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Response Journal™

# Sample

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**Response Journal**

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*Their Eyes Were  
Watching God*  
Zora Neale Hurston

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## *Response Journal*

### **To The Student**

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

## Chapter 1

1. Zora Neale Hurston begins her novel with these words: “Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.” Do you have a dream that seems unattainable, forever just out of reach? Write a letter to the author telling her about your dream. Describe in it what you might do to make the dream attainable.
2. “Women forget all those things they don’t want to remember, and remember everything they don’t want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.” Is there something in your life you would like to forget or something you want to be sure to remember always? Create a short poem of eight to twelve lines, describing the memory you would like to forget/retain.
3. Janie walks past her old neighbors with only a brief greeting, knowing full well she is going to be the subject of their conversation. Have you had a similar experience in the cafeteria or a school corridor? Write one or two paragraphs, telling a friend how the experience made you feel.
4. Janie sits on her porch with her friend Pheoby “full of that oldest human longing – self revelation.” Have you felt that longing, a need to share something of yourself with someone else? Write a ten-line poem in free verse, expressing how you felt at the time.

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9. Nanny had dreams for her daughter that were never realized. She hoped they would be realized in Janie. Grandparents take on special challenges in raising grandchildren. Write a letter to Nanny, giving her some practical advice that might help her to understand Janie better.

### **Chapter 3**

10. Janie asked the question, “Did marriage compel love like the sun the day?” Imagine you are Janie; write an entry in her diary giving her answer to the question after she has married Logan Killicks.
11. Nanny was concerned for Janie’s material well being, but Janie had no use for Logan’s sixty acres. She was looking for something else altogether. Have you ever experienced a longing for something you couldn’t name? Write about your thoughts and feelings as you wrestled with that longing, or if you prefer, express them in a poem.

### **Chapter 4**

12. Logan felt that the problem with Janie was that she had been spoiled both by her grandmother and by him as well. Write a letter to Logan trying to help him understand what Janie was going through and suggesting how he might deal with it.
13. Joe Starks had come to Florida to be a “big voice.” Write a poem expressing Joe’s dreams for the future of black folks in this new Florida he is hoping to build.

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27. After Joe's death, Janie "thought back and forth about what had happened in the making of a voice out of a man." Joe had sacrificed personal relationships for a life of accomplishment. Was the tradeoff worth it for him? For Janie? Write a paragraph on each of them, giving your own thoughts on the tradeoff.
28. "Years ago, she had told her girl self to wait for her in the looking glass." As a young girl, Janie had hopes and dreams for her future that hadn't been fulfilled. Make a list of your hopes and dreams for the future. Beside each hope for the future, write down what you might do to accomplish it. Try to list at least six items. Your list could be arranged like this.

HOPE

1. Go to college

WAY TO ACHIEVE

1. Study

## **Chapter 9**

29. When Janie thought back to her grandmother, she realized "she hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love." Why was it that she hated her grandmother after the woman had devoted her life to Janie? Write a letter from Janie to her grandmother explaining her feelings.
30. Now that she was alone after Joe's death, Janie was struggling to understand her feelings. She wanted to "show her shine." In Janie's name, write a poem about what she was now experiencing.

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59. Although they've found an empty house to take refuge in, Janie and Tea Cake decide to press on, because of the ever-rising lake waters. Their friend Motor Boat decides to stay, feeling safe where he is. If you were part of the group, which course of action would you have chosen? Write about your choice and the reasons that one choice made the most sense under the circumstances.

## **Chapter 19**

60. After Tea Cake's experience of forced labor, Janie and Tea Cake feel trapped in Palm Beach, and both are afraid for their safety. Janie laughed, and Tea Cake laughed with her when she told him, "De ones de white man know is nice colored folks. De ones he don't know is bad niggers." How have black/white relations changed in the intervening years since then? What has brought about the change? Develop your ideas in a well-written essay of two or more paragraphs.
61. Janie is distraught when the doctor gives her the bad news about Tea Cake's illness and his poor prognosis. Janie wonders why God is doing this to Tea Cake and her. She looks to the heavens for a sign, but there is none. What words of comfort could you find for her under the circumstances? Write her a note of comfort.
62. After Janie shoots Tea Cake, "she had to hold him tight for soon he would be gone, and she had to tell him for the last time." What was it she had to tell him? Write out Janie's last words to Tea Cake as he lay dying in her arms. Use your imagination.