

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Chapters 13-15

Standard Focus: Voice

As a literary element, voice can be the style in which the author writes: a combination of point of view, tone, diction, and narrative structure. However, voice can also have deeper meaning in a text. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, voice is a significant part of not only the style of the piece, but also a considerable part of the plot of the story. Often, the search for identity or self is also referred to as a search for a person's voice to speak, but also the figurative meaning, such as the ability to speak one's own mind, make one's own decision, and decide one's own future.

Directions: Voice is an important part of their *Eyes Were Watching God*. References to the use of voice permeate throughout, each taking on a different meaning in the story. For each example of the use of voice in the text, explain how each "Voice" contributes to the plot, and the larger sense of the story's theme. The chapter number has been provided for you for reference, ad as example has been done for you.

Reference to Voice	Importance of Reference
The townspeople gossip about Janie's return, saying that Tea Cake ran off with another woman (Chapter 1)	
"She was sixteen. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Where were the singing bees for her?"(Chapter 2)	
As Nanny explains why Janie has to marry Logan, she says: " 'Ah wanted tuh preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for me.' " (Chapter 2)	
"Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband had stopped talking in rhymes to her." (Chapter 4)	
" 'And now we'll listen tuh uh few words uh encouragement from Mrs. Mayor Starks.' They burst of applause was cut short by Joe talking the floor himself. 'Thank yuh fuh yo' copliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech'makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman, and her place is in de home.'" (Chapter 5)	
"The years took all the fight out of Janie's face...No matter what Jody did, she said nothing." (Chapter 7)	

<p>After Joe buys the mule from Matt, he frees it. Janie responds: 'Freein' dat mule makes uh mighty big man outa you. Something like George Washington and Lincoln...You got tuh town so you freed uh mule. You have tuh have power tuh free things and dat makes you lak uh king uh something.' Hambo said, 'Yo' wife is a born orator, Starks.'" (Chapter 6)</p>	
<p>Janie visits Joe on his death-bed: "Naw, Jody, I come in heah tuh talk widja and Ah'm dointuh do it too. It's for both of our sakes Ah'm talkin' ...You ain't tired tuh pacify nobody but yo'self. Too busy listening tuh yo' wn big voice...All dis bowin' down, all dis obedience under yo' voice-dat ain't whut Ah rushed off down de road tuh find out about you." (Chapter 8)</p>	
<p>"Me scramble 'round tuh git de money tuh take yuh-been workin' lak uh dawg for two whole weeks-and she come astin' me if Ah want her to go!...'Don't git man, Tea Cake, Ah just didn't want you doin' nothin' outa politeness. If dere's somebody else you'd ruther take, it's all right wid me.'...Naw it ain't all right wid you. If it was you wouldn't be sayin' dat. Have de nerve tuh say whut you mean." (Chapter 11)</p>	
<p>The ironic use of such an eloquent, or well-spoken narrator throughout the novel, in stark contrast to the black Southern dialect.</p>	