

Their Eyes Were Watching God: Notes

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Note: This report was supposed to be organized by date, with small entries for each reading chunk. I read most of the book in one night, so that structure does not fit very well. In writing these notes, I plan to just comment in general, perhaps going through individual parts, but making no claims about what specific chapters are covered or on what day I read them.

I wonder if Janie's Grandmother would feel the same way about life if she were to live today. Certainly life has gotten better for the females of color that live in the USA, but in a larger sense they are still at a great disadvantage in many areas of life. In the inner city, life is not really all that different from town life when *Their Eyes Were Watching God* takes place.

The book raises interesting questions about love and life and all those other classic Important Subjects. Life: what's the point of it all? Love: what is it? Is it different for everyone? If yes, is that property specific to love—for instance, do you and I see the same color blue? Janie and Tea Cake: was it worth it?

The book discusses most of these themes only indirectly. The questions mentioned might

seem obvious after reading it, but it does not ask them itself. This fact makes the book much more meaningful, turning it from a philosophy textbook into an engaging work of literature.

The analogy of love to the sea struck me. It is a very deep analogy, hence very good. Some aspects not covered in the book: love's analogue of waves is, perhaps, passion; love's analogue of the tide is inherent in the analogy: as the tide rises, love becomes more intense, but also might block the road to some island, covering it with water. When love ebbs, you can smell the dead lobsters.

On page 280, some men in front of the boarding house where Janie is staying comment that "uh nigger woman is de freest thing on earth. Dey do as dey please." This comment is quite the opposite of Nanny's point of view near the beginning of the book. Nanny says that a colored woman is the mule of the world. This difference might represent a change in Janie's point of view: at first, she thinks that her horizons are harshly limited, but discovers that, with the meager freedom she is granted, she can do anything. It might also represent a difference in how typical men and women see each other's freedoms: each thinks the other is far more free to do as they please.