UNIT-III- DRAMA (DETAILED)

EUGENE O' NEILL'S LONG DAYS JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

INTRODUCTION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The play takes place on a single day in August 1912, from around 8:30 a.m. to midnight. The setting is the seaside Eugene Gladstone O'Neill (October 16, 1888 – November 27, 1953) was an American playwright and Nobel laureate in literature. His poetically titled plays were among the first to introduce into U.S. drama techniques of realism earlier associated with Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and Swedish playwright August Strindberg. The tragedy *Long Day's Journey into Night* is often numbered on the short list of the finest U.S. plays in the 20th century, alongside Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

O'Neill's plays were among the first to include speeches in American English vernacular and involve characters on the fringes of society. They struggle to maintain their hopes and aspirations, but ultimately slide into disillusionment and despair. Of his very few comedies, only one is well-known (*Ah, Wilderness!*). Nearly all of his other plays involve some degree of tragedy and personal pessimism.

☑ Early life

O'Neill was born in a hotel, the Barrett House, at Broadway and 43rd Street, on what was then Longacre Square (now Times Square). He was the son of Irish immigrant actor James O'Neill and Mary Ellen Quinlan, who was also of Irish descent. His father suffered from alcoholism; his mother from an addiction to morphine, prescribed to relieve the pains of the difficult birth of her third son, Eugene. Because his father was often on tour with a theatrical company, accompanied by Eugene's mother, in 1895 O'Neill was sent to St. Aloysius Academy for Boys, a Catholic boarding school in the Riverdale section of the Bronx.[8] In 1900, he became a day student at the De La Salle Institute on 59th Street in (Manhattan). The O'Neill family reunited for summers at the Monte Cristo Cottage in New London, Connecticut. He also briefly attended Betts Academy in Stamford. He attended Princeton University for one year. Accounts vary as to why he left. He may have been dropped for attending too few classes been suspended for "conduct code violations, or "for breaking a window", or according to a more concrete but possibly apocryphal account, because he threw "a beer bottle into the window of Professor Woodrow Wilson", the future president of the United States. O'Neill spent several years at sea, during which he suffered from depression and alcoholism. Despite this, he had a deep love for the sea and it became a prominent theme in many of his plays, several of which are set on board ships like those on which he worked. O'Neill joined the Marine Transport Workers Union of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which was fighting for improved living conditions for the working class using quick 'on the job' direct action. O'Neill's parents and elder brother Jamie (who drank himself to death at the age of 45) died within three years of one another, not long after he had begun to make his mark in the theater.

Career : After his experience in 1912–13 at a sanatorium where he was recovering from tuberculosis, he decided to devote himself full-time to writing plays (the events immediately prior to going to the

sanatorium are dramatized in his masterpiece, *Long Day's Journey into Night*).-O'Neill had previously been employed by the *New London Telegraph*, writing poetry as well as reporting. In the fall of 1914, he entered Harvard University to attend a course in dramatic technique given by Professor George Baker. He left after one year. During the 1910s O'Neill was a regular on the Greenwich Village literary scene, where he also befriended many radicals, most notably Communist Labor Party of America founder John Reed. O'Neill also had a brief romantic relationship with Reed's wife, writer Louise Bryant.-O'Neill was portrayed by Jack Nicholson in the 1981 film *Reds*, about the life of John Reed; Louise Bryant was portrayed by Diane Keaton. His involvement with the Provincetown Players began in mid-1916. Terry Carlin reported that O'Neill arrived for the summer in Provincetown with "a trunk full of plays.", but this was an exaggeration. Susan Glaspell describes a reading of *Bound East for Cardiff* that took place in the living room of Glaspell and her husband George Cram Cook's home on Commercial Street, adjacent to the wharf (pictured) that was used by the Players for their theater: "So Gene took *Bound East for Cardiff* out of his trunk, and Freddie Burt read it to us, Gene staying out in the dining-room while reading went on. He was not left alone in the dining-room when the reading had finished." The Provincetown Players performed many of O'Neill's early works in their theaters both in Provincetown and on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village. Some of these early plays, such as *The Emperor Jones*, began downtown and then moved to Broadway. In an early one-act play, *The Web*. written in 1913, O'Neill first explored the darker themes that he later thrived on. Here he focused on the brothel world and the lives of prostitutes, which also play a role in some fourteen of his later plays. In particular, he memorably included the birth of an infant into the world of prostitution. At the time, such themes constituted a huge innovation, as these sides of life had never before been presented with such success.

O'Neill's first published play, *Beyond the Horizon*, opened on Broadway in 1920 to great acclaim, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. His first major hit was *The Emperor Jones*, which ran on Broadway in 1920 and obliquely commented on the U.S. occupation of Haiti that was a topic of debate in that year's presidential election.-His best-known plays include *Anna Christie* (Pulitzer Prize 1922), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *Strange Interlude* (Pulitzer Prize 1928), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), and his only well-known comedy, *Ah, Wilderness!*, a wistful re-imagining of his youth as he wished it had been. In 1936 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature after he had been nominated that year by Henrik Schück, member of the Swedish Academy.- After a ten-year pause, O'Neill's now-renowned play *The Iceman Cometh* was produced in 1946. The following year's *A Moon for the Misbegotten* failed, and it was decades before coming to be considered as among his best works.

Family life

Connecticut home of the Tyrones, Monte Cristo Cottage. The four main characters are the semi-autobiographical representations of O'Neill himself, his older brother, and their parents.This play portrays a family in a ferociously negative light as the parents and two sons express accusations, blame, and resentments—qualities that are often paired with pathetic and self-defeating attempts at affection, encouragement, tenderness, and yearnings for things to be otherwise. The pain of this family is made worse by their depth of self-understanding and self-analysis, combined with a brutal honesty, as they see it, and an ability to boldly express themselves. The story deals with the mother's addiction to morphine,

the family's addiction to whiskey, the father's miserliness, the older brother's licentiousness, and younger brother's illness.Synopsis-Act I- *Living-room of the Tyrones' summer home, 8:30 am on a day in August, 191*James Tyrone is a 65-year-old actor who had long ago bought a "vehicle" play for himself and had established his reputation based on this one role with which he had toured for years. Although that "vehicle" had served him well financially, he is now resentful that his having become so identified with this character has limited his scope and opportunities as a classical actor. He is a wealthy though somewhat miserly man. His money is all tied up in property which he hangs onto in spite of impending financial hardship. His dress and appearance are showing signs of his strained financial circumstances, but he retains many of the mixed affectations of a classical actor in spite of his shabby attire.His wife Mary has recently returned from treatment for morphine addiction and has put on some much-needed weight as a result. She is looking much healthier than the family has been accustomed to, and they remark frequently on her improved appearance. However, she still retains the haggard facial features of a long-time addict. As a recovering addict, she is restless and anxious. She also suffers from insomnia, which is not made any easier by her husband and children's loud snoring. When Edmund, her younger son, hears her moving around at night and entering the spare bedroom, he becomes alarmed, because this is the room where, in the past, she would satisfy her addiction. He questions her about it indirectly. She reassures him that she just went there to get away from her husband's snoring. In addition to Mary's problems, the family is worried about Edmund's coughing; they fear that he might have tuberculosis, and are anxiously awaiting a doctor's diagnosis. Edmund is more concerned about the effect a positive diagnosis might have on his mother than on himself. The constant possibility that she might relapse worries him still further. Once again, he indirectly speaks to his mother about her addiction. He asks her to "promise not to worry yourself sick and to take care of yourself." "Of course I promise you," she protests, but then adds ('with a sad bitterness'), "But I suppose you're remembering I've promised before on my word of honor."

Act II-*The same, around 12:45 pm; and about a half-hour later*-Jamie and Edmund taunt each other about stealing their father's alcohol and watering it down so he won't notice. They speak about Mary's conduct. Jamie berates Edmund for leaving their mother unsupervised. Edmund berates Jamie for being suspicious. Both, however, are deeply worried that their mother's addiction may have resurfaced. Jamie points out to Edmund that they had concealed their mother's addiction from him for ten years, explaining that his naiveté about the nature of the disease was understandable but deluded. They discuss the upcoming results of Edmund's tests for tuberculosis, and Jamie tells him to prepare for the worst. Mary appears. She is distraught about Edmund's coughing, which he tries to suppress so as not to alarm her, fearing anything that might trigger her addiction again. When Edmund accepts his mother's excuse that she had been upstairs so long because she had been "lying down", Jamie looks at them both contemptuously. Mary notices and starts becoming defensive and belligerent, berating Jamie for his cynicism and disrespect for his parents. Jamie is quick to point out that the only reason he has survived as an actor is through his father's influence in the business. Mary speaks of her frustration with their summer home, its impermanence and shabbiness, and her husband's indifference to his surroundings. With irony, she alludes to her belief that this air of detachment might be the very reason he has tolerated her addiction for so long. This frightens Edmund, who is trying desperately to hang on to his belief in normality while faced with two emotionally horrific problems at once. Finally, unable to tolerate the way Jamie is looking at her, she asks him angrily why he is doing it. "You know!", he shoots back, and tells her to take a look at her glazed eyes in the mirror. Act III-*The same, around 6:30 that evening*-Mary and Cathleen return home from their drive to the drugstore, where Mary has sent Cathleen in to purchase her morphine

prescription. Not wanting to be alone, Mary does not allow Cathleen to go to the kitchen to finish dinner and offers her a drink instead. Mary does most of the talking and discusses her love for fog but her hatred of the foghorn, and her husband's obvious obsession with money. Mary has already taken some of her "prescription". She talks about her past in a Catholic convent and the promise she once had as a pianist and the fact that it was once thought that she might become a nun. She also makes it clear that while she fell in love with her husband from the time she met him, she had never taken to the theatre crowd. She shows her arthritic hands to Cathleen and explains that the pain is why she needs her prescription – an explanation which is untrue and transparent to Cathleen. When Mary dozes off under the influence of the morphine, Cathleen exits to prepare dinner. Mary awakes and begins to have bitter memories about how much she loved her life before she met her husband. She also decides that her prayers as an addict are not being heard by the Virgin and decides to go upstairs to get more drugs, but before she can Edmund and James Sr. return home. Although both men are drunk, they both realize that Mary is back on morphine, although she attempts to act as if she is not. Jamie has not returned home, but has elected instead to continue drinking and to visit the local whorehouse. After calling Jamie a "hopeless failure" Mary warns that his bad influence will drag his brother down as well. After seeing the condition that his wife is in, James expresses the regret that he bothered to come home, and he attempts to ignore her as she continues her remarks, which include blaming him for Jamie's drinking. Then, as often happens in the play, Mary and James try to get over their animosity and attempt to express their love for one another by remembering happier days. When James goes to the basement to get another bottle of whiskey, Mary continues to talk with Edmund. When Edmund reveals that he has consumption, Mary refuses to believe it, and attempts to discredit Dr. Hardy, due to her inability to face the reality and severity of the situation. She accuses Edmund of attempting to get more attention by blowing everything out of proportion. In retaliation, Edmund reminds his mother that her own father died of consumption, and then, before exiting, he adds how difficult it is to have a "dope fiend for a mother." Alone, Mary admits that she needs more morphine and hopes that someday she will "accidentally" overdose, because she knows that if she did so on purpose, the Virgin would never forgive her. When James comes back with more alcohol he notes that there was evidence that Jamie had attempted to pick the locks to the whiskey cabinet in the cellar, as he has done before. Mary ignores this and bursts out that she is afraid that Edmund is going to die. She also confides to James that Edmund does not love her because of her drug problem. When James attempts to console her, Mary again rues having given birth to Edmund, who appears to have been conceived to replace a baby they had lost before Edmund's birth. When Cathleen announces dinner, Mary indicates that she is not hungry and is going to bed. James goes in to dinner all alone, knowing that Mary is really going upstairs to get more drugs.

Act IV-*The same, around midnight*-Edmund returns home to find his father playing solitaire. While the two argue and drink, they also have an intimate, tender conversation. James explains his stinginess, and also reveals that he ruined his career by staying in an acting job for money. After so many years playing the same part, he lost his talent for versatility. Edmund talks to his father about sailing and of his aspiration to become a great writer one day. They hear Jamie coming home drunk, and James leaves to avoid fighting. Jamie and Edmund converse, and Jamie confesses that although he loves Edmund more than anyone else, he wants him to fail. Jamie passes out. When James returns, Jamie wakes up, and they quarrel anew. Mary, lost in her drug-laden dreams of the past, comes downstairs. Holding her wedding gown, she talks about her convent days and how she lost her vocation by falling in love with James, while her husband and sons silently watch her.

Characters

James Tyrone Sr. – 65 years old. He looks ten years younger and is about five feet eight inches tall but appears taller due to his military-like posture and bearing. He is broad-shouldered and deep-chested and remarkably good-looking for his age with light brown eyes. His speech and movement are those of a classical actor with a studied technique, but he is unpretentious and not temperamental at all with "inclinations still close to his humble beginnings and Irish farmer forebears". His attire is somewhat threadbare and shabby. He wears his clothing to the limit of usefulness. He has been a healthy man his entire life and is free of hang ups and anxieties except for fear of "dying in the poorhouse" and obsession with having money. He has "streaks of sentimental melancholy and rare flashes of intuitive sensibility". He smokes cigars and dislikes being referred to as the "Old Man" by his sons.

Mary Cavan Tyrone – 54 years old, the wife and mother of the family who lapses between self-delusion and the haze of her morphine addiction. She is medium height with a young graceful figure, a trifle plump with distinctly Irish facial features. She was once extremely pretty and is still striking. She wears no make-up and her hair is thick, white and perfectly coiffed. She has large, dark, almost black, eyes. She has a soft and attractive voice with a "touch of Irish lilt when she is merry". Mary has been addicted to morphine since the difficult birth of her youngest son Edmund. The doctor who treated her simply gave her painkillers, which led to a longtime morphine addiction that continues to plague her. James "Jamie" Jr. – 33 years old, the older son. He has thinning hair, an aquiline nose and shows signs of premature disintegration. He has a habitual expression of cynicism. He resembles his father. "On the rare occasions when he smiles without sneering, his personality possesses the remnant of a humorous, romantic, irresponsible Irish charm – the beguiling ne'er-do-well, with a strain of the sentimentally poetic". He is attractive to women and popular with men. He is an actor like his father but has difficulty finding work due to a reputation for being an irresponsible, womanizing alcoholic. He and his father argue a great deal about this. Jamie often refers to his father as "Old Gaspard", a character from the opera *Les cloches de Corneville*, who is also a miser.

Edmund – 23 years old, the younger and more intellectually and poetically inclined son. He is thin and wiry. He looks like both his parents but more like his mother. He has her big dark eyes and hypersensitive mouth in a long narrow Irish face with dark brown hair and red highlights from the sun. Like his mother, he is extremely nervous. He is in bad health and his cheeks are sunken. Later he is diagnosed with tuberculosis. He is politically inclined to have socialist leanings. He traveled the world by working in the merchant navy and caught tuberculosis while abroad.

Cathleen – "The second girl", she is the summer maid. She is a "buxom Irish peasant", in her early twenties with red cheeks, black hair and blue eyes. She is "amiable, ignorant, clumsy with a well-meaning stupidity".

Several characters are referenced in the play but do not appear on stage:

Eugene Tyrone – A son born before Edmund who died of measles at the age of two. He was infected by Jamie who was seven at the time and had been told not to enter his room but disobeyed. Mary believes that Jamie had the intent of hurting Eugene.

Bridget – A cook.

McGuire – A real estate agent who has swindled James Tyrone in the past.

Shaughnessy – A tenant on a farm owned by the Tyrones.

Harker – A friend of James Tyrone, "the Standard Oil millionaire", owns a neighboring farm to Shaughnessy with whom he gets into conflicts, often postulated to be based on Edward Harkness, Standard Oil heir, who had a summer home nearby in Waterford, Connecticut.

Doctor Hardy – The Tyrones' physician at the insistence of James, though the other family members don't think much of him and suspect he is only their doctor because he is cheap.

Captain Turner – The Tyrones' neighbor.

Smythe – A garage assistant whom James hired as a chauffeur for Mary. Mary suspects he is intentionally damaging the car to provide work for the garage.

The mistress – A woman with whom James had had an affair before his marriage, who had later sued him causing Mary to be shunned by her friends as someone with undesirable social connections.

Mary's father – Died of tuberculosis.

James's parents and siblings – The family immigrated to the United States when James was 8 years old. His father abandoned the family two years later and returned to Ireland, where he died after ingesting rat poison. It was suspected suicide but James refuses to believe that. He had two older brothers and three sisters.

History of the play

O'Neill finished revising the manuscript into its final version in March 1941. He did not want it ever produced as a play, and did not even want it published during his lifetime, writing to his friend, the critic George Jean Nathan: "There are good reasons in the play itself... why I'm keeping this one very much to myself, as you will appreciate when you read it.

O'Neill did not copyright the play. In 1945 he had a sealed copy of the manuscript placed in the document vault of publisher Random House, instructing that it not be published until 25 years after his death. He sent a second sealed copy to the O'Neill collection at Yale University.

Soon after O'Neill's death, his widow Carlotta Monterey demanded that Random House contravene O'Neill's explicit wishes and publish the play at once. "We refused, of course," wrote publisher Bennett Cerf in his memoirs, "but then were horrified to learn that legally all the cards were in her hand. … I do not regret that we took the stand we did, because I still think we were right." Monterey had the play published by the Yale University Press in 1956, with the bulk of the proceeds deeded to Yale's Eugene O'Neill Collection and for scholarships at its drama school.

Autobiographical content

In key aspects, the play closely parallels Eugene O'Neill's own life. The location, a summer home in Connecticut, corresponds to the family home, Monte Cristo Cottage, in New London, Connecticut (the

small town of the play). The actual cottage, today owned and operated by the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, is made up as it may appear in the play. The family in the script corresponds to the O'Neill family, which was Irish-American, with three name changes: The family name "O'Neill" is changed to "Tyrone," which is the name of the earldom granted to Conn O'Neill by Henry VIII. The names of the second and third sons are reversed, "Eugene" with "Edmund". In fact, Eugene, the playwright, was the third and the youngest child, and he corresponds to the character of "Edmund" in the play. O'Neill's mother, Mary Ellen "Ella" Quinlan, corresponds to the character Mary *Cavan.* The ages are all the actual ages of the O'Neill family in August 1912.Eugene O'Neill's father, James O'Neill, was a promising young actor in his youth, as was the father in the play. He also shared the stage with Edwin Booth, who is mentioned in the play. James O'Neill achieved commercial success in the title role of Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, playing the title role about 6,000 times; he was criticized for "selling out" for commercial success at the expense of artistic merit.Eugene's mother Mary did attend a Catholic school in the Midwest, Saint Mary's College, of Notre Dame, Indiana. Subsequent to the date when the play is set (1912), but prior to the play's writing (1941–42), Eugene's older brother Jamie did drink himself to death (c. 1923). Regarding O'Neill himself, by 1912 he had attended a renowned university (Princeton), spent several years at sea, and suffered from depression and alcoholism, and did contribute to the local news Paper the *New London Telegraph,* writing poetry as well as reporting. He did go to a sanatorium in 1912–13 due to suffering from tuberculosis (consumption), whereupon he devoted himself to playwriting. The events in the play are thus set immediately prior to O'Neill beginning his career in earnest.

UNIT-IV- SHORT STORIES

1) Washington Irving's RIP VAN WINKLE

A Summary and Analysis of Washington Irving's 'Rip Van Winkle'

First published in 1819, 'Rip Van Winkle' is one of the most famous pieces of writing by Washington Irving, whose contribution to American literature was considerable. 'Rip Van Winkle' has become a byword for the idea of falling asleep and waking up to find the familiar world around us has changed. But what is less well-known, especially outside of America perhaps, is the specific detail of this most iconic of American stories. Before we offer some words of analysis, it might be worth summarising the plot of the tale.

'Rip Van Winkle': summary

In a village near the Catskill Mountains in New York lives a man named Rip Van Winkle – a kind neighbour and henpecked husband. He is dutiful and quick to help his friends and neighbours, and is well liked. In addition to his 'termagant' or fierce wife, he has children, including a son, also named Rip, who bears a strong resemblance to his father.Rip Van Winkle also has a dog, Wolf, who is also put upon by 'Dame Van Winkle', Rip's wife. Rip's farm is a constant source of trouble for him, and the only pleasure he derives is from his regular meetings with other men of the village, who meet outside the local pub, named after King George the Third of Great Britain, to discuss village gossip and other topics.One day, Rip Van Winkle goes for a walk up the Catskill Mountains, with his dog Wolf for company. As he is about to descend, he hears someone shouting his name. A strange, short man with a grey beard appears, wearing antique Dutch clothes. He beckons Rip to follow him, and they arrive at a woodland amphitheatre where strange people are playing ninepins. They are also dressed in old clothes. The man

who has led Rip here has a keg of alcoholic drink, which he shares with these figures. Rip tries the drink, and takes such a shining to it that he ends up drinking too much of it, and he sinks into a deep sleep. When he wakes up, all of the strange figures have gone, including the man with the keg of liquor. Rip's dog has also gone. The gun he'd taken with him up the mountain has gone, and a rusted gun is there next to him instead.As he walks home, Rip realises his beard has grown a foot long. When he arrives back in his village, he meets people he doesn't know, and who don't know him. All of the shops and houses look different. When he goes into his home it's to find that it's rundown and deserted. Going out into the street, he finds that the pub he used to meet with friends outside has changed from the King George the Third to the General Washington.Rip speaks with the villagers and asks if any of them know two of his oldest friends, whom he names. They tell him that those two friends have died. Rip asks them if anyone knows a man named Rip Van Winkle. They point to a man who looks just like Rip: his son, now grown up and resembling his father.Rip's daughter, also grown up, appears with a baby. Rip asks her who her father was. She replies that his name was Rip Van Winkle, but that he disappeared twenty years ago after he went for a walk in the mountains. They feared he'd been captured by Native Americans, or had shot himself. It turns out that RipVan Winkle thought he'd slept for one night, but he had in fact been asleep for twenty years.

Rip asks his daughter what happened to her mother (Rip's wife). Upon learning that she has died, Rip is relieved, so henpecked was he! At this point, Old Peter Vanderdonk, a descendant of a great historian, appears and corroborates Rip's story: he says that his ancestor told of Hendrick Hudson, the great explorer who helped to found North America and after whom the Hudson River was named, keeping a vigil in the Catskill Mountains every twenty years with his crew. Rip's visit to the mountains just happened to coincide with one of these vigils.

Rip settles down to watch his grandchild grow, and his son tends to the farm while Rip Senior enjoys his retirement. He eventually reacquaints himself with his remaining friends in the village, who take up their regular meets outside the pub, and Rip Van Winkle becomes revered as a village elder and patriarch who remembers what the village was like before the American Revolutionary War.

'Rip Van Winkle': analysis

'Rip Van Winkle' is perhaps the most famous homegrown American fairy tale. It has supernatural elements, the idea of an enchanted wood, and focuses on simple village life, such as we find in many classic European fairy stories. But the mention of the pub's name – shifting from King George the Third to General Washington – reveals that this is a specifically and unmistakably *American* tale.

'Rip Van Winkle', like many other stories which attain the status of modern myths or archetypes – ***Jekyll and Hyde*** and ***Frankenstein*** are two other famous examples – has become more famous as an idea than a tale, at least outside of the United States.

The story's time setting is central: Rip Van Winkle goes to sleep before 1776 when the American colonies are still ruled by the British, and wakes up after the American War of Independence, which has succeeded in shaking off the British yoke and creating the independent nation of the United States of America.

Curiously, Washington Irving wrote 'Rip Van Winkle' in, of all places, Birmingham – Birmingham, England, that is, rather than Birmingham, Alabama. What's more, Irving had never been to the Catskill Mountains which are so central to the story's plot and atmosphere when he wrote the tale!

Nor was the central idea of the story – a man falling asleep for many years and waking up to find the

word around him substantially changed – entirely new. Indeed, it was an ancient idea: the Greek historian

Diogenes Laërtius, writing some 1,500 years before Irving, tells a similar story concerning Epimenides of Knossos, who fell asleep in a cave for fifty-seven years. The Christian myth of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, who fell asleep for two centuries to escape persecution, is another important precursor to 'Rip Van Winkle'.

But the clearest influence was Johann Karl Christoph Nachtigal's German folktale 'Peter Klaus'. Like Irving's story, it features a man from a simple village who discovers some strange men drinking in the woods; like Irving's story, the hero falls asleep after partaking of their drink, and, like Irving's story, he wakes up to find twenty years have passed. Why did Irving recycle this old plot device for his story about the American Revolution? And how should we interpret the story?

One interpretation is that Irving, through this light-hearted tale, is actually trying to downplay the American Revolution. Rip Van Winkle manages to sleep right through it, which is quite a feat when you think about what a noise there must have been. When he gets back to his village, although several of his friends have died – one presumably in the war itself – the others have survived, and he soon goes back to sitting and gossiping with them outside of the pub where they used to chatter together. The name of the pub may have changed – to represent the shift from one George to another, from King George to George Washington – but life for these simple villagers is largely the same as it was before. Rip's son is his 'ditto', or spitting image: the next generation is much the same as the last. The humor of the story – chiefly in Rip Van Winkle being a henpecked husband – also supports this analysis of the story. If Dame Van Winkle is like Old Mother England, lording it over Rip (representing the American colonies), then her death is a blessed release for Rip, but nothing more momentous than that. He is relieved rather than anything more dramatic.

Rip Van Winkle and Other Stories Summary and Analysis of "Rip Van Winkle"

The story of Rip Van Winkle was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman from New York who was especially interested in the histories, customs, and culture of the Dutch settlers in that state. It is set in a small, very old village at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, which was founded by some of the earliest Dutch settlers. Rip lived there while America was still a colony of Great Britain.

Rip Van Winkle is descended from gallant soldiers but is a peaceful man himself, known for being a kind and gentle neighbor. His single flaw is an utter inability to do any work that could turn a profit. It is not because he is lazy—in fact, he is perfectly willing to spend all day helping someone else with their labor. He is just incapable of doing anything to help his own household. He also is well-known for being an obedient, henpecked husband, for Dame Van Winkle has no problem shouting insults into the neighborhood and tracking him down in the village to berate him. All the women and children in the village love him and side with him against his wife, and even the dogs do not bark at him.

Indeed, when he tries to console himself and escape from Dame Van Winkle, he often goes to a sort of philosophical or political club that meets on a bench outside of a small inn. Here the more idle men actually gossip and tell sleepy stories about nothing, every once in a while discussing "current" events when they find an old newspaper. Nicholaus Vedder is the landlord of the inn and the leader of the group. He never speaks but makes his opinions clear based on how he smokes his pipe. Even here, Van Winkle cannot escape from his wife, who berates everyone for encouraging his idleness.

His indolence is probably to be blamed for his farm's bad luck, so Dame Van Winkle has more than a little cause to berate him—which she does, morning, noon, and night. As the years pass, things continue

To get worse, and his only recourse is to escape to the outdoors. His one companion in the household is his

dog Wolf, who for no good reason is just as badly treated by the petticoat tyrant Dame Van Winkle.

On one trip to the woods, Van Winkle wanders to one of the highest points in the Catskills. Fatigued from the climb, he rests, and soon the sun has started to set. He knows he will not be able to get home before dark. As he gets up, he hears a voice call his name. A shadowy figure seems to be in need of assistance, so he approaches the man, who looks very strange. He is short and square, with thick bushy hair and a grizzled beard, dressed in the antique Dutch fashion. He asks Van Winkle for help climbing higher with a keg. They reach an amphitheatre in the woods, where a collection of similarly odd-looking men are bowling, which makes the environs sound like it is thundering. Although they are involved in pleasurable pursuits, they are silent and grim. The man starts to serve drinks from the keg and gestures to Van Winkle to help. He eventually takes a drink for himself. It tastes delicious, and he goes back for more and more until he is quite drunk and lies down to pass out. When he wakes up in the morning, he is anxious about what Dame Van Winkle will say about his late return. He reaches for his gun but finds that it is now rusty and worm-eaten—perhaps the men tricked him and replaced his gun. Wolf also is gone and does not respond to Van Winkle's calls. He gets up and feels quite stiff. When he tries to retrace his steps, the amphitheatre appears to have become an impenetrable wall of rock, and some of the natural features of the area have changed. Van Winkle returns to the village but recognizes nobody, which is strange for a small village, and he notices that everyone is strangely dressed. They look surprised to see him, too, and he realizes that his beard has grown a foot longer. The children hoot at him and the dogs bark. The village itself has grown larger. He begins to think he must be going crazy, for the natural scenery is the only thing that is recognizable. The flagon must have made him lose his mind. At his house, he finds it in complete disrepair and abandoned. His wife and children are not there. The inn where he used to meet his friends has disappeared, and where there used to be a picture of George III there is now one of a certain George Washington. The new group of people at the new hotel there is full of completely different people, and their discussions are more argumentative than he remembers. The crowd asks him questions, especially about what political party he belongs to. He is confused and says he is still a loyal subject of the king. They declare him a traitor and a Tory. When he says he has just come looking for his friends, they tell him that Nicholaus Vedder has been dead for eighteen years and Van Bummel is now in Congress.

Rip Van Winkle becomes still more distressed and confused when he asks if they know Rip Van Winkle and the townspeople point out a different lazy-looking man. He begins to think he is crazy. A familiar woman approaches, and he finds out enough to decide that she is his daughter. She explains that her father went out with his gun one day twenty years ago and was never heard from since. Rip Van Winkle tells everyone that for him it has only been one night, which makes them think he is crazy, too. The one piece of good news is that Dame Van Winkle recently passed away. Peter Vanderdonk, the town's oldest inhabitant, vouches for Rip Van Winkle and says that he has heard tales passed down about the ghosts of Hendrick Hudson and his men appearing once every twenty years; they bowl and keep a guardian eye on the region that Hudson explored. The tale seems to fit with Rip's experience. Rip goes to live with his daughter, who is married to a cheerful farmer. He lives much happier than he ever was with Dame Van Winkle. Also, he is now old enough for his idleness to be socially acceptable, and he returns to the hotel and is again well-loved in the village. He eventually learns about the Revolutionary War and everything else that has passed, but the only yoke of government that he cares about having thrown off is that of Dame Van Winkle. Knickerbocker closes the story with an impassioned declaration of its veracity on personal examination. He also gives a brief history of the magic and fables associated with the Catskills,

suggesting that even the Indians tell of similar experiences in the area in their own stories and myths.

Analysis

"Rip Van Winkle" is one of the most famous stories of *The Sketchbook of* Geoffrey Crayon. It is one of the few that take place in America, although it is believed to be a retelling of an Old World folktale. The setting of the tale, in the Catskills by the Hudson, gives the story a fairly precise location that grounds it in America. The passages that begin and end the story frame it to separate it from the other sketches. Here our narrator is no longer Crayon but Diedrich Knickerbocker, who is quite adamant in vouching for the authenticity of the tale, which serves not to satisfy the reader but instead to make the reliability of the tale and its narrator even more ambiguous. This distance of Crayon from the tale touches on the theme of veracity in storytelling and its importance.

The story itself is an escapist fantasy; Rip Van Winkle is an ineffectual male hero who cannot support his farm or family. Instead of facing the consequences of his idleness and facing his wife, who certainly makes the problem worse instead of better, he sleeps for twenty years. Finally, he is of such an age that his idleness is excusable and allowed. This makes him an antithesis to the American dream. He has no ambition, he does not work hard for himself, and he does not rise above where he began. He just likes to chat and have friends. He also sleeps through what was the defining moment of American history, and upon waking, he does not even care. This develops him as the American anti-hero, for he takes no part in the country's founding or history. His story makes sense as more of an Old World story, one that the Dutch settlers, in their relatively old village, can retell. The story also shows that great historical events are often less important than the daily happenings in an individual's life. The only oppressor Rip Van Winkle cares about having overcome is his wife. Dame Van Winkle is certainly the antagonist in this story. She is constantly berating Rip Van Winkle, whom everyone else in the neighborhood adores. She is a completely flat character—we only ever see her worst side, except for the one comment made after she has died that she always kept the house in good order. Her criticism of her husband, if far too strong, is nevertheless deserved. He has completely failed in his role as husband, father, and breadwinner, leaving his family in near ruin. The husband is an extreme form of deadbeat and the wife an extreme form of nagging and henpecking, a state of affairs which appears to be a lesson and warning for Irving's male and female readers alike. The husbands should learn to be more industrious and attentive, and the wives should learn to be less antagonistic and more understanding lest they drive their husbands further away. Rip's night in the woods symbolizes the fantasy of escape through one's imagination, which is in itself a form of storytelling. Once he is freed of his duties to his family, he becomes the town storyteller, and it is this story which has freed him from his domestic duties—he literally and figuratively dreamed them away. In this way the imagination, or one's creative life, is presented as a way to deal with the less pleasing duties of everyday life. At the same time, it is not without its dangers. Although Van Winkle finds a happy ending, he is very close to being labeled insane or dangerous and being thrust out of the town.

2) NATHANIEL HAWTHORN'S YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

Goodman Brown says goodbye to his wife, Faith, outside of his house in Salem Village. Faith, wearing pink ribbons in her cap, asks him to stay with her, saying that she feels scared when she is by herself and free to think troubling thoughts. Goodman Brown tells her that he must travel for one night only and reminds her to say her prayers and go to bed early. He reassures her that if she does this, she will come to no harm. Goodman Brown takes final leave of Faith, thinking to himself that she might have guessed the

evil purpose of his trip and promising to be a better person after this one night. Goodman Brown sets off on a road through a gloomy forest. He looks around, afraid of what might be behind each tree, thinking that there might be Indians or the devil himself lurking there. He soon comes upon a man in the road who greets Goodman Brown as though he had been expecting him. The man is dressed in regular clothing and looks normal except for a walking stick he carries. This walking stick features a carved serpent, which is so lifelike it seems to move. The man offers Goodman Brown the staff, saying that it might help him walk faster, but Goodman Brown refuses. He says that he showed up for their meeting because he promised to do so but does not wish to touch the staff and wants to return to the village. Goodman Brown tells the man that his family members have been Christians and good people for generations and that he feels ashamed to associate with him. The man replies that he knew Goodman Brown's father and grandfather, as well as other members of churches in New England, and even the governor of the state. The man's words confuse Goodman Brown, who says that even if this is so, he wants to return to the village for Faith's sake. At that moment, the two come upon an old woman hobbling through the woods, and Goodman Brown recognizes Goody Cloyse, who he knows to be a pious, respected woman from the village. He hides, embarrassed to be seen with the man, and the man taps Goody Cloyse on the shoulder. She identifies him as the devil and reveals herself to be a witch, on her way to the devil's evil forest ceremony. Despite this revelation, Goodman Brown tells the man that he still intends to turn back, for Faith's sake. The man says that Goodman Brown should rest. Before disappearing, he gives Goodman Brown his staff, telling him that he can use it for transport to the ceremony if he changes his mind. As he sits and gathers himself, Goodman Brown hears horses traveling along the road and hides once again. Soon he hears the voices of the minister of the church and Deacon Gookin, who are also apparently on their way to the ceremony. Shocked, Goodman Brown swears that even though everyone else in the world has gone to the devil, for Faith's sake he will stay true to God. However, he soon hears voices coming from the ceremony and thinks he recognizes Faith's voice. He screams her name, and a pink ribbon from her cap flutters down from the sky. Certain that there is no good in the world because Faith has turned to evil, Goodman Brown grabs the staff, which pulls him quickly through the forest toward the ceremony. When he reaches the clearing where the ceremony is taking place, the trees around it are on fire, and he can see in the firelight the faces of various respected members of the community, along with more disreputable men and women and Indian priests. But he doesn't see Faith, and he starts to hope once again that she might not be there. A figure appears on a rock and tells the congregation to present the converts. Goodman Brown thinks he sees his father beckoning him forward and his mother trying to hold him back. Before he can rethink his decision, the minister and Deacon Gookin drag him forward. Goody Cloyse and Martha Carrier bring forth another person, robed and covered so that her identity is unknown. After telling the two that they have made a decision that will reveal all the wickedness of the world to them, the figure tells them to show themselves to each other. Goodman Brown sees that the other convert is Faith. Goodman Brown tells Faith to look up to heaven and resist the devil, then suddenly finds himself alone in the forest. The next morning Goodman Brown returns to Salem Village, and every person he passes seems evil to him. He sees the minister, who blesses him, and hears Deacon Gookin praying, but he refuses to accept the blessing and calls Deacon Gookin a wizard. He sees Goody Cloyse quizzing a young girl on Bible verses and snatches the girl away. Finally, he sees Faith at his own house and refuses to greet her. It's unclear whether the encounter in the forest was a dream, but for the rest of his life, Goodman Brown is changed. He doesn't trust anyone in his village, can't believe the words of the minister, and doesn't fully love his wife. He lives the remainder of his life in gloom and fear.

Goodman Brown shows both innocence and corruptibility as he vacillates between believing in the inherent goodness of the people around him and believing that the devil has taken over the minds of all

the people he loves. At the beginning of the story, Goodman Brown believes in the goodness of his father and grandfather, until the old man, likely the devil, tells him that he knew them both. Goodman Brown believes in the Christian nature of Goody Cloyse, the minister, and Deacon Gookin, until the devil shows him that Goody Cloyse is a witch and the other two are his followers. Finally, he believes that Faith is pure and good, until the devil reveals at the ceremony that Faith, too, is corruptible. This vacillation reveals Goodman Brown's lack of true religion—his belief is easy to shake—as well as of the good and evil sides of human nature. Through Goodman Brown's awakening to the evil nature of those around him, Hawthorne comments on what he sees as the hidden corruption of Puritan society. Goodman Brown believes in the public professions of faith made by his father and the elders of his church and in the societal structures that are built upon that faith. Hawthorne suggests, however, that behind the public face of godliness, the Puritans' actions were not always Christian. The devil in the story says that he was present when Brown's father and grandfather whipped Quakers and set fire to Indian villages, making it clear that the story of the founding of New England has a dark side that religion fails to explain. The very fact that Goodman Brown is willing to visit the forest when he has an idea of what will happen there is an indication of the corruptibility and evil at the heart of even the most faithful Puritan. Faith represents the stability of the home and the domestic sphere in the Puritan worldview. Faith, as her name suggests, appears to be the most pure-hearted person in the story and serves as a stand-in of sorts for all religious feeling. Goodman Brown clings to her when he questions the goodness of the people around him, assuring himself that if Faith remains godly, then his own faith is worth fighting temptation to maintain. When he sees that Faith has been corrupted, he believes in the absolute evil at the heart of man. His estrangement from Faith at the end of the story is the worst consequence of his change of heart. If he is able to be suspicious of Faith, Hawthorne suggests, then he has truly become estranged from the goodness of God.

3) WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *THAT EVENING SUN*
That Evening Sun" is a short story by the American author William Faulkner, published in 1931 on the collection These 13, which included Faulkner's most anthologized story, "A Rose for Emily". The story was originally published, in a slightly different form, as "That Evening Sun Go Down" in The American Mercury in March of the same year. "That Evening Sun" is a dark portrait of white Southerners' indifference to the crippling fears of one of their black employees, Nancy. The story is narrated by Quentin Compson, one of Faulkner's most memorable characters, and concerns the reactions of him and his two siblings, Caddy and Jason, to an adult world that they do not fully understand. The black washerwoman, Nancy Mannigoe, fears that her common-law husband Jesus is seeking to murder her because she is pregnant with a white man's child.

Plot summary

Quentin narrates the story in the turn of the century, presumably at age twenty-four (although in The Sound and the Fury he commits suicide at age nineteen), telling of events that took place fifteen years before. Nancy is an African-American washerwoman working for Quentin's family since their regular cook, Dilsey, is taken sick. Jesus, Nancy's common-law husband, suspects that she is pregnant with a

white man's child and leaves her. At first Nancy is only worried about going home at night and running into Jesus, but later she is paralyzed with the fear that he will kill her, having delusions of him being hidden in a ditch outside her house.

Quentin and his siblings witness all of this, given that they are present for every major conversation between their father and Nancy. Mr. Compson tries to help her up to a certain extent, first by taking her home at night despite the fact that Mrs. Compson feels jealous and insecure that her husband is more worried about protecting some "Negro woman" than herself. He puts her up one night at Quentin and Caddy's room when she is too afraid to stay alone in the kitchen. The kids, however, have no idea of what's going on, and cannot understand Nancy's fear.

As the narrative progresses, Nancy becomes crippled by her fear. One night she feels so impotent that she talks the kids into going home with her. There, she is not able to attend to them, tell them proper stories or even make them some popcorn. Jason, the youngest, starts to cry. Their father arrives and tries to talk some sense into Nancy, who fears Jesus will come out of the darkness of the ditch outside as soon as they go away. The story ends as the father walks the children back—not the least bit affected by Nancy's situation, the kids still teasing each other and the father scolding them.

It is left ambiguous as to whether Nancy survives the night. However, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Benjy refers to Nancy's bones lying in the ditch, although she was "shot by Roskus" and it is implied that Nancy is the name of a horse.

The title

The title is thought to be taken from the song Saint Louis Blues, originally composed by W.C. Handy, but popularized by Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong in 1927. It begins with the line: "Lordy, how I hate to see that evening sun go down". The title implies that once the sun sets, death is sure to follow.

Faulkner first came across Handy's music when the latter played dances in Oxford, Mississippi. Though the song is never explicitly referenced in the text, Faulkner employs a number of blues tropes to structure the plot and develop racial stereotypes. Scholar Ken Bennett notes that "the image of the 'evening sun' is a common one in black religious music. For example, the spiritual *It's Gettin' Late Over in the Evenin', the Sun Most Down,* based on Revelation 20, uses the image of the evening sun to suggest the coming of death and judgment."

Variation

In manuscript form, the story was written from Nancy's perspective and titled "Never Done No Weeping When You Wanted to Laugh."

This story appears as "That Evening Sun Go Down" in *The Best American Short Stories of the Century* by John Updike, Katrina Kenison. In this version of the story, Nancy's husband is called "Jubah", not Jesus, although a frightened Nancy whispers the word "Jesus" three times in Part II when Caddy is interrogating her. The substitution of Jubah for Jesus likely was made for censorship reasons. In the original magazine publication of the story, his name was rendered as "Jubah."

J.D. Salinger, in his 1964 essay "A Salute to Whit Burnett" (the editor of Story Magazine, Burnett was Salinger's mentor whose class in short story writing at Columbia University he attended in 1939 and who was the first professional to publish one of his stories), said that it was Burnett's use of "That

Evening Sun Gone Down" in the class that taught him the importance of the author's relationship with his "silent reader".

Nancy's bones appear in *The Sound and the Fury*, but she is resurrected entirely as a Nun in Requiem for a Nun. Faulkner responded to a question about the story and the novel in Charlottesville by saying Nancy was “the same person, actually” in both texts, though he qualified his comment by adding, “These people I figure belong to me and I have the right to move them about in time when I need them” (FU79). To what extent and in what ways we ought to read Nancy, Quentin, and the others as “the same” from appearance to appearance thus remain issues open for debate.

References

1. *Faulkner, William. "That Evening Sun Go Down, by William Faulkner*
2. The opening of "That Evening Sun" emphasizes the differences between the past and the present, much like the opening section of "A Rose for Emily." Quentin is 24 years old, and laundry is now delivered in automobiles. There are electric line poles and paved streets; even the black women who still take in laundry have their husbands pick it up and deliver it in cars. But 15 years earlier, the streets would have been filled with black women carrying bundles of clothes balanced on their heads. Nancy was one of the women whom the Compson children liked to watch carry laundry on her head because she could balance her bundle while crawling through fences or walking down in ditches and then up out of them. Sometimes, the husbands of the washing women would fetch and deliver the clothes for their wives, but Jesus, Nancy's husband, would never stoop to this servitude for her.
3. The emphasis on washing both in the first and last sections unifies the story. The opening paragraphs describe the children's interest in Nancy as a washerwoman; the story ends with Quentin's accepting Nancy's death and wondering, "Who will do our washing now, Father?" Likewise, the opening emphasizes how Jesus is different from other husbands; at the end, he is likely outside Nancy's shack, waiting to kill her.
4. This first section provides much background information. When Dilsey, the Compsons' cook, is sick, Nancy has to cook for the family, and the children, always thinking that she is drunk, have to go to her cabin to wake her. However, when Nancy is arrested, the children come to believe that her problem isn't alcohol, but drugs. On the way to jail, Nancy passes Mr. Stovall, a deacon in the Baptist church, and she begins to plead with the white man: "When you going to pay me, white man? It's been three times now since you paid me a cent — " The Baptist deacon knocks her down and kicks out several of her teeth, and Nancy is taken to jail. There, she tries to hang herself by removing her dress and using it as a noose. The jailer reports that it is not whiskey that is the cause of Nancy's problems; rather, it is cocaine, because "no nigger would try to commit suicide unless he was full of cocaine, because a nigger full of cocaine wasn't a nigger any longer."
5. Several of Nancy's teeth are kicked out because of a Southern racial distinction that allows a white Baptist deacon, such as Mr. Stovall, to use Nancy as a sexual object, regardless of whether he pays her or not. But a black man could be hanged immediately if he even spoke familiarly with a white woman. Mr. Stovall, of course, knows that he will not be punished for striking Nancy. At the time the story takes place, a white man could harm a black person without the least fear of recrimination.
6. This episode also highlights the theme of small-town mentality. Quentin reports the encounter between Nancy and Mr. Stovall, but he himself didn't witness it. Instead, he knows about the incident because it soon becomes the talk of the town: "That was how she lost her teeth, and all that day they told about Nancy and Mr. Stovall, and all that night the ones that passed the jail

could hear Nancy singing and yelling." In a small town, this event would provide a great deal of gossipy enjoyment.

7. Pregnant likely with a white man's child, Nancy attempts suicide; the jailer finds her "hanging from the window, stark naked, her belly already swelling out a little, like a little balloon." This suggestion of her being pregnant leads Quentin to recall a conversation between Nancy and Jesus. He and his siblings overheard them talking about Nancy's swelling under her apron, and Jesus said that it was a "watermelon." When Nancy retorted, "It never come off your vine, though," Jesus responded, with a hint of future violence, "I can cut down the vine it did come off of." Quentin merely reports these sexually charged innuendoes, including his sister Caddy's questioning the two adults about their statements. Again, we have a double vision: The adults discuss a subject that belongs to the adult world, and the young listeners misunderstand the sexual nature of that discussion.
8. So far, Faulkner has presented only background information. At this point, the main plot, narrated by 9-year-old Quentin, begins with his announcing that Nancy has finished washing the supper dishes, but that she remains sitting in the kitchen. After speaking to Nancy, Mr. Compson tells his wife that he is going to escort Nancy home because she fears that Jesus is back in town. She is afraid that he will kill her for being pregnant with someone else's child, especially a white man's. Mrs. Compson accuses her husband of being more concerned with Nancy's safety than with her own. Her objection is a ridiculous complaint: In the Southern culture in which she lives, no black person, not even the feared Jesus, would break into the Compson mansion or threaten Mrs. Compson.
9. The children quickly decide to go with Nancy and their father. Nancy explains that Jesus was always good to her, but now nobody can protect her from his wrath. Listening to Mr. Compson tell her that this would never have happened if she had "let white men alone," Nancy is adamant that Jesus is close by. She can feel him, and she knows that she will see him only one more time, immediately before he cuts her throat with a razor. Mr. Compson tries to assure her that Jesus is most likely in St. Louis with another woman by now, to which she responds that if she ever finds out that Jesus is cheating on her, she will cut off his head and slit the woman's belly. Her response is ironic given that this murderous violence is exactly what Nancy fears from Jesus.
10. However, we should be aware that, essentially, Nancy is not blaming Jesus for wanting to kill her. Because she would decapitate Jesus for fooling around, she knows that Jesus is justified in using a razor on her for cheating on him. Nevertheless, she fears having her throat cut, all alone, in the darkening night.
11. The children are ignorant of and unconcerned about Nancy's mounting anxieties. Walking to her cabin, they prattle constantly about which one of them is more scared. Caddy begins to tease Jason that he is a "scairy cat," which he fervently denies. By teasing each other, the children are clearly unaware of the abject terror that Nancy is feeling. None of them — particularly the inquisitive Caddy — understands the crux of Nancy and Mr. Compson's conversation. For example, when Mr. Compson tells Nancy that Jesus would not be upset if only Nancy had "let white men alone," Caddy immediately wants to know, "Let what white men alone?. . . How let them alone?" Later, when Nancy threatens to slit the belly of whichever woman Jesus is with, Caddy again wants to know, "Slit whose belly, Nancy?" Although Quentin never joins in the teasing between Caddy and Jason, his narrating their childish play without commenting on how inappropriate it is, given Nancy's predicament, suggests that even Quentin sees nothing wrong with his siblings' banter. He is a child relating what he sees and hears.
12. Nancy does not feel in control of her own fate. She constantly reiterates, "I aint nothing but a nigger. . . . It aint none of my fault." This response is not surprising when we consider that the Southern aristocratic society castigated blacks as worthless. Nancy has internalized this condemnation to so great an extent that she believes her life is without value.

Quentin Compson, reminisces about his hometown of Jefferson, Mississippi, which has changed a great deal since he was a child. The town has been modernized, with paved streets, telephone poles, and a city laundry; "even the Negro women" now have cars, which they use when they are doing the laundry for the white families in town.

Fifteen years earlier, when Quentin is still a child, he and his siblings enjoy watching their black servant, Nancy, carry the bundle of laundry on her head from their house down to her own cabin in Negro Hollow. Sometimes the servant women's husbands come and collect the laundry for them, but Jesus, Nancy's husband, never does. The Compson family's regular servant, Dilsey, is sick, and as such Nancy has been working in her stead. Quentin describes an incident in which Nancy—who has also turned to prostitution—is arrested after loudly demanding payment from Mr. Stovall, a white man who works at the bank and is a respected member of the local church. Mr. Stovall kicks Nancy to silence her, knocking out her teeth. She is put in jail, where she sings and protests all day before trying to hang herself from the window bars with her dress. When the jailor finds her, he remarks that her belly is swollen "like a little balloon," suggesting that Nancy is pregnant. Later, Quentin, his sister Caddy, and his younger brother Jason also notice Nancy's swollen belly while she is cooking for them. Jesus is in the kitchen with them and tells the children that Nancy has a watermelon under her dress. When Nancy says it hasn't "come off" Jesus's "vine," Jesus responds that he can easily "cut down the vine" that it did come from, much to the children's confusion. Nancy continues to cook for the Compsons even though, after this incident, Mr. Compson tells Jesus to stay away from the house. Although everyone in the community thinks Jesus has left town, Nancy becomes afraid to walk home by herself because she thinks Jesus is back and looking for her. Mr. Compson agrees to walk Nancy home and take the children with him even though Mrs. Compson disapproves. As the group walks Nancy down a dark lane, Nancy tells Mr. Compson that she thinks that Jesus is waiting in the ditch outside her house with a razor and that he is going to kill her. The Compsons walk Nancy home every night for a period until Mrs. Compson becomes frustrated. One night they let Nancy sleep over in their kitchen, but she wakes everyone by making a strange noise that both is and is not like singing. Mr. Compson finds no one outside the house but nevertheless lets Nancy sleep in the children's bedroom. Quentin is haunted by the image of her frightened eyes. Dilsey gets better, but Nancy still comes to the kitchen in the evenings to talk about Jesus. Dilsey says that Nancy can stay with her, but Nancy says that "no nigger" will be able to stop Jesus and, instead, begs the Compson children to ask their parents if she can stay in their room again. Mrs. Compson refuses, and Mr. Compson tells Nancy to "go home and lock her door." Nancy persuades the children to walk home with her, telling them that they will have fun. When they arrive at Nancy's house, however, the children do not like the smell and are nervous about the fact that their parents do not know where they are. Jason begins to cry, and Nancy tries to placate the children by telling them stories and making popcorn. Eventually they hear footsteps outside the cabin, which turn out to be coming from Mr. Compson; he has arrived to take the children home. They leave Nancy sitting in her hut with the door open, again making the sound which is like singing but not singing, waiting for Jesus to come for her. On the way home, Quentin wonders who will do their laundry now. Mr. Compson carries Jason

on his shoulders and snaps at Caddy when she teases calls her brother for being afraid of the dark. The narrator, Quentin Compson, points out that Monday "is no different from any other weekday in Jefferson now." A "city laundry" has replaced the "Negro women" who used to do the laundry on Mondays when Quentin was a boy, and the streets in Jefferson are now paved. Quentin complains that the trees which used to grow on the sidewalk are being cut down to make room for telegraph poles, which bear "clusters of bloated and ghostly and bloodless grapes," and the laundry is now collected and taken away in motorcars. Quentin points out the changes that have taken place in Jefferson since he was a child. While the "Negro women" used to do the laundry on Mondays, a "city laundry" has now taken over this job. This change is symptomatic of the other modernizations that have taken place in the American South since the early 1900s. By using words like "bloated" and "bloodless," Quentin suggests that he thinks these changes are negative, and that they have sapped the personality (the "blood") from the town by replacing the old ways of life in the South. Quentin notes that "even the Negro women who still take in white people's laundry after the old custom" have cars now. On Mondays "fifteen years ago," when Quentin was a boy, the streets were "full of Negro women" carrying bundles of laundry on their heads that were "almost as large as cotton bales." They carried these bundles, "without a touch of hand," from the "kitchen door of the white house" to the "blackened washpot beside a cabin door in Negro Hollow."

The fact that "Negro women" still take in "white people's laundry" suggests that, although black people's status has improved since Quentin's childhood, they still often work for white people as servants. The fact that Quentin says that "even the Negro women" have cars suggests that black people are still second-class citizens in Quentin's mind. Although Quentin praises the black women's skill in carrying the laundry, his nostalgia for this is synonymous with nostalgia for the old ways of life in the South when black people had very few rights. The bundles of laundry are like "cotton bales," cotton being one of the main industries built on slavery in the South. This signifies that black people in the South are still suffering the consequences of slavery, many years after its abolition, in terms of how white people view and treat them.

Quentin describes how Nancy, a black woman who sometimes worked for the Compsons, would wear her sailor hat on top of the bundle of laundry she carried. Quentin and his brother and sister, Jason and Caddy, would follow Nancy and marvel at how the bundle "never bobbed nor wavered," even when she had to climb down into the ditch that was outside her house and climb out the other side. Nancy had a "high, sad" face that sunk in a little "where her teeth were missing."

Quentin and his siblings enjoyed the novelty of seeing Nancy carry the laundry on her head. While the white children see laundry day as a game, and Nancy as entertaining, it is hard physical labor for the black servants and not something they would be nostalgic for. Nancy's "sad" face and "missing teeth" further suggest that her life is hard and that she has been a victim of physical violence. Some of the washer women's husbands would help their wives by fetching the clothes for them, but Jesus, Nancy's husband, never did—"even before" Mr. Compson, Quentin's father, told Jesus to stay away from the Compson's property. Jesus never came to help Nancy with the washing, even when she was doing the

extra work of cooking for the Compsons because their usual maid, Dilsey, was sick. Nancy's husband,Jesus, is framed as a menacing figure from this early point in the story. The fact that he never helps Nancy, even when she is taking on extra work, suggests he is a mean, careless husband. The fact that Mr. Compson has banished him from the property suggests that he has caused or been in trouble in some way. Quentin complains that Nancy was not a very reliable servant and describes how he, Caddy, and Jason would often have to go to Nancy's cabin and wake her up so that she could come and cook their breakfast. They did not cross the ditch however, because Mr. Compson had warned them to stay away from Jesus, who lived with Nancy. He recalls a memory from the past, in which the children throw rocks at Nancy's house to wake her and Nancy comes to the door "without any clothes on" and tells them she is sleeping. By the time she gets around to making breakfast. it is too late for Quentin to go to school. Quentin's privilege is evident here as he remembers the inconvenience of their regular servant being sick and their having to make do with Nancy. The ditch represents the racial segregation between the two societies in Jefferson: the white part of the town, and the black society in "Negro Hollow." The fact that the children throw rocks at Nancy's house, and yet still expect her to serve them, shows that the children have learned to disrespect black people and expect black people to wait on them.

Quentin and his family think that Nancy is a drunk, and that is why she is late for work. Later they hear that Nancy has been arrested again. As she is being escorted to jail, the group passes a man called **Mr.** Stovall, a local bank cashier and church deacon. Nancy screams at Mr. Stovall, demanding, "when you going to pay me white man?" Mr. Stovall responds by kicking Nancy in the face and knocking out several of her teeth. As Nancy is lying on the ground and Mr. Stovall is restrained, she laughs and says, "it's been three times now since he paid me a cent."

This scene between Nancy and Mr. Stovall implies that Nancy has been working as a prostitute, and that Mr. Stovall has used her services but has failed to pay her. Mr. Stovall responds violently towards Nancy, kicking her in the mouth, in order to silence her. He is afraid that her outburst will expose his actions and damage his reputation as a respectable member of the white community. However, there are no consequences for Mr. Stovall, even when he publicly assaults Nancy. This shows how safe white people were from the law (which generally took their side) compared to black people.

In jail Nancy protests all night, "singing and yelling," and people stop outside to listen and laugh at the jailor trying to "shut her up." The next morning, Nancy stops singing, and when the jailor goes up to her cell, he finds that she has tried to hang herself from the window bar. The jailor "revives her" and then beats her; he tells everyone that Nancy is not a drunk but is on cocaine, because "no nigger would try to commit suicide unless he was full of cocaine." The jailor also reveals that Nancy is pregnant because she hangs herself naked and he can see her "belly already swelling out a little, like a little balloon."

The white community's lack of sympathy towards Nancy is evident; rather than feel concerned about her, they view her arrest as entertaining gossip. The severity of Nancy's problems is made clear by the fact that she tries to commit suicide. However, the report from the jailor suggests that the white

community trivializes this too and thinks that Nancy tries to kill herself because she is on drugs rather than because she is deeply unhappy. This shows an unwillingness on the part of the white community to address the reasons a black woman may have for being unhappy, such as racism or extreme poverty.

Quentin notes that he, Caddy, and Jason also notice Nancy's "apron swelling out" when she is cooking for them because Dilsey is sick. This is "before father told Jesus to stay away from the house," Quentin notes, and as such Jesus is sitting in the Compson's kitchen while Nancy cooks. Jesus says that Nancy has a "watermelon" under her dress, to which Nancy replies that it didn't "come off" Jesus's "vine." Caddy is confused and asks Nancy and Jesus what they mean but the adults ignore her. Jesus says that he can easily "cut down the vine it did come off," and Nancy tells him not to talk like that before the children, and that Mr. Compson doesn't want Jesus hanging around the kitchen. Jesus sulks and complains that "he can't hang around a white man's kitchen," but a "white man can hang around his."
Mr. Compson tells Jesus to stay away from the house, suggesting that Jesus's aggressive behavior has escalated in some way. Quentin refers to an incident before this takes place, while Nancy is evidently pregnant with someone else's child, probably as a result of her prostitution. When she says the "watermelon" has not come off Jesus's "vine" she means it is not Jesus's child. Jesus implies that he might hurt the man who got Nancy pregnant, saying he can "cut down the vine it did come off of." Jesus is angry about the hypocrisy in their society, as he feels there is one rule for white men and another for black men. White men can tell black men to get off their property, but black people have no civil rights to defend themselves or their own homes from the actions of white men.

Dilsey stays sick for a long time, so Nancy continues to cook for the family, and Mr. Compson tells Jesus to stay away from the house. One evening, after supper, Mrs. Compson remarks that Nancy is taking a long time to wash and dry the dishes and sends Quentin to see what is taking so long. Quentin finds that the dishes have been put away and fire is out. Nancy is sitting by the "cold stove," and when Quentin asks her what is wrong, she says that "she ain't nothing but a nigger" and that "it ain't none of her fault."

Nancy is clearly avoiding going home, which is why she sits so long in the kitchen after all her work is finished. When Quentin goes to question her, she implies that she is in trouble but that there is nothing she can do about it since "she ain't nothing but a nigger" and "it ain't none of her fault." This suggests that Nancy feels her situation is hopeless and that she can't do anything to help or protect herself because of her race and lack of rights and power in society.

Unnerved by Nancy's manner and the contrast between the "warm, busy, cheerful" way the kitchen usually feels and the cold, dreary atmosphere "at that hour" of the night, Quentin returns to the library and tells his parents that Nancy is finished. Mr. Compson goes to see what is wrong with Nancy. Caddy suggests that she might be waiting for Jesus to come and get her, but Quentin says that

Jesus has left town. Jason thinks Nancy is "scared of the dark" and doesn't want to walk home. Caddy tells Jason that he is afraid of the dark too, causing the younger boy to defend his own bravery.

Quentin demonstrates his privilege and his ability to avoid situations that makes him uncomfortable. He dislikes the atmosphere in the kitchen, which is depressing compared to the "warm, busy, cheerful" atmosphere he thinks a kitchen should have. Although Nancy is a human being, Quentin only views her as something that cooks and cleans and makes the kitchen feel homey. The younger children's reaction suggests that they are too young to comprehend adult fears but empathize with Nancy on their own level, assuming she is afraid of the same things as them, like the dark. Jason, however, is already learning that in the patriarchal culture of the South, boys are meant to be brave and not admit their fears.

Mr. Compson returns and says that he is going to walk Nancy home because Nancy thinks that Jesus has come back to town. Mrs. Compson asks if Nancy has seen Jesus, but Mr. Compson says she hasn't. Mrs. Compson then complains that her husband seems to consider Nancy's safety "more precious" than her own, as he will leave her and the children "unprotected" with Jesus about. Caddy and Jason then beg to go with their father and Nancy and, although Mrs. Compson is irritated, Mr. Compson takes the three children and goes to walk Nancy home.

Mrs. Compson trivializes Nancy's fear, even though if Jesus is outside, Nancy could be in significant danger. Instead of acknowledging this, Mrs. Compson acts as though she and Nancy are in the same amount of danger from Jesus, even though this is clearly not true—Jesus is unlikely to hurt a white woman because the consequences would be so severe, and Nancy is the person he is angry with. In contrast, killing Nancy will have no consequences because she is not protected by the law or civil rights.

RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

On the walk home, Nancy says that she will be alright if she can just get "through the lane," which is the darkest part of the walk. Mr. Compson asks Nancy if she can stay with Aunt Rachel, who sometimes claims to be Jesus's mother yet also sometimes says she isn't "kin" to him. Caddy teases Jason about being "scairder than niggers," but Jason denies it.
The dark lane becomes symbolic of the racial divide in Jefferson. Aunt Rachel clearly is Jesus's mother, but his violent behavior sometimes makes her ashamed to admit she is related to him. Caddy calls Jason "scairder than niggers" which demonstrates that the children have learned racist stereotypes, such as the idea that black people are cowardly. This stereotype ignored the fact that black people were genuinely afraid for their lives because of racial violence during this period and, instead, suggested that black people were inherently weak. This supported the patriarchal culture of the South, in which macho bravery was considered a virtue while cowardice was considered unmanly and inferior.

While the children argue, Mr. Compson tries to reassure Nancy that Jesus is gone. Nancy replies that Jesus told her that "she done woke up the devil in him and there aint but one thing going to lay it down

again." Mr. Compson tells Nancy that she wouldn't be in this situation if she could "just let white men alone." Caddy asks what her father means and is ignored. Nancy tells Mr. Compson that she knows Jesus hasn't "gone nowhere"—that, in fact, he is hiding somewhere in wait, and that she "aint going to see him again but once, with that razor in his mouth." Nancy says, when he appears, she "won't even be surprised."

Nancy believes that there is nothing she can do to stop Jesus, and that it is her destiny to be murdered by him. Rather than understanding the hopelessness she feels in her vulnerable position as a black woman, Mr. Compson blames Nancy for the situation. He says that she should "let white men alone," suggesting that Nancy has led white men on by persuading them to use her services as a prostitute; rather than accepting that white men go to her voluntarily. Mr. Compson shows his racial prejudice because he is more willing to believe that a black woman leads white men astray than that white men freely act in ways which society, in this period, would deem immoral.

Dilsey is still sick, so the family begin to walk Nancy home every night after she has finished her work. Eventually Mrs. Compson becomes annoyed that she is being "left alone in this big house" while Mr. Compson takes home "a frightened Negro." Instead of walking Nancy home, the family sets up a bed for her in the kitchen and allow her to sleep there for several nights. One night they are woken up by a Nancy making an eerie sound that isn't "singing" nor "crying." Mr. Compson goes downstairs to check on Nancy as Caddy and Quentin creep out onto the landing to see what is going on.

Mrs. Compson demonstrates that she is willing to put her own convenience (her desire not to be left alone) ahead of Nancy's physical safety. The fact that they allow Nancy to sleep in the kitchen shows that the Compsons are relatively sympathetic towards their servants, although they do not let Nancy have one of the bedrooms. The sound Nancy makes is associated with the racial divide between black and white characters in the story. The white characters do not understand the sound, and it is portrayed as something alien and strange. The sound expresses Nancy terror of what may happen to her. The fact that the white characters do not understand this shows what a gulf in sympathy there is between the white and black people in Jefferson. The children hear their father going down the back stairs and then hear Nancy's sound again "in the stairway." They see that she is standing against the wall in the dark, her eyes appearing catlike. Nancy stops making the sound when the children go down and stand with her until Mr. Compson comes back. He brings Nancy's bed up with him from the kitchen and sets it up for her to sleep in the children's bedroom.

Nancy is most afraid when she is alone and stops making the sound when the children go down to the landing because they provide her with company in the darkness. Although the children are very privileged compared to Nancy, they are in a similar position to her as they cannot physically defend themselves and rely on their father for protection. Quentin and Caddy lie in the dark room with Nancy. Caddy keeps asking Nancy questions about what made her afraid and what she saw in the kitchen, wondering whether she saw Jesus trying to get in. Nancy whispers something but, in the dark, it seems

as though "nobody" had made the sound, and that it "came from nowhere and went nowhere." To Quentin, it seems as if Nancy isn't in the room at all, and that he had "looked so hard at her eyes on the stairs" in the dark that their image had been "printed" on his eyeballs—"like the sun" after staring at it and then closing one's eyes. Nancy starts crying for Jesus, making the sound long until it "goes out like a match." Quentin tells Caddy that it is the other Jesus, not her husband, that Nancy is calling for.

Nancy becomes associated with the darkness here as the sound she makes seems to come from nowhere and go nowhere; as though it comes out of the dark. This suggests that Nancy's life has been overshadowed by the darkness (racism) that haunts Jefferson and that, since she will likely be murdered by Jesus, her whole life and death have been defined by this. Nancy's death is foreshadowed by the sound "going out like a match." The image of Nancy's eyes "printed" on Quentin's eyeballs suggests that Nancy's fears haunt Quentin after the events. It is ironic that Nancy is calling for "Jesus," since Jesus could be either Jesus Christ (who is a sign of salvation in the Christian faith) or Jesus her husband (whom she believes will kill her rather than save her).

Dilsey gets well and comes to cook for the Compsons again, but Nancy still comes into the kitchen after it gets dark. Dilsey asks Nancy how she knows that Jesus has come back. Jason, who is also in the kitchen, says that "Jesus is a nigger." Nancy tells Dilsey that she can feel Jesus; that he is "laying yonder in the ditch." Jason says that Dilsey "is a nigger" too, while Dilsey makes Nancy some coffee and tries to calm her down. Jason then says that he "ain't a nigger" and asks Nancy if she is one. Nancy replies, "I hellborn, child. I won't be nothing soon. I going back to where I came from."

Nancy cannot prove that Jesus has come back but senses that he is nearby and that she is in danger. This represents racism in Jefferson, which puts all the black characters in danger and is ever present even though it is never openly articulated. Jason is in the process of learning this racism as he is learning to separate black and white people into different categories. The fact that he keeps asking who is "a nigger" and who is not suggests that he does not understand the reason for the divide and will need it confirmed by the adults around him before it becomes second nature to him. When Nancy replies to Jason, she again associates herself with darkness, nothingness, and lack of salvation, suggesting that her life is meaningless and that nothing can help her. Nancy, like Jason, has learned her place in society because, in the Christian culture of the South, Nancy would be considered sinful because she has been a prostitute.

Nancy tries to drink the coffee that Dilsey has made for her, but she cannot swallow it. She starts making "the sound," which she made the night that she slept in the children's bedroom. Quentin remarks that it was like there were two Nancys, "one looking" at the children, the other "making that sound." Nancy spills the coffee on the floor, and Dilsey says that Nancy can sleep in her house if she is afraid of Jesus. Nancy turns this offer down though because she says that "no nigger" will stop Jesus.

Nancy says that "no nigger will stop Jesus" because she feels that black people are powerless to stop

Jesus's literal violence, but also against the atmosphere of racial violence that surrounds them. Jesus will not be afraid to hurt other black people because they are not protected by the law like white people are.

Nancy seems to have an idea suddenly, and her eyes "move fast, like she is afraid" there isn't time. She asks the children if they remember the night she slept in their room and says that, if they let her stay again, she will play with them like she did last time. She persuades the children to ask their mother, but Mrs. Compson says that she "can't have Negroes sleeping in the bedrooms." Caddy asks Mrs. Compson why Nancy is afraid of Jesus and if Mrs. Compson is afraid of Mr. Compson. Jason starts to cry and says he will only stop crying if Dilsey makes him a chocolate cake. Mr. Compson tells Jason off and sends the children to tell Nancy to go home and lock her door.

Nancy attempts to manipulate the children by reminding them of the time that they played in the bedroom together. Although she has said that "no nigger will stop Jesus," she feels protected in the presence of the white Compsons, as they have more protection under the law than she has. Mrs. Compson, however, has lost patience with Nancy and says no. Caddy picks up on the fact that Nancy is afraid of her husband and is curious about this. Caddy too is learning the social boundaries of the world she is growing up in. As a girl in a patriarchal culture Caddy is probably aware that she will be married one day, and that she will have fewer rights than her husband. Like Nancy, Caddy may one day be afraid of her husband or be a victim of domestic violence.

Caddy tells Nancy what Mr. Compson has said and asks what Nancy has done to make Jesus mad. Nancy drops her cup and begins making "the sound" again, before asking the children if they remember having fun when she stayed in their room. Jason says he didn't have any fun, but Caddy reminds him that he was not there, but asleep in Mrs. Compson's room. Nancy says that if the children come home with her, they will have fun again. Caddy doesn't think their parents will let them go, but Nancy says that she shouldn't tell them. Caddy thinks it will be alright to go because their mother didn't say they shouldn't, but Quentin reminds her that this is only because they haven't asked.

Nancy grows increasingly desperate after learning that Mr. and Mrs. Compson have given up on helping her. Again, she tries to manipulate the children, trying to bribe them to come to her house and convincing them not to ask their parents for permission to go. Caddy too is clearly familiar with this type of manipulation as she astutely points out that her parents have not said they could not go. Quentin, who is older, knows that this is not a good excuse to behave in a way that their parents will not like.

The children set off down the lane with Nancy. The lane is dark, and Caddy teases Jason about being scared. Caddy asks Nancy why she is "talking so loud" and Nancy laughs and says; "listen at Quentin and Caddy and Jason saying I'm talking loud." The children are confused and say that Nancy is talking "like there are five" of them or like Mr. Compson is with them. Nancy calls Jason "Mister Jason," the way she would Mr. Compson, whose first name is also Jason. Nancy tells them to "hush" and they cross

the ditch towards her house.

Nancy tries to make it sound like Mr. Compson is with them in order to deter Jesus from attacking her. This shows that she does not believe that the children alone will be enough to protect her and suggests that she is putting them in danger by taking them with her. Although this is not an admirable decision on Nancy's part, she is driven to this by fear and by the negligence of the children's parents.

Quentin doesn't like the smell in **Nancy**'s house, which is like a lamp and Nancy's smell like the wick; "they [are] waiting for one another to begin to smell." Nancy asks them what they want to do at her house, but the children are uncomfortable. Quentin says that there is "something you could smell besides Nancy in the house," something even **Jason** smells. The young boy wants to go home.

The image of the lamp and the wick suggests that Nancy belongs to her environment in "Negro Hollow," but that the Compson children do not. They are not familiar with the poverty there, signified by Nancy's "smell," and it immediately makes them uncomfortable. The "something" besides Nancy that they can smell suggests the adult world, which the children do not understand but that they sense their proximity to and want to escape from.

Nancy stands in front of the door and looks at the children as if she is "emptying" her eyes. **Caddy** asks if Nancy will tell them a story and Nancy agrees. While she is telling the story though, **Quentin** notices that she talks and looks around as if her eyes and voice "did not belong to her." Quentin says that "the Nancy who could stoop under a barbed wire fence with a bundle of clothes balanced on her head" was there, but another part of her "was outside"—"waiting somewhere else."

The idea that part of Nancy is already waiting outside the house suggests that Nancy has already accepted her death as inevitable. The idea that she is waiting for it outside in the darkness associates Nancy with death, which is often talked about in terms of darkness. Nancy tries to keep the children occupied with stories in an attempt to put off her death, even though she considers it inevitable and inescapable.

Nancy's story is about a queen who is trying to get across the ditch outside her house, so that she can "get home and bar the door." **Caddy** asks why a queen would need to go near a ditch or get home and bar her door. **Jason** says he doesn't like the story and wants to go home. He says that he will tell his parents if they won't take him home, and Nancy pleads with the children to stay, saying that she knows better stories. She tells them that she has some popcorn and that Jason can hold the popper if they stay. Jason says this will be alright as long as he can hold the popper and Caddy cannot. While they are talking, Nancy puts her hand on a hot lamp and doesn't seem to notice it burning until Caddy points it out.

Nancy, who was able to manipulate the children at first, is now begging them to stay. Jason shows his tyrannical side when he says that he will stay to make popcorn if Caddy cannot hold the popper. Although Jason is very young, this shows that the children are pampered and accustomed to getting their own way. Nancy, meanwhile, is so transported by fear that she is almost literally detached from her body and is unable to feel her hand burning until Caddy points it out.

Nancy gets the popper out from under the bed, but it is broken. **Jason** begins to cry when he sees this and again says he wants to go home. **Caddy** is losing interest in the popcorn too and thinks that they should leave because it is getting late. Nancy seems desperate for them to stay and tries to fix the popper, but Caddy says it won't hold. Nancy helps Jason hold the popper over the fire, but it breaks, and the corn falls in the grate. Jason gets smoke in his eyes and starts crying again.

Nancy gets increasingly desperate as the children grow less enthusiastic about staying. Caddy, who has been the most interested in staying with Nancy and the most curious about Nancy's situation so far, also begins to lose interest. The popper breaking suggests Nancy's losing battle to keep the children invested in her situation, which they do not really care about except in a very naïve, superficial way because they are too young to understand.

As **Nancy** is taking the popcorn out of the fire, insisting that it will still be good to eat, the group hear footsteps approaching the cabin outside. They all stop to listen, and Nancy begins making the sound again as tears start coming out of her eyes even though she is not crying. The children watch, fascinated, unsure what is going on. **Caddy** goes to the door and says that she sees **Mr. Compson** coming. Nancy begs Caddy to ask Mr. Compson if she can come and sleep in their room again and that, if she can, they will have fun. **Jason** says that he hasn't had any fun, and that Nancy got smoke in his eye and hurt him.

It is unclear whether the footsteps approaching belong to Jesus or not. It is possible that he is sneaking up on the house, and that he is prepared to hurt the children inside, but that he is deterred by the approach of Mr. Compson. However, the reader could also assume that the footsteps belong to Mr. Compson and that the children are in no real danger.

Mr. Compson enters the cabin and, again, tells **Nancy** to go and stay with **Aunt Rachel**. He says that he has checked the ditch outside Nancy's cabin, and that **Jesus** is not there. Nancy says she knows Jesus is there because she received a sign from him: a pig's bone with some meat and blood still on it, which was on the table when she got home. Nancy says that she knows Jesus is there and that "as soon as" the Compsons walk out the door, she will be "gone." Mr. Compson again tries to coax her to Aunt Rachel's, but Nancy says that it won't do "no good," and that even if she were sleeping in the room with the Compson children she would still be "gone" the next morning.

Nancy loses all hope as soon as Mr. Compson arrives because she knows that he has not come to help her. Although he tries to placate her, telling her that he has checked the ditch and that Jesus is not there, Nancy is convinced that when they leave, she will be "gone." The use of the word "gone" suggests that she will vanish, returning to the empty darkness that she believes is waiting for her and that her life has been made up of because of her low social status.

Giving up, **Mr. Compson** tells **Nancy** to lock her door and put out the lamp, but Nancy says she is scared for "it to happen in the dark." Mr. Compson moves to take the children home and Nancy says that she has her "coffin money saved up with Mr. Lovelady." (In an aside, **Quentin** tells the reader that

Mr. Lovelady is the town undertaker whose wife killed herself suddenly one morning.) Mr. Compson tells Nancy not to talk “nonsense” and says that he will see her in the kitchen the next day. Nancy says that Mr. Compson will “see what he sees,” but that “it will take the Lord to say what will be.”

The digression about Mr. Lovelady and his wife’s unexpected suicide ties into the idea that uncomfortable ideas go unacknowledged in this society. Rather than openly acknowledging racism in the town, the residents push it under the surface. Similarly, with Mr. Lovelady’s wife, the reason for her suicide is unknown and it is treated as something inexplicable and random, rather than the result of some underlying problem. Although Nancy believes she is damned and that her death will be “dark,” her closing statement suggests that she does believe in Christianity and that her fate is synonymous with what “the Lord” has planned for her. This implies that Nancy feels she is damned on a spiritual level and that salvation is being denied her because she does not deserve it. This suggests that Nancy has internalized the racist ideas about herself and her social status.

The children leave with Mr. Compson. Nancy remains sitting by the fire with the door of her cabin open and does not get up to close it. Caddy asks her father what’s going to happen, and he tells her that nothing will. They walk down through the ditch and Quentin observes that he can’t “see much where the moonlight and the shadows tangled.” Although Nancy is clearly very afraid, so much so that she is paralyzed by fear and simply sits with the door open after they leave, Mr. Compson still trivializes her fear. He dismisses the children’s questions about what will happen to Nancy. Although Quentin does not openly question his father’s judgement, he does check the ditch for himself and acknowledges that he cannot really see if someone is hiding there or not. This suggests that Mr. Compson is willing to overlook potential danger to Nancy rather than inconvenience himself and go out of his way to look for Jesus. The fact that Quentin is aware of this and does not draw attention to it suggests that he too has learned to ignore uncomfortable ideas and become complacent and preoccupied with his own comfort and convenience.

Caddy asks if Jesus is watching them from the ditch, but Mr. Compson says that Jesus is gone. Jason is sitting on his father’s shoulders and it looks like Mr. Compson “has two heads, a big one and a little one.” They come out of the ditch and can no longer see Nancy through the open door, but they can hear her making the sound which is “like singing and not like singing.” Quentin asks Mr. Compson who will do their washing now. Jason, on Mr. Compson’s shoulders, declares that he “is not a nigger,” to which Caddy responds that Jason is “worse” because he’s a “tattletale.” She says he is “scardier than a nigger,” prompting Mr. Compson to break up the fight by shouting at Candace.

The image of Jason riding on Mr. Compson’s shoulders, like Mr. Compson has “two heads,” suggests that Jason will grow up to be a version of his father. This is supported by the fact that Jason announces that “he is not a nigger,” suggesting that Jason is learning to differentiate himself from black people and learn racist attitudes in the same way that his father has. When Mr. Compson defends Jason from Candace, it suggests that Jason’s status as white man will protect him from criticism in the future, just as

Mr. Compson protects Jason from it as a child. Quentin's question about "who will do the washing," implies that he believes Nancy will be killed but also that, in his mind, the most significant consequence of this will be that no one will be there to do his washing. This shows his total disregard for Nancy's wellbeing and connects the end of the story to Quentin's nostalgic comments about the washer women at the beginning of the story.

UNIT-V- FICTION

1) ***ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD***

   Their Eyes Were Watching God is a 1937 novel by American writer Zora Neale Hurston. It is considered a classic of the Harlem Renaissance, and it is likely Hurston's best known work. The novel explores main character Janie Crawford's "ripening from a vibrant, but voiceless, teenage girl into a woman with her finger on the trigger of her own destiny".

Set in central and southern Florida in the early 20th century, the novel was initially poorly received. Since the late 20th century, it has been regarded as influential to both African-American literature and women's literature.[3] TIME included the novel in its 2005 list of the 100 best English-language novels published since 1923.[4]

Plot synopsis

Janie Crawford, an African-American woman in her forties, recounts her life starting with her sexual awakening, which she compares to a blossoming pear tree kissed by bees in spring. Around this time, Janie allows a local boy, Johnny Taylor, to kiss her, which Janie's grandmother, Nanny, witnesses.

As a young slave woman, Nanny was raped by her white owner, then gave birth to a mixed-race daughter she named Leafy. Though Nanny wanted a better life for her daughter and even escaped her jealous mistress after the American Civil War, Leafy was later raped by her school teacher and became pregnant with Janie. Shortly after Janie's birth, Leafy began to drink and stay out at night, eventually running away and leaving Janie with Nanny.

Nanny, having transferred her hopes for stability and opportunity from Leafy to Janie, arranges for Janie to marry Logan Killicks, an older farmer looking for a wife. However, Killicks doesn't love Janie and wants only a domestic helper rather than a lover or partner; he thinks she doesn't do enough around the farm and considers her ungrateful. When Janie speaks to Nanny about her desire for love, Nanny, too, accuses Janie of being spoiled and, soon afterwards, dies.

Unhappy, disillusioned, and lonely, Janie leaves Killicks and runs off with Jody (Joe) Starks, a glib man who takes her to the all-black community of Eatonville, Florida. Starks arranges to buy more land, establishes a general store, and is soon elected mayor of the town. However, Janie soon realizes that Starks wants her as a trophy wife to reinforce his powerful position in town and to run the store, even forbidding her from taking part in the town's social life. During their twenty-year marriage, he treats her as his property, criticizing her, controlling her, and physically abusing her. Finally, when Starks's kidney begins to fail, Janie says that he never knew her because he would not let her be free.

After Starks dies, Janie becomes financially independent through his estate. Though she is beset

with suitors, including men of means, she turns them all down until she meets a young drifter and gambler named Vergible Woods, known as "Tea Cake". He plays the guitar for her and initially treats her with kindness and respect. Janie is hesitant because she is older and wealthy, but she eventually falls in love with him and decides to run away with him to Jacksonville to marry. They move to Belle Glade, in the northern part of the Everglades region ("the muck"), where they find work planting and harvesting beans. While their relationship is volatile and sometimes violent, Janie finally has the marriage with love that she wanted. Her image of the pear tree blossom is revived. Suddenly, the area is hit by the great 1928 Okeechobee hurricane. Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog while saving Janie from drowning and becomes increasingly jealous and unpredictable. When he tries to shoot Janie with his pistol, she fatally shoots him with a rifle in self-defense and is charged with murder.

At the trial, Tea Cake's black male friends show up to oppose her, but a group of local white women arrive to support Janie. After the all-white jury acquits Janie, she gives Tea Cake a lavish funeral. Tea Cake's friends forgive her, asking her to remain in the Everglades. However, she decides to return to Eatonville. As she expected, the residents gossip about her when she returns to town. The story ends where it started, as Janie finishes recounting her life to Pheoby.

Gender roles

The novel explores traditional gender roles and the relationship between men and women. Nanny believes that Janie should marry a man not for love but for "protection". Janie's first two husbands, Logan Killicks and Jody Starks, both believe Janie should be defined by her marriage to them. Both men want her to be domesticated and silent. Her speech, or silence, is defined by her physical locations, most often. For example, Starks forces her silence at the store, a public—and therefore, male space at the time. He says, "... Muh wife don't know nothin' bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's ah woman[,] and her place is in de home." Janie is also forbidden from socializing with the townspeople on the porch. Tea Cake is Janie's last husband, who treats her as more of an equal than Killicks and Starks did, by talking to her and playing checkers with her. Despite this, Tea Cake does hit Janie to show his possession over her. Thus, Janie's life seems defined by her relation to domineering males.

Masculinity and femininity:

Scholars argue that, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the role of masculinity is portrayed through the subordination and objectification of women. In a reflection of post-slavery Florida, black men are subordinate only to their white employers and adhere to white patriarchal institutions of masculinity in which women are held in a positive social regard only if they are attractive, are married, or have attained financial security via previous marriages. Black women, specifically, face greater oppression, as their own struggle for independence was considered counter-productive to the greater fight for equality for black Americans as a whole. Nanny explains this hierarchical structure early on to Janie when she says, "Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything...white man throw down the load and tell de nigger man to pick it up. He picks it up because he has to, but he doesn't tote it. He hands it to his womenfolks." In other words, it would say that blacks were dealing with the oppression from the white people since white was viewed as "superior". In the book, men view women as an object to pursue, acquire, and control through courting, manipulation, and even physical force. Janie's journey for the discovery of her self-

identity and independence is depicted through her pursuit of true love—her dream—through marriages to three different men. Each of the men she marries conforms in some way to gender norms of the day. The role of femininity is portrayed through the symbolism of property, mules, and elements in nature. Women in the book are considered a trophy prize for males, to simply look pretty and obey their husbands. The analogy of the Mule and Women is stated repetitively in the book and is used to represent the gender role of women. Janie's Nanny explained to Janie at a young age how African-American women were objectified as mules. "De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so far as Ah can see." Mules are typically bought and sold by farmers, usually to be used to work until exhaustion. Later in the book, Janie realizes that Nanny's warnings were true when she identifies with an abused mule in Eatonville. She sees herself as a working animal with no voice, there for the amusement of others and at the expense of her own free will. This identification is shown in the book when the townspeople are laughing at the mule that Jody had eventually bought and rescued (in an attempt to manipulate Janie). However, Janie doesn't laugh alongside the townspeople as she is shown to empathize with the mule ("Everybody was having fun at the mule-baiting. All but Janie") and she feels disgusted by the situation. The mule represents the feminine gender role in the story by which men suppress and degrade women who are stereotyped as unable to think for themselves and needing constant guidance from men. These stereotypes "become a chain on the American women, preventing them from developing individuality, and from pursuing their personal happiness" and ultimately what forces them to mold into their gender role.

Janie Crawford

Janie Crawford is the main character of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. At the beginning of the story, she is described as naive, beautiful, and energetic. However, as the story progresses, Janie is constantly under the influence and pressure of gender norms within her romantic relationships. As she navigates each of her relationships with men, Janie ultimately loses her confidence and self-image, conforming to roles that the husbands want her to fill.

In Janie's first relationship, she was given as a wife by Nanny at an early age and was told that love may come with marriage but that it was not important. However, as time passed, Janie was unable to love Logan. "She began to cry. 'Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think.' As time passed on, Logan began forcing gender roles onto Janie, telling her that he would buy a mule for her so that she could work. However, Janie was strong-minded and Logan made little progress on changing Janie. Janie raised her voice, but still, she remained susceptible to suppression and abuse. "You ain't got no particular place. It's wherever Ah need yuh. Git a move on yuh, and dat quck."

Then, in Janie's second relationship, she left Logan Killicks in an attempt to pursue a better future with her new husband, Joe Starks. Joe was the Mayor of Eatonville and achieved incredible wealth, placing Janie in a higher status than her peers, since she was "sleeping with authority, seating in a higher chair". Janie believed that her life would change for the better. However, she was confined in the roles of a housewife and was made to be Joe's prized possession. "The king's mule, and the king's pleasure is everything she is there for, nothing else".

In Janie's third and last relationship, she was able to experience true love, on her own terms, with her third husband Vergible "Tea Cake" Woods. Janie was older than Tea Cake by nearly twelve years. He loved and treated her better than her previous husbands. While she was no longer strictly confined by the gender roles placed upon her by her previous husbands, she was still easily influenced and manipulated by Tea Cake. Janie was forced to shoot and kill Tea Cake in self defense after he developed rabies.

Logan Killicks

Logan Killicks is Janie's first husband. Shortly after Nanny observes Janie sharing her first kiss with boy named Johnny Taylor—and therefore showing signs of puberty—she informs Janie that she was promised to Logan Killicks, a widower, from a young age for her own well-being and protection. Logan owns a farm with 60 acres of land. He grows and sells potatoes as well as chops and delivers wood. He has one mule to plow the fields and decides that he needs to add another to the stable. Though Janie hopes that it will grow, there is never any gentleness or love between her and Logan. She is 15 or 16 years old when she is married off to Logan and later, she grows to resent her grandmother for selling her off, like a slave.[14] Their marriage is purely based on logic, work and convenience— he is a man with property and he needs a wife while Nanny is an aging woman raising her grandchild alone, and she needs to secure Janie's future. There is little regard for Janie's happiness as Nanny believes Logan to be a good husband based on his financial prospects alone.

Logan has traditional views on marriage. He believes that a man should be married to a woman, be his property, and work hard. Everyone contributes to tending the family land. He believes Janie should work well from dawn to dusk, in the field as well as the house, and do as she is told. She is analogous to a mule or other working animal. He is not an attractive man by Janie's description of him and seems to be aware of this. As such, his prospects at finding a mate based on attraction and his age are slim, thus the reason for approaching Nanny early on about an arrangement of marriage to Janie when she comes of age.

During the course of their brief marriage, Logan attempts to subjugate Janie with his words and attempts to make her work beyond the gender roles in a typical marriage. He does not appreciate her streaks of independence when she refuses his commands and he uses her family history to try to manipulate her into being submissive to him. At one point, he threatens to kill her for her insubordination in a desperate and final attempt to control her.

Joe "Jody" Starks

Joe "Jody" Starks is Janie's second husband. He is charismatic, charming and has big plans for his future. Janie, being young and naive, is easily seduced by his efforts to convince her to leave Logan. Ultimately, Joe is successful in gaining Janie's trust and so she joins him on his journey. Joe views Janie as a princess or royalty to be displayed on a pedestal. Because of her youth, inexperience, and desire to find true love, Jody easily controls and manipulates her into submitting to his male authority.

Joe Starks is a man who is strong, organized and a natural leader. He has money from his time working for white men and he now aims to settle in a new community made up of African-Americans, a place in its infancy where he can make a name for himself. Joe quickly establishes himself as an authoritative figure around the town which has no determined name or governance of any kind when he and Janie arrive. With the money he has, he buys land, organizes the townsfolk, becomes the owner-operator of the general store and post office, and is eventually named Mayor of Eatonville. Joe strives for equality with white men, particularly the mayor of the white town across the river from Eatonville. To attain this status he requires nice things: the largest white house, a nice desk and chair, a gilded spitoon, and a beautiful wife. He is a larger-than-life character and during their time in Eatonville, he has grown an equally large belly and taken up the habit of chewing nice cigars, both of which cement his status with the locals as an important man around town. Joe, like most of the men in the book, believes that women are incapable of thinking and caring for themselves. He likens them to children and livestock that need constant tending and direction. “Somebody’s got to think for the women and chillen and chickens and cows. God, they sho don't think none fo themselves.”

Jody is a jealous man, and because of this he grows more and more possessive and controlling of Janie.

He expects her to dress a certain way (buying her the finest of clothes, with tight corsets) and requires that she wear her long, beautiful hair—symbolic of her free spirit and femininity— covered and up in a bun, so as not to attract too much unwanted attention from the other men in Eatonville. He considers her long hair to be for his enjoyment alone. He excludes her from various events and the social gatherings in Eatonville to further his dominance and control over her. He restricts her from being friendly with the other townswomen, requiring her to behave in a separate and superior manner.

Vergible "Tea Cake" Woods

Tea Cake is Janie's third and final husband. He is her ideal partner in her search for true love. He is charismatic, charming, funny, and creative with a tendency to embellish stories. To Janie, he is larger than life, wise, and genuinely cares for her. Tea Cake is loving towards Janie and respectful of her as her own individual person. Unlike her previous two marriages, Tea Cake never stops trying to make her happy. He is more than willing to share with her what he has learned from his own experiences and show her the greater world outside of her own existence. He enjoys being with Janie and playing the role of a teacher. Through Tea Cake, Janie learns to shoot a rifle, play checkers, and fish among other activities.

However, Tea Cake shows tendencies of patriarchal dominance and psychological abuse towards Janie. He isn't always truthful with her and shows some of the same characteristic traits exhibited by Joe Starks and Logan Killicks. For instance, he keeps her from working with the rest of the people down on the muck because he believes she is above common folk. Consequently, until Janie asserts herself with Tea Cake and joins the others in working, she gains a bit of a reputation for thinking herself better than everyone else.

In a show of male dominance in their relationship, Tea Cake takes $200 from Janie without her knowledge or permission and spends it on a nice guitar and a lavish party with others around town without including her in the festivities. While accounting for his spending of her money, he tells Janie that he had to pay women that he deemed unattractive $2 each to keep them from the party. He then gambles the remaining amount to make the money back and excludes her from the gambling scene. What differentiates him from Joe in this regard is that Janie regularly confronts him and he acquiesces to her demand that she not be excluded from aspects of his life.

Another tendency that Tea Cake shares with Joe is his jealousy and need to maintain some amount of control over Janie. When he overhears another woman speaking poorly to Janie about Tea Cake and attempting to set her up with her brother, Tea Cake decides to take matters into his own hands. First, he discusses with Janie, a conversation he overheard between her and Mrs. Turner, a local café owner. He criticizes Mrs. Turner's appearance (like Janie, she is mixed-race) and then successfully executes an elaborate plan to ruin her establishment. Finally, he slaps Janie around in front of Mrs. Turner and others to show them that he is in charge and to assert his ownership over her.

In the end, Tea Cake plays the role of hero to Janie when he saves her from drowning and being attacked by a rabid dog. Tea Cake himself is bitten and eventually succumbs to the disease. Not able to think rationally and enraged with jealousy, he physically attacks Janie and she is forced to shoot and kill Tea Cake. Therefore, she effectively ends her emotional attachment to the men in her life and the desire to seek out and realize her dream of true love.

Liberated woman

Janie is searching for her own voice and identity throughout the novel. She is often without a voice in relation to her husbands as she will not fight back. Janie is also faced with situations that make her feel that her value as an African-American woman is little to none. She is seen as distinct from other women

in the novel, who follow traditions and do not find a life independent of men. Janie's physical appeal becomes a basis of Starks and Tea Cake to have jealousy and belittle her looks. Starks orders Janie to cover her long hair as other men are attracted to it. Similarly, Tea Cake remarks on Janie's lighter skin and her appeal to Mrs. Turner's brother. But Janie begins to feel liberated in her marriage with Tea Cake because he treats her as an equal and mostly does not look down on her. As a result, she loves him more than she did the other two spouses. Janie does not find complete independence as a woman until after the death of Tea Cake. She returns to Eatonville with her hair down and she sits on her own porch chatting with her friend Pheoby. By the end of the novel, she has overcome traditional roles and cultivates an image of the "liberated black woman."

Liberation from racial history

Janie grew up under the care of her grandmother, Nanny. Her experiences as a slave and freedwoman shaped the way Nanny saw the world. She hoped to protect Janie, by forcing her to marry Logan Killicks, although he was older and not attractive. Janie followed her grandmother's advice but found that it wouldn't be as easy to love him as Nanny had suggested. African Americans believed in marriage during the early 20th century because they had been prevented from such legal protection under slavery. Unhappy in her marriage to Logan, Janie runs off with Starks and commits bigamy. After the death of Starks, Janie meets Tea Cake and they fall in love. Her community thought he was a broke nobody and were suspicious of him. Tea Cake wasn't the perfect man, but better than expected by the community of Eatonville.

Liberation from domestic violence

During the early 20th century, the African-American community asked African-American women to set aside self-realization and self-affirmation values. They imposed male-dominated values and often controlled who women married. Janie suffered domestic violence in her marriages with Joe Starks and Tea Cake. Starks initially seemed to be good for Janie, but later beat her several times, in an effort to exert his authority over her. Despite her husband's physical and emotional abuse, Janie did not complain, behavior that was approved by the townsmen. Domestic abuse was not entirely disapproved by the African-American community, and men thought it was acceptable to control their women this way. After Starks' death, Janie was freed from his abuse. Tea Cake showed his respect of her. Although Tea Cake was not a perfect husband, he was the only husband of hers that gave her the chance to love.

Liberation from sexual norms

The early 1900s was a time in which patriarchal ideals were accepted and seen as the norm. Throughout the novel, Janie on multiple occasions suffers from these ideals. In her relationships, she is being ordered around by the man, but she did not question it, whether in the kitchen or bedroom. Janie in many ways expresses her growing distance from the sexual and social norms. After the death of Starks, Janie goes to his funeral wearing black and formal clothes. But for Tea Cake's funeral, she wears workers' blue overalls, showing that she cared less for what society thought of her as she got older. In addition, critics say that Tea Cake was the vehicle for Janie's liberation. She went from working in the kitchen and indoors to working more "manly" jobs, such as helping in the fields, fishing, and hunting. Tea Cake offered her a partnership; he didn't see her as an object to be controlled and possessed through marriage.

Value of women in a relationship

Throughout the novel, Hurston vividly displays how African American women are valued, or devalued, in

their marital relationships. By doing so, she takes the reader on a journey through Janie's life and her marriages. Janie formed her initial idea of marriage off the beautiful image of unity she witnessedbetween a pear tree and a bee. This image and expectation sets Janie up for disappointment when it came time to marry. From her marriage to Logan Killicks to Tea Cake, Janie was forced to acknowledge where she stood as a powerless female in her relationship.Starting with her marriage to Logan, Janie was put in a place where she was expected to prove her value with hard work. On top of all the physical labor expected from her, Janie endured constant insults and physical beatings from her male counterparts. Hoping for more value, Janie decides to leave Logan and run off with Joe Starks. However, in reaction to this decision, she's only faced with more beating and devaluement. Joe expected her stay in the home, work in the kitchen, and when she was in public, Janie was expected to cover her hair and avoid conversation with the locals. With one last hope, Janie engaged in a marriage with Tea Cake, a younger man, and things finally seemed to look up for her, even though she was still expected to help in the fields and tend to her womanly duties. Overall, throughout her marriages, Janie experienced the hardships that most African American women went through at that time. From the physical labor to the physical beatings, Janie was presented with the life that a woman was expected to live. [See detailed argument and synopsis in Addison Gayle, Jr.'s article, "The Outsider".Janie was able to feel like a woman in her third marriage with Tea Cake. In her first marriage with Logan she was being controlled by her husband. She didn't feel like a woman in her first marriage. She didn't feel any love or affection either. In her second marriage with Jody, she was able to experience independence as a woman. With Jody's death, she became in charge of the store and his property. She was able to experience freedom and an economic stable life. She learned about ownership, self determination, self ruling, and home ruling. In her last marriage with Tea Cake Janie experienced true love. But she also learned who she was as an African American woman. Throughout her marriages she learned how to value herself as a woman, an African American woman, and a hard working woman.The novel is written in dialect and colloquial language that expresses it as a story of a black woman from Southern United States. Throughout the novel, Janie serves both as protagonist as well as occasional narrator, detailing the events of her life, her three marriages, and the aftermath of each, that eventually lead to her return to Eatonville. This is done with two contrasting writing styles, one in standard English prose when the narration is done in third person, and the other making use of black Southern vernacular in dialogue. The theme of having a voice and being able to speak out is a prevalent theme throughout the novel. During her first two marriages to Logan Killicks and Joe Starks, Janie is subjugated and held under their rule, the former comparing her to another mule to work his field and the latter keeping her in a powerless position of domesticity. Throughout both marriages she finds herself without the ability to speak out or to express herself, and when she tries she is usually shut down. This leaves her feeling like a "rut in the road," the isolation taking its toll until she finally confronts Joe and attacks his ego with a verbal assault against his manhood. The effect this takes is that it leaves Joe resenting Janie and in effect destroys what is left of their marriage. When Janie marries Tea Cake, we see how language affects the way Janie begins to feel about herself. The way Tea Cake speaks to her allows her to find the freedom in her own voice and to begin to learn how to use it. We are able to see how language helps Janie grow as a person once she learns that her voice is her power.

Race

While the novel is written about Black people in the South, it is not primarily a book about a racist society. Nanny is the first character to discuss the effects of slavery. "Ah was born back due in slavery so

it wasn't for me to fulfil my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do. Dat's one of de hold-backs of slavery." The novel is mostly concerned with differences within the black community. Starks is compared to the master of a plantation, as he has a huge house in the centre of the town. "The rest of town looked like servants' quarters surrounding the 'big house'. Starks becomes a figure of authority because he has money and is determined to create the first black town. But his plans seem to result in a town where people impose their own hierarchy. "Us talks about de white man keepin' us down! Shucks! He don't have tuh. Us keeps our own selves down." When Janie marries Tea Cake and moves to the Everglades, she becomes friendly with Mrs. Turner. This woman compliments Janie on her light skin and European features, from her mixed-race ancestry. Turner disapproves of her marriage to Tea Cake, as he is darker skinned and more "African" looking.

Inspirations and influences

Perhaps the strongest inspiration for Hurston's writing of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was her former lover Percival Punter. Hurston writes in her autobiography that the romance between Janie and Tea Cake was inspired by a tumultuous love affair. She described falling in love with the man as "a parachute jump". Like Janie in the novel, Hurston was significantly older than her lover. Like Jody, Punter was sexually dominant and sometimes violent. Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* three weeks after the tumultuous conclusion of her relationship with Punter. She wrote in her autobiography that she had "tried to embalm all the tenderness of [her] passion for him." With this emotional inspiration, Hurston went on to paint the picture of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* using her personal experience and research as a template.

In 1927, a decade before writing Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston traveled south to collect folk songs and folk tales through an anthropological research fellowship arranged by her Barnard College mentor Franz Boas. The all-black Eatonville of Their Eyes Were Watching God is based on the all-black town of the same name in which Hurston grew up. The town's weekly announced in 1889, "Colored People of the United States: Solve the great race problem by securing a home in Eatonville, Florida, a Negro city governed by negroes." The hurricane that symbolizes the climax of Hurston's story also has an historical inspiration; in 1928, "a hurricane ravaged both coastal and inland areas of Florida, bringing torrential rains that broke the dikes of Lake Okeechobee near Belle Glade". Scholars of the African diaspora note the cultural practices common to the Caribbean, Africa, and the United States in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* while living in Belle Glade, at the home of Harvey Poole, who, as manager of one of the local labor camps, informed her tremendously about bean picking, and the labors of African-Americans on the muckland. The book was also written while on a Guggenheim Fellowship in Haiti to research Obeah practices in the West Indies.

Initial reception

Hurston's political views in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* were met with resistance from several

leading Harlem Renaissance authors.

Novelist and essayist Richard Wright condemned *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, writing in a review for New Masses (1937):

Miss Hurston seems to have no desire whatsoever to move in the direction of serious fiction… [She] can write; but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phyllis Wheatley... Her characters eat and laugh and cry and work and kill; they swing like a pendulum eternally in that safe and narrow orbit in which America likes to see the Negro live: between laughter and tears.

Ralph Ellison said the book contained a "blight of calculated burlesque."

Alain Locke wrote in a review: "when will the Negro novelist of maturity, who knows how to tell a story convincingly—which is Miss Hurston's cradle gift, come to grips with motive fiction and social document fiction?"

The New Republic's Otis Ferguson wrote: "it isn't that this novel is bad, but that it deserves to be better". But he went on to praise the work for depicting "Negro life in its naturally creative and unselfconscious grace".

Not all African-American critics had negative things to say about Hurston's work. Carter G. Woodson, founder of The Journal of Negro History wrote, "*Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a gripping story... the author deserves great praise for the skill and effectiveness shown in the writing of this book." The critic noted Hurston's anthropological approach to writing, "She studied them until she thoroughly understood the working of their minds, learned to speak their language".

Meanwhile, reviews of Hurston's book in the mainstream white press were largely positive, although they did not translate into significant retail sales. Writing for The New York Times, Ralph Thompson states: "the normal life of Negroes in the South today—the life with its holdovers from slave times, its social difficulties, childish excitements, and endless exuberances... compared to this sort of story, the ordinary narratives of Negroes in Harlem or Birmingham seem ordinary indeed."[53]

For the New York Herald Tribune, Sheila Hibben described Hurston as writing "with her head as with her heart" creating a "warm, vibrant touch". She praised *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as filled with "a flashing, gleaming riot of black people, with a limitless sense of humor, and a wild, strange sadness".

New York Times critic Lucille Tompkins described *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: "It is about Negroes... but really it is about every one, or at least every one who isn't so civilized that he has lost the capacity for glory."

Rediscovery

As universities across the country developed Black Studies programs in the 1970s and 1980s, they created greater space for Black literature in academia. Several prominent academics, including Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Addison Gayle, Jr., established a new "Black Aesthetic" that "placed the sources of contemporary black literature and culture in the communal music and oral folk tradition". This new respect coupled with a growing Black feminism led by Mary Helen Washington, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, and others would create the space for the rediscovery of Hurston.

Hurston first achieved a level of mainstream institutional support in the 1970s. Walker published an essay, "Looking for Zora", in Ms. magazine in 1975. In that work, she described how the Black community's general rejection of Hurston was like "throwing away a genius". The National Endowment for the Humanities went on to award Robert Hemenway two grants for his work to write Hurston's biography.[57] The 1977 biography was followed in 1978 by the re-issue of *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

In 1975, the Modern Language Association held a special seminar focusing on Hurston. In 1981 professor Ruth Sheffey of Baltimore's Morgan State University founded the Zora Neale Hurston Society. Hurston had attended the school, then known as Morgan Academy, in 1917.

In 1978, Harper and Row leased its rights to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to the University of Illinois Press. However, the printing was so profitable that Harper and Row refused to renew the leasing contract and instead reprinted its own new edition. This new edition sold its total print of 75,000 in less than a month.

The *New York Times*'s Virginia Heffernan explains that the book's "narrative technique, which is heavy on free-indirect discourse, lent itself to poststructuralist analysis". With so many new disciplines especially open to the themes and content of Hurston's work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* achieved growing prominence in the last several decades. It is now firmly established in the literary canon.[56]

On November 5, 2019, the BBC News listed Their Eyes Were Watching God on its list of the 100 most influential novels.

Their Eyes Were Watching God- Summary

Janie Crawford, the protagonist of the novel, returns home after being away for a very long time. The townsfolk, particularly the women, are unfriendly towards her. They gossip about Janie and how Tea Cake was too young for her. Janie's best friend, Pheoby, is angry at the women and leaves their company to take some supper to Janie. Janie tells Pheoby that she is wealthy, with nine hundred dollars in the bank. Tea Cake was a wonderful husband who never took a cent of her money. He recently died, and that is the only reason that she is back from the Everglades. Janie tells Pheoby the story of her life to so that Pheoby can explain her actions to the nosy community on her behalf.

She never met her mother or her father, and is raised by her grandmother. Her grandmother works as a nanny for white children in the Washburn family, and Janie grows up playing with the Washburn children.

Janie loves to spend the afternoons lying under a pear tree, staring into the branches. One afternoon, she is mesmerized by the beauty of bees pollinating the pear blossoms. Intoxicated by her new sexuality, she kisses Johnny Taylor. Nanny sees the kiss and proclaims that Janie is a woman now. She slaps Janie for her indiscretion, and tells her that she must get married.
Janie marries Logan Killicks and moves in to his ugly house. Three months pass and she still feels no love for Logan, so she goes to visit Nanny. Janie starts crying and Nanny sternly tells her not to worry because Janie's mind will change as time passes. Later that evening, Nanny prays to God saying that she feels

sorry for Janie's unhappiness but that she did the best she could. Heavy-hearted, Nanny dies a month later.

Long before the first year of their marriage is complete, Logan's stops being sweet to Janie. One afternoon, Janie meets Joe Starks, a citified, stylishly-dressed man. Joe tells Janie that he wants to buy land in Eatonville, a new town that is run entirely by black people. Joe asks Janie to leave Logan and marry him. One afternoon, when Janie and Logan are fighting, Logan threatens to kill Janie with an axe. Janie runs out of the gate, gets in a carriage with Joe Starks. They run away and get married before sundown.
When Janie and Joe arrive in Eatonville, both are disappointed with the town. Joe buys land to increase the size of it. He calls a meeting on his porch to discuss his desire to build a post office and a general store. Very quickly, Joe earns back all the money he invested in building the store by selling land to people who want to move to the town. Joe becomes hugely influential in the town and is elected mayor. As time passes, Janie tells Joe that his interest in the new town is putting a strain on their relationship. But Joe states that he has always wanted a big voice and finally, as town mayor, he has it.

Janie and Joe's relationship continues to deteriorate. One day, he slaps her face for preparing a bad meal. Eleven years pass. Janie learns to stop fighting and rarely contradicts her husband. Joe constantly criticizes Janie for being old and ugly. He hopes that by pointing out her flaws, he can distract others from noticing his own advancing age.

One afternoon, Joe begins to insult Janie after she makes a small mistake. For the first time, Janie retaliates in front of a store full of people. She tells Joe that he is nothing but a loud voice; she tells everyone in the store that when he pulls his pants down, there is nothing there. Joe is irrecoverably crushed. His health deteriorates quickly. He becomes very ill and takes to a sick bed permanently, but refuses to allow Janie to enter his room.

Janie wants to talk to Joe before it is "too late." Janie tells Joe that "not listening" has been the main problem in his life. He has been too busy listening to himself to listen to her. She tells Joe that she did not leave Logan and "come down the road" with him to lead a life of "bowing down" and obedience. Joe breathes his last painful breath and dies of kidney failure.

Janie mourns on the outside, but on the inside, she rejoices. She is finally free of the heavily restricted life that Joe had forced her into.

One evening, a man named Tea Cake walks into the store. He and Janie play chess, flirt and chat all day while the rest of the town is at a ball game. He helps her close the store at the end of the evening, and Janie appreciates his help. About a week after their first meeting, Tea Cake comes to the store and pretends to play an invisible guitar. He suggests that they go fishing in the middle of the night. They catch a few fish and have to smuggle Tea Cake out of the back gate of Janie's house so that the people in town won't gossip.

Their relationship progresses slowly and playfully. The town criticizes Janie: how can she stop mourning the death of her dead husband so soon? Why is she with a man that has no money and no power? Pheoby asks Janie why she allows Tea Cake to take her to places she used to never go to: baseball games, fishing ponds, forests for hunting. Janie explains that she never wanted to be restricted from doing activities that Joe had considered lower-class, but that Joe had forced her to. Furthermore, Janie confides to Pheoby that she intends to marry Tea Cake, sell the store, and move out of town. She says, "Dis ain't no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma's way,

Now Ah means tuh live mine."

One morning, Janie takes a train to away from home and marries Tea Cake in her blue satin wedding dress. She packs herself two hundred of the dollars that her husband left her, but does not tell Tea Cake about the money. Janie is so happy, "that she scares herself." One week after they are married, Tea Cake leaves before Janie wakes up and steals the money. Immediately, Janie thinks of of poor Ms. Annie Tyler, a rich widow whose money was stolen by a younger man who pretended to love her. Tea Cake reappears the next morning, telling Janie that he spent all her money entertaining his friends. He promises to win it back gambling. He does win it back one week later, but is almost killed by the angry men who lose their money to him and want it back. Tea Cake promises Janie that from that moment on they will live only using his money.
Tea Cake says that when he recovers from the cuts he wants to head to the Muck down in the Everglades because "folks don't do nothin' down dere but make money and fun and foolishness."

Once the season begins, Tea Cake spends his day picking beans while Janie tends the house. At night the men have have discussions and arguments, just as they did on the porch in Eatonville. But here, Janie can "listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wants to. She [gets] so she can tell big stories herself from listening to the rest."

When Janie finds Tea Cake flirting with a young girl named Nunkie, she slaps him. Janie asks if Tea Cake loves Nunkie. Tea Cake says he never did love Nunkie and that no woman could compare to Janie. He says that his wife is "something tuh make uh man forgit tuh git old and forgit tuh die."
In the autumn, Janie becomes acquainted with Mrs. Turner. Mrs. Turner is a mixed-race woman who hates her own blackness. She is intent on re-marrying Janie to her white-looking brother. Tea Cake tells Janie that if Mrs. Turner hates black people so much, she should stay away from him and Janie.
The following season, many people return to live on the Muck; some of the people are familiar from last year and some are brand new. Mrs. Turner brings her brother to town to introduce him to Janie. Tea Cake slaps Janie to show Mrs. Turner's brother that Tea Cake had full control over Janie. They make up the next morning, to the whole town's envy. Tea Cake and his friends stage a bar brawl, destroying the Turners' restaurant.

One afternoon, Janie sees Seminole Indians passing through the Muck heading east. They warn of a hurricane coming, but no one believes them. That night, the weather gets extremely bad. The lights go out. Janie, Tea Cake, and some friends huddle in their basement. "They seemed to be staring at the dark, but there eyes were watching God."

After the storm, Tea Cake and Janie decide to leave the ruined area on foot. As they escape, the dam on the lake breaks and water rushes up fast behind them. Janie falls into the water and starts to drown, but Tea Cake helps her swim. As the two walk to safety, a rabid dog tries to attack Janie, and while Tea Cake protects her, it bites him on the face. Janie tells Tea Cake that they should find a doctor for his dog bite, but Tea Cake says that he is fine.

Tea Cake becomes ill and Janie grows worried and calls Doctor Simmons. She tells him that Tea Cake was bitten by a dog one month ago in the storm. Doctor Simmons tells her that Tea Cake has rabies and will probably die. He advises Janie not to sleep with Tea Cake because he may bite her and give her rabies.

Tea Cake becomes extremely moody, he is unable to drink water, and he starts behaving like a wild dog.

He falls into a jealous rage when he finds out that Mrs. Turner's husband is back in the Everglades. He confronts Janie, shooting her with a pistol while Janie shoots with a rifle. The rifle fires slightly faster, and Tea Cake falls to the ground dead, biting Janie's forearm. Janie is put in jail and tried in court. Simmons explains her case to the jury and she is acquitted of murder.

Janie arranges a beautiful funeral for Tea Cake in Palm Beach and then moves back to Eatonville. The narration returns to the porch with Pheoby where it began in the first chapter. Janie says she has been to the horizon and back; she knows now that, "you got tuh go there tuh know there...Two things everybody got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves." Janie then tells Pheoby to explain her story to the townspeople; perhaps they will learn a little about love from her experiences.

Janie climbs the stairs to her bedroom with her nightlamp. Tea Cake is not dead; while Janie is living, he will live on in her memory. Janie finally finds peace; she pulls in the horizon like a great net and drapes it over her shoulders. "So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see."

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