***Their Eyes Were Watching God***

(Zora Neale Hurston, 1937)

Chapters 6-7 Reading Questions

CHAPTER SIX

1. Who are the *“mule-talkers”*? Why do they tease Matt Bonner about his mule?
2. Why does Joe make Janie wear a head-rag while she works in the store? How does Janie feel about it?
3. Joe buys Matt’s mule after hearing Janie talk about it. He later explains that he bought the mule to give it some rest instead of working it. What **comparison** does Janie make about Joe’s actions regarding the mule?
4. After the mule dies, there is a big *“dragging-out”* ceremony for it, but Janie is not allowed to attend. What reason does Joe give for excluding Janie?
5. When Joe returns from the mule’s funeral he and Janie have a discussion and Hurston writes: *“Janie took the easy way away from a fuss. She didn’t change her mind but she agreed with her mouth.”* In your own words, explain what this means.
6. In your own words, explain the meaning of this passage: *“The spirit of the marriage left the bedroom and took to living in the parlor. It was there to shake hands whenever company came to visit, but it never went back inside the bedroom again.”* What caused this change between Janie and Joe?
7. At the end of the chapter, Janie speaks her mind about a conversation the men are having on the store’s porch. What is the subject of the men’s conversation? What does Janie tell them about women?

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. A dynamic character is one who changes. How has Janie changed?
2. Explain what is meant by: *“She sat and watched the shadow of herself going about tending the store and prostrating itself before Jody, while all the time she herself sat under a shady tree with the wind blowing through her hair and her clothes.”*
3. What physical signs/changes make it clear that Joe is getting older?
4. What mistake does Janie make in the store that causes Joe to insult her physical appearance?
5. Janie responds with: *“Talkin’ bout me lookin’ old! When you pull down your britches, you look lak de change uh life.”* Why might this be a particularly offensive insult to Joe?
6. How does Joe respond to this embarrassing insult from his wife?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. At the beginning of the chapter Hurston writes: *“But the stillness was the sleep of swords.”* What are the connotations of this line? What **poetic device** is Hurston using here (Hint: is it alliteration, simile, onomatopoeia, imagery or personification)?
2. When Janie makes Joe beef-bone soup and he refuses to eat it, what does he imply about Janie?
3. Joe is sick and getting sicker. What rumors do the townspeople start spreading about Janie?
4. After the doctor from Orlando visits Joe, Janie began to think about Death. Hurston describes Death as *“that strange being…who lived in the West”* and she later describes Rumor as *“that wingless bird, had shadowed over the town.”* How do these two metaphors impact the **tone** of the chapter?
5. Janie visits Joe on his deathbed and they have a long and important conversation. What was Janie’s initial intention in going in to talk to Joe? What is Joe’s attitude toward his wife at the conclusion of this conversation?
6. After Joe dies in bed, Janie lets loose her hair and then *“she starched and ironed her face, forming it into just what people wanted to see”.* What does this excerpt say about Janie’s feelings? In your opinion, is she right or wrong for feeling this way?

CHAPTER NINE

1. At Joe’s funeral, Janie sits wearing a veil over her “starched and ironed” face. Hurston writes: *“She sent her face to Joe’s funeral, and herself went rollicking with the springtime across the world.”* What does Hurston mean about Janie when she writes this?
2. What outward change does Janie make after Joe’s funeral? What does this change symbolize about Janie’s new situation?
3. What does Janie realize about Nanny’s view of life? How is Janie’s view different?
4. Hurston ends the chapter with Janie saying: *“Let ‘em say whut dey wants tuh, Pheoby. To my thinkin’ mourning oughtn’t tuh last longer’n grief.”* Explain what this means.