black town in the South. Ask students to tell you what they know about Florida in general, about Zora Neale Hurston, and about the novel. Do a group KWL sheet with the students (form included.) Put any information the students know in the K column (What I Know.) Ask students what they want to find out and put that information in the W column (What I Want to Find Out.) Keep the sheet and refer back to it while reading. After reading the novel, complete the L column (What I Learned.)

### Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should preview the study guide questions before each reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in that section. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet on a side blackboard or bulletin board and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can make copies for each student to have. In either case, you should advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

Extra Activities Center The resource materials portion of this unit contains suggestions for a library of related books and articles in your classroom as well as crossword and word search puzzles. Make an extra activities center in your room where you will keep these materials for students to use. (Bring the books and articles in from the library and keep several copies of the puzzles on hand.) Explain to students that these materials are available for students to use when they finish reading assignments or other class work early.

Books Each school has its own rules and regulations regarding student use of school books. Advise students of the procedures that are normal for your school.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

### PROMPT

Later on in the story you will read about a hurricane that takes place in Florida.

Your assignment is to write a public service announcement for television or radio. It should explain what a hurricane is, and what to do in the event that you are caught in one.

### PREWRITING

The first thing you need to do is decide whether you want to do television or radio. Radio has no visual input, so your explanation and directions must be very clear and easy to understand. A television announcement would need several visuals in the form of posters, charts, or photographs. In order to be accurate, you will also have to do some research on hurricanes. Your school or public library will have books, encyclopedias, newspaper articles, and possibly videos having to do with hurricanes.

### DRAFTING

First, write a paragraph in which you explain what a hurricane is. Tell about the speed of the winds, the amount of rain that can be expected, how long the storm may last, and the kind of damage that is possible. You may want to talk about a recent hurricane as an example.

In the body of your paper, explain what to do in case of a hurricane. You may find it easier to use a list format here instead of a paragraph. Give information on when to evacuate, where to go, what to bring with you. Include phone numbers for relief groups such as the Red Cross. If you are doing the television version, have charts, tables, and pictures available.

Finally, write a concluding paragraph that tells again what a hurricane is, and why your listeners should obey the advice given by the professionals.

### PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask another student to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper, double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.