***Their Eyes Were Watching God***

**Zora Neale Hurston**

**Introduction Notes:**

* Retrospective narrative: The story already happened, and it is being re-told
* Two distinctly different narrative voices: **Rhetorical Device**
	+ Third-person omniscient (all-knowing)
		- Literary
		- Figurative, poetic language
	+ First-person
		- Long passages of dialogue
		- Highly colloquial: appropriate for ordinary, familiar conversation
* Protagonist: Janie Starks
	+ Attractive black woman who left her hometown with a man
		- Unheard of, unusual; causes bitterness and envy from the other women in town
* Tea Cake: Janie’s late lover (Cause of death: unknown)

**Chapter 1: The Exposition**

*“Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board.”*

* Men will dream until their death. They will always reach beyond what they can grasp.
* In contrast, women are not afforded the luxury of dreaming. They are seen as subservient and subordinate to their men. They are logical, level-headed, and pragmatic.
* Janie returns to Eatonville and is “greeted” by a judgmental, gossiping town of porch-sitters and finger-pointers
* Pheoby Watson: Janie’s best friend
	+ Defends Janie against the neighbor’s accusations
	+ Genuinely interested in what has been going in Janie’s life since she left
		- What happened with Tea Cake?
		- Where did she go? What did she do? Details, please…
* Janie begins to tell her tale…

**Chapter 1**

**Key Lines/Phrases:**

Page 1:

* “The sun was gone, but HE had left HIS footprints in the sky.”
	+ Possibly signifies a male-driven society
	+ Indicates, perhaps, that God is a man
	+ Could symbolize the man who has died (Heaven?)

Page 2:

* “They made burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs. It was mass cruelty. A mood come alive. Words walking without masters; walking altogether like harmony in a song.”
	+ **Personification** of words and their powers: **Rhetorical Device**
	+ Everyone in the town looks and speaks with judgment, in what seems ironically (and disturbingly) harmonious.

Page 5:

* “An envious heart makes a treacherous ear.”
	+ Jealous people want to hear negative things about those they are envious of
		- Societal? Timeless?

Page 7:

* “Janie full of that oldest human longing – self revelation.”
	+ Major thematic element of the novel: The search for one’s self, and how that search is facilitated through others.
	+ Janie wants to discover who she is