

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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December 1, 2025. Hurston (1).

reminders

- ▶ Paper 2 preliminary work: 350 words, 4 printed copies
- ▶ use evidence
- ▶ evidence means quotations, carefully cited
 - ▶ being able to use quotation cogently and effectively is one of the hallmarks of advanced literacy
 - ▶ failures are currently one of the hallmarks of cutting-edge large language models
- ▶ quotations need a context
- ▶ quotations need analysis

quotation model I: in text

The doctor's apartment is a sordid variation on the theme of accumulated objects; whereas Nora and Robin collect dolls and souvenirs, the doctor's inventory consists of useless medical equipment like "a rusty pair of forceps, a broken scalpel" (85) and, in the very same sentence, his cross-dressing toilette: "some twenty perfume bottles, almost empty, pmoades, creams, rouges, powder boxes and puffs" (85).

The doctor insistently refuses to come to the point: "'I'm telling you of French nights at the moment,' the doctor went on, 'and why we all go into them'" (89). Instead of answering Nora's specific question, he transform it into an occasion for wild generalization.

- ▶ quotations within quotations use single quotes
- ▶ parenthetical citations follow the closing quotation mark and precede closing punctuation
- ▶ if the quotation is part of the grammar of the clause, it is not set off by a comma or colon

quotation model 2: block quote

In *Nightwood*, even the most positive forms of community are fleeting and ambivalent. A signal example occurs early, in the description of Baron Felix's encounters with the circus:

The more amiable actresses of Prague, Vienna, Hungary, Germany, France and Italy, the acrobats and sword-swallowers, had at one time or another allowed him their dressing rooms—sham salons in which he aped his heart. Here he had neither to be capable nor alien. He became for a little while a part of their splendid and reeking falsification. (14)

The only place for Felix to escape being “alien” is a “sham”; the only association he can belong to is “falsification.” Yet this world of pure performance is unambiguously liberating, not only for the Baron but also for the flagrantly deviant personas of the performers themselves.

- ▶ no quotation marks unless these occur in the text itself
- ▶ the citation follows the closing punctuation
- ▶ if you are going to quote at length, **make it count**

quotation model 3: Zora Neale Hurston

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.

“What she doin coming back here in dem overhalls? Can’t she find no dress to put on?—Where’s dat blue satin dress she left here in?—Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?—What dat ole forty year ole ’oman doin’ wid her hair swingin’ down her back lak some young gal?—Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?—Thought she was going to marry?—Where he left her?—What he done wid all her money?—Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain’t even got no hairs—why she don’t stay in her class?—” (2)

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(intertextuality moment)

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“Mowgli,” said Baloo, “thou hast been talking with the Bandar-log—the Monkey People.”

Mowgli looked at Bagheera to see if the Panther was angry too, and Bagheera’s eyes were as hard as jade stones.

“Thou hast been with the Monkey People—the gray apes—the people without a law—the eaters of everything. That is great shame.”

...“They are very many, evil, dirty, shameless, and they desire, if they have any fixed desire, to be noticed by the Jungle-People. But we do not notice them even when they throw nuts and filth on our heads.

Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (1893), in *The Jungle Book; The Second Jungle Book* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1925), 36–37, [HathiTrust](#). In Hindi, *bandar-log* means “monkey-people.”

quotation model 4: also Zora Neale Hurston

He finally lit on the ground and walked around the body to see if it were really dead. Peered into its nose and mouth. Examined it well from end to end and leaped upon it and bowed, and the others danced a response. That being over, he balanced and asked:

“What killed this man?”

The chorus answered, “Bare, bare fat.”

“What killed this man?”

“Bare, bare fat.”

“What killed this man?”

“Bare, bare fat.”

“Who’ll stand his funeral?”

“We!!!!”

“Well, all right now.”

So he picked out the eyes in the ceremonial way and the feast went on. (61–62)

quotation model 5: still Zora Neale Hurston

“Nanny...got de land and everything and then Mis’ Washburn helped out uh whole heap wid things.”

Pheoby’s hungry listening helped Janie to tell her story. So she went on thinking back to her young years and explaining them to her friend in soft, easy phrases while all around house, the night time put on flesh and blackness....

It was a spring afternoon in West Florida. Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the back-yard....It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How? Why? This singing she heard that had nothing to do with ears. (10)

- What is happening to narration here?

They sat there in the fresh young darkness close together....

Time makes everything old so the kissing, young darkness became a monstropolous old thing while Janie talked. (7)

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Time makes everything old so the kissing, young darkness became a monstropolous old thing while Janie talked. (7)

OED Dictionary  monstropolous 

Advanced search  AI Search Assistant   Signed in as Rutgers Universit...

0 result for "monstropolous" [Advanced search >](#)

Did you mean?
[obstropolous](#)

language makes language

Davis chanted a traditional-prayer poem with his own variations....Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in:

*We'll walk in de light, de beautiful light
Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright
Shine all around us by day and by night
Jesus, the light of the world*

They, all of them, all of the people took it up and sung it over and over until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable. (45–46)

Cf. Allie D. Coombs, "Jesus, the Light of the World," in J.V. Coombs and W.E.M. Heckleman, *Silver and Gold No. 1* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing, 1898), 168, [Sounding Spirit Digital Library](#). Attribution from [hymntime.com](#).

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(content warning: derogatory term quoted on next slide)

the power of tradition

She slapped the girl's face violently, and forced her head back so that their eyes met in struggle....

“Yo’ Nanny wouldn’t harm a hair uh yo’ head. She don’t want nobody else to do it neither if she kin help it. Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it’s some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don’t know nothin’ but what we see. So de white mamn throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin’ fuh it tuh be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!” (14)

- ▶ What does this episode say about power? Consider the content of Nanny’s speech—and the context.

Hurston's position

I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

Hurston, "How It Feels To Be Colored Me," *World Tomorrow* 11, no. 5 (May 1928): 215–16, [HathiTrust](#).

the meaning of tradition?

She hated her grandmother and had hidden it from herself all these years under a cloak of pity....Some people could look at a mud-puddle and see an ocean with ships. But Nanny belonged to that other kind that loved to deal in scraps. Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon—for no matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you—and pinched it in to to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter's neck tight enough to choke her. She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love. (89)

next

- ▶ Paper 2 exercise on paper, in 4 copies
- ▶ Hurston, 1–128