

# Their Eyes Were Watching God

## Chapter One

### Standard Focus: Dialect

One of the ways an author develops his or her style is through the use of dialect. Dialect is the distinctive speech pattern of a particular region, class, or race. Unlike slang, dialect has a distinct and well-developed system of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Through the use of dialect, authors are able to create a realistic story, believable characters, and an authentic-feeling setting.

In her research as an anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston collected African-American folk tales and developed a system to convert many of these spoken tales to a written form of the black dialect. To Hurston, the dialect was not a negative stereotype, but a musical and poetic language, which is a natural part of the African-American culture. By writing in the realistic manner in which blacks in the South actually spoke, Hurston creates powerful, authentic characters and a realistic setting.

Directions: Replace the following sentences from Chapter One with a more familiar or modern *"translation."*

1. "Wat dat ole forty year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal?"
2. "If she ain't got manners enough to stop and let folks know how she been makin' out, let her g'wan!"
3. "The worst thing Ah ever knowed her to do was taking a few years offa her age and dat ain't never harmed nobody"
4. "De way you talkin' you'd think de folks in dis town didn't do nothin' in de bed 'cept praise de Lawd."
5. "Mah mullato rice ain't so ood dis time. Not enough bacon grease, but Ah reckon it'll kill hungry"
6. "Ah see Mouth-Almighty is still sittin' in de same place. And Ah reckon they got me up in they mouth now."
7. "You know if you pass some people and don't speak tuh suit 'em dey got tuh go way back in yo' life and see whut you even done. They know mo' 'bout yuh than you do yo' self."
8. "Most of these zigaboos is so het up over yo' business till they liable to hurry theyself to Judgment to find out about you if they don't soon know.

