

Honors American Literature
Their Eyes Were Watching God or *The Grapes of Wrath*
Honors 2nd Summer Reading Book and Discussion

NOTES – In addition to reading *Into the Wild*, Choose ONE:

Their Eyes Were Watching God – ISBN-10: 0061120065

or

Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck – ISBN-10: 0-14-303943-1

If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Johnson via e-mail: joyjohnson@concordiaprepschool.org.

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* Introduction**

One of the most important works of twentieth-century American literature, Zora Neale Hurston's beloved 1937 classic, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is an enduring Southern love story sparkling with wit, beauty, and heartfelt wisdom. Told in the captivating voice of a woman who refuses to live in sorrow, bitterness, fear, or foolish romantic dreams, it is the story of fair-skinned, fiercely independent Janie Crawford, and her evolving selfhood through three marriages and a life marked by poverty, trials, and purpose. A true literary wonder, Hurston's masterwork remains as relevant and affecting today as when it was first published—perhaps the most widely read and highly regarded novel in the entire canon of African American literature.

Hurston was an anthropologist and writer during the Harlem Renaissance, which was a time when many African-American writers and artists thrived as they offered a new view of the experiences of Black Americans. Hurston, who grew up in the South, was born in Alabama but moved to Florida when she was very young. She loved literature, and her quest to understand people, as well as the way cultures develop, led her to New York City, where she studied anthropology at Barnard College, the sister school to Columbia University. At the time Hurston was studying anthropology, the Harlem Renaissance was in full swing, and its center was in Harlem, just ten blocks north of Barnard. Hurston began writing about African-American culture and quickly became a celebrated member of the Harlem Renaissance when her story 'Spunk' was included in the famous collection *The New Negro*. Hurston's views of life as an African-American woman can be seen in her most famous work, the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. (Source: Educators Natalie Boyd and Jenna Clayton)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How does Janie change from the beginning of the text to the end of the text?

Keeping in mind this essential question, you will be focusing on the thematic motifs of **change** and **self-discovery** and how, through *plot* and *characterization*, Hurston explores this change. The questions for each journal entry will help you to answer this essential question as they pertain to some aspect of her change.

- Each journal entry will be in response to a question. You will write a total of FIVE journal entries for this novel. Each journal response (in chart form) must be at least one typed page, single-spaced.
- Begin a new page for each journal entry.
- Journal entries must encompass the entire text so that you are analyzing different parts of the work.

Journal Directions:

- ★ At the top of the page the title will be one of the questions/prompts (see underlines below).
- ★ In the left-hand column, you should list specific scenes and page numbers (cited using MLA Format). Example: (Hurston 15).
- ★ In the second column, write a fully developed paragraph or paragraphs with a topic sentence, quotes for support (be sure to cite), and analysis where you analyze/explain how the text evidence you gave in

the 1st column answers the specific journal question. In the 2nd column, please provide a full, in-depth response (at least one page, typed single-spaced). I highly recommend that you integrate short, relevant quotes as you discuss the meaning of specific scenes that answer the journal prompt. You must properly cite all quotes. Example: (Hurston 32). Formula: Assertion (your inference or interpretation), quote, analysis. Transition into next example of support—same formula, etc.

The Five Journal Questions/Prompts for *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

1. Janie's relationship with Nanny—In column 1, give at least TWO scenes or examples (with page numbers) that SHOW their relationship and background. You will be making inferences about their relationship based on your examples. In column 2, write a well-organized paragraph (topic sentence, support, and analysis, concluding sentence) analyzing how your examples show their relationship. You must integrate at least three relevant quotes in this paragraph.
2. Janie's definition of love and marriage v. Nanny's definition—In column 1, give TWO specific scenes that show their views. In column 2, write a well-organized paragraph in which you analyze why and how their views are different. Be sure to state each character's view. Use quotes for support.
3. Janie's relationship with Logan Killicks—In column 1, identify at least THREE specific scenes or examples (with page numbers) that SHOW their relationship. In your paragraph(s) analysis in column 2, consider the following: What is your interpretation of their relationship? Make a clear statement. Based on certain scenes, how do you know this? What is the outcome of their relationship? What might this tell us about Janie at this point of the story? (Look carefully at the end of this section.) Be sure to embed at least three quotes in this commentary.
4. Janie's relationship with Jody Starks—In column 1, list THREE specific scenes or examples that SHOW Janie and Jody's relationship. In your column 2 paragraph analysis, define and describe Jody and Janie's relationship and discuss how it is similar and different from her relationship with Killicks. Make inferences about the scenes/examples you have chosen. Be sure to imbed at least three quotes in your commentary. Identify and examine the turning point of their relationship. What is the outcome? How has Janie changed by the end of their relationship? Give specific support. (Hint: Analyze her final scene with Jody.)
5. Janie's relationship with Teacake—In column 1, briefly summarize THREE specific examples or scenes that SHOW their relationship. In column 2, consider the following: Define the relationship. Why and how is this relationship different from the others? Give specific quotes and analysis that support your ideas. What is the outcome of their relationship at the end of the text? Why is it ironic? How has Janie changed by the end of the book? Be sure to look carefully at her last scene with Teacake.

EXAMPLE

Janie's relationship with Nanny (*Title must be at the top of the page and will be one of the questions/prompts*)

<p>In column 1, list at least two scenes or examples (with page numbers) that SHOW their relationship and background. Cite using MLA format.</p> <p><i>Example: ...“Put me down easy, I’m a cracked plate,” says Nanny (Hurston 20).</i></p>	<p>In column 2, write a well-organized paragraph (topic sentence, support, analysis, concluding sentence) analyzing how your examples show their relationship. Integrate three+ relevant quotes in this paragraph AND make inferences about their relationship based on your examples. (<i>Refer to directions listed above.</i>)</p>
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***The Grapes of Wrath* Introduction**

Life during the Great Depression of the 1930s was extremely difficult for almost everyone. But for those who had little to begin with, it created often unbearable circumstances. By 1935, drought and poor farming practices, especially in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, and Texas, led to the wind erosion of topsoil. So severe was this problem that the affected areas of the Great Plains were labeled the Dust Bowl. At nearly the same time, the development of the all-purpose tractor enabled large landowners to dispense with the labor of farmers who were tenants on their land. By the late thirties, a majority of the approximately 1.8 million tenant farmers in the South had been evicted from their homes. Many of the displaced farmers sought work in the “promised land” of California. Eventually, there were as many as 30,000 migrants in California, several workers for every available job in the fertile farming valleys of that state.

In 1936, John Steinbeck conducted research on the people who had moved to California from Arkansas and Oklahoma; in 1937 he toured the Dust Bowl and traveled with migrants on their relentless drive to California. From those experiences he wrote *The Grapes of Wrath*, which upon publication in 1939 earned Steinbeck both high praise (including the Pulitzer Prize) and harsh criticism for its strong language and socio-political implications. The novel continues to be one of the most highly praised and vehemently criticized pieces of American literature. (Source: Dr. Donald R. Gallo, Professor of English, Central Connecticut State University)

Preparing to Read

- If interested, read about the Dust Bowl and other events of the Great Depression.
- Think about what happens when machines replace people. What alternatives do unskilled workers have when they are replaced?
- What is your definition of family? Is a family made up of only relatives? What keeps a family together? Of what importance is family unity in today’s society?
- As you work through *The Grapes of Wrath*, consider stopping occasionally to record your thoughts and reactions in a Response Journal. (NOTE: This is entirely optional. This journal can then be used during the school year for class notes.) Include statements about the characters—what you learn about them, how they affected you—and your thoughts about the key issues and events which the book explores. Or, jot down questions you have about events and statements in the book which you do not understand. The Response Journal/notes will be helpful as we discuss the novel in class in preparation for an essay. In addition, because this novel contains several sophisticated words, unusual expressions, and dialect, you may want to keep a list of some of those words and their meanings in your journal.

Discussion Questions

Select **FIVE** questions from the following page and respond in paragraph form. Make sure to incorporate multiple examples of support in the form of direct quotes from the text in EACH of your answers, citing the lines you quote. **Submit your TYPED summer reading responses to Turnitin.com on the first day of class.**

Quoting the Text

When quoting passages from a novel, stand-alone quotes are not allowed. Respond, use textual support to back up your statement by first introducing the quote, and then comment on the quote after the citation. NOTE: Shorter phrases/passages work better—no block quotes—and remember to cite the page numbers.

Examples:

After several of the women decide to burn their possessions before they move, one mother asks, “How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past?” (Steinbeck 22).

or

Unlike the predatory actions of the tractor, Steinbeck demonstrates the optimistic power of a machine as the Joads prepare to leave their home: “The family met at the most important place, near the truck. The house was dead, and the fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle. The ancient Hudson...this was the new hearth, the living center of the family” (147).

*****A word of warning!!*****

DO NOT include the question in your response. This creates a false positive when you upload in Turnitin.com, which means the instructor must investigate if you have in fact plagiarized. Failure to comply will cost you points on your summer reading.

1. In the beginning, each character has personal reasons for wanting to go to California. How does each member of the Joad family feel about moving to California? How does each feel about leaving home? In what ways does each individual's goal change? Which people grow to see a larger purpose in life? What factors contribute to their changes?
2. How do the tractors operate? What role does the bank play? What power do the small farmers have against the banks and the tractors?
3. What is the effect of the chapters which come between the narrative about the Joads? How would the elimination of those chapters affect the meaning and impact of the novel?
4. Using your own knowledge, identify as many Biblical references or parallels as you can find in the novel and discuss their effectiveness as well as their meaning within the context.
5. How has farming changed throughout the novel? Why do the local people fear the migrants? What is a Hooverville? How do you suppose a Hooverville got its name? In addition, why is it so difficult to obtain work in California? Why do wages fall? What keeps the men from uniting? What advice does Floyd Knowles give? How is Rose of Sharon affected by all of this?
6. Some critics maintain that this novel promotes hatred between classes of people. In which ways does it do that? In what ways does the novel's effect go beyond that?
7. Explain the importance of the contrast between the dryness of the first part of the novel and the floods of the final part. Note also the frequent references to the sun as a “large red drop” that made a cloud look like a bloody rag and the earth look bloody. How do these images contribute to the meaning of the novel?
8. Describe the role women play throughout this novel. Be sure to comment on the significance of Rose of Sharon's final act in the novel.

****As a reminder, Honors American Literature students read TWO books over the summer and complete work related to both texts: Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (all juniors read this non-fiction text) AND a choice of either Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* as the second honors book.****