***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