

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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December 8, 2025. Hurston (3).

honors presentation

review: feminist questions: plot

She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman. (25)

The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. (87)

"We been together round two years. If you kin see de light at daybreak, you don't keer if you die at dusk." (159)

Now she was her sacrificing self with Tea Cake's head in her lap. (184)

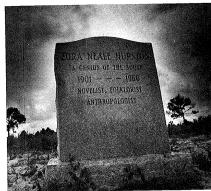
- Discussion: how is this novel revising the **female** coming-of-age plot? Be specific.



74/Ms.

IN SEARCH OF ZORA NEALE HURSTON

BY ALICE WALKER



On January 16, 1959, Zora Neale Hurston, suffering from the effects of a stroke and writing painfully in long-hand, composed a letter to the "editorial department" of Harper & Brothers inquir-

three hundred brown skins, three hundred good swimmers, plenty guavas, two schools, and no jailhouse." Of course I cannot see the guavas, but the five lakes are still there, and it is the lakes I

Hurston in 1935, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, [Beinecke Library](#); Alice Walker, "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston," Ms. 3 (March, 1975): 74. Walker placed the marker and chose the inscription: "ZORA NEALE HURSTON | A GENIUS OF THE SOUTH | 1901 – – – 1960 | NOVELIST, FOLKLORIST | ANTHROPOLOGIST"

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- 1891 b. Notasulga, AL
- 1897 John Hurston elected mayor of Eatonville, FL
- 1918 at Howard U.
- 1925 at Barnard (BA, 1928); studies anthropology under Franz Boas
- 1925 "Spunk," *Opportunity*; rpt. in *The New Negro*, ed. Locke
- 1926 *Fire!!*, ed. Hurston, Hughes, Thurman
- 1931 "Hoodoo in America," *J. Am. Folklore*
- 1935 *Mules and Men* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott)
Works Progress Administration, Federal Theatre Project
- 1936 fieldwork in Jamaica and Haiti (Guggenheim)
drafts *Their Eyes* in seven weeks
- 1937 *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Lippincott)
- 1942 *Dust Tracks on a Road* (Lippincott): memoir, success
- 1950 increasing poverty and obscurity
- 1960 d. Florida
- 1975 Walker, "In Search of ZNH," Ms.
-

A beating with the fist

Tea Cake had a brainstorm. Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss. (147)

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“Ah beat her to show dem Turners who is boss.” (148)

All gods who receive homage are cruel. All gods dispense suffering without reason. Otherwise they would not be worshipped. Through indiscriminate suffering men know fear and fear is the most divine emotion. It is the stones for altars and the beginning of wisdom. Half gods are worshipped in wine and flowers. Real gods require blood. (145)

- By the end of the novel, what real god has demanded blood?

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- By the end of the novel, what real god has demanded blood?

It was the meanest moment of eternity. A minute before she was just a scared human being fighting for its life. Now she was her sacrificing self with Tea Cake's head in her lap. (184)

the hurricane and the folk

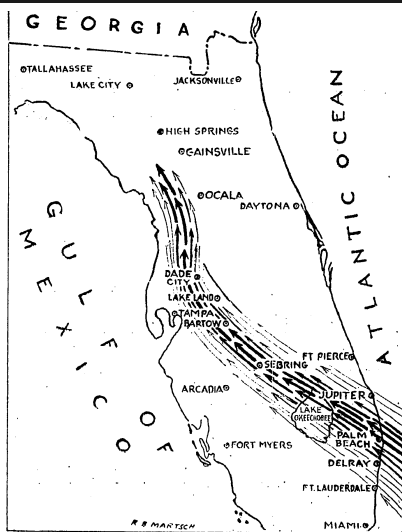
Sometime that night the winds came back. Everything in the world had a strong rattle, sharp and short like Stew Beef vibrating the drum head near the edge with his fingers. By morning Gabriel was playing the deep tones in the center of the drum....

It woke up old Okechobee and the monster began to roll in his bed. Began to roll and complain like a peevish world on a grumble. The folks in the quarters and the people in the big houses further around the shore heard the big lake and wondered. The people felt uncomfortable but safe because there were the seawalls to chain the senseless monster in his bed. The folks let the people do the thinking. (158)

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Path of the Hurricane in Its Sweep Across Florida.

FLOOD MENACE IN FLORIDA

Rising Waters Add to the Storm Damage Above Miami District.

24 DROWN IN OKEECHOBEE

Nearly Every Building in West Palm Beach Damaged—Improved Hospitals Overflow.

HURRICANE VEERS NORTH

Warnings of Its Approach Are Issued in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.

With the hurricane sweeping north-westward through Florida last night, leaving a trail of wreckage and deaths along the eastern coast, Tampa escaped damage by a veering of the storm to the north.

In the meantime 300 persons were reported to have been killed in

BIG HURRICANE TOLL LAID TO DROWNINGS

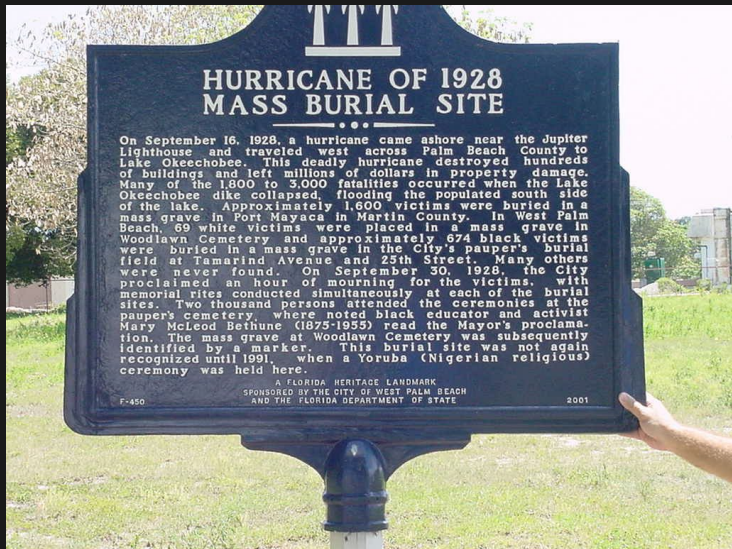
Miami Mayor, Here, Says Wind
Alone Killed Less Than 12%
of 1,500 Florida Victims.

LAKE OKEECHOBEE BLAMED

Government Will Be Asked to Build
\$5,000,000 Canal to Control
Waters of "Death Trap."

Of the toll of 1,500 deaths in the recent Florida hurricane, less than a dozen were actually killed by the storm itself, and the others were drowned by the overflowing of Lake Okeechobee, according to Everest G. Sewell, Mayor of Miami, who is stopping at the Waldorf, where he arrived yesterday. The Mayor characterized the lake as a "death trap," and said that had proper precautions been taken, the loss of life from the storm would have been negligible.

In order to avoid a recurrence of



Historical marker (2001) of 1928 mass grave, West Palm Beach, National Weather Service, "Memorial Web Page for the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane," weather.gov/mfl/okeechobee.



SCENES AT PALM BEACH

GUS' BATHS
NEAR ALBA HOTEL
FLAGLER DRIVE AT PENNSYLVANIA
HOTEL

ROYAL POINCIANA GROUNDS
AUSTRALIAN PINE WALK
ROYAL PALM WAY



TRUCKS CARRYING COFFINS TO
THE EVERGLADES

EVERGLADES IN VICINITY OF BELLE
GLADE UNDER WATER

PLACE IN BELLE GLADE WHERE A LARGE
NUMBER OF BODIES WERE FOUND

Ten feet higher and as far as they could see the muttering wall advanced before the braced-up waters like a road-crusher on a cosmic scale. The monstropolous beast had left his bed. The two hundred miles an hour wind had loosed his chains. (161)

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another social vision (cont.)

White people had preempted that point of elevation and there was no more room. They could climb up one of its high sides and down the other, that was all. Miles further on, still no rest. (164)



LOADING BODIES OF THOSE WHO PERISHED IN THE EVERGLADES INTO TRUCK
AT BELLE GLADE

National Weather Service, "Memorial Page."

aftermath

- ▶ How does race shape the storm aftermath? Where do Hurston's emphases fall in this episode, and why?

“Don’t dump no white folks in de hole jus’ so.”

“Whut tuh do ’bout de colored folks? Got boxes fuh dem too?”

“Nope. They cain’t find enough of ‘em tuh go ’round. Jus’ sprinkle plenty quick-lime over ‘em and cover ‘em up.”

“Shucks! Nobody can’t tell nothin’ ’bout some uh dese bodies, de shape dey’s in. Can’t tell whether dey’s white or black.” (171)

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“Look lak dey think God don't know nothin' 'bout de Jim Crow law.”
(171)

next

- ▶ Hurston, concluded
- ▶ Carby, “The Politics of Fiction” (Canvas: make notes to bring in)
- ▶ plenary discussion