

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A VOICE IN “THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD” BY ZORA NEALE HURSTON

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**Abstract:** *Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God" is a timeless exploration of the importance of having a voice in a society that often seeks to silence marginalized voices. This article critically analyzes the theme of voice in the novel, examining its significance in the context of Janie's quest for autonomy and self-realization amidst societal constraints and personal struggles.*

**Keywords:** *Exploration, self-discovery, empowerment, protagonist, transformative, self-expression, amidst, autonomy, self-realization.*

**Аннотация:** *Книга Зоры Нил Херстон «Их глаза смотрели на Бога» — это вечное исследование важности иметь право голоса в обществе, которое часто стремится заставить замолчать маргинализованные голоса. В этой статье критически анализируется тема голоса в романе, исследующая ее значение в контексте стремления Джени к автономии и самореализации среди социальных ограничений и личной борьбы.*


**Ключевые слова:** *Исследование, самопознание, расширение прав и возможностей, протогонист, трансформация, самовыражение, среди, автономия, самореализация.*

**Izoh:** *Zora Neale Hurstonning "Ularning ko'zlari Xudoga qaradi" asari ko'pincha chekka ovozlarni o'chirishga intiladigan jamiyatda o'z ovozigaga ega bo'lish muhimligini abadiy tadqiq qiladi. Ushbu maqola romandagi ovoz mavzusini tanqidiy tahlil qiladi, uning ahamiyatini Jenining ijtimoiy cheklovlar va shaxsiy kurashlar sharoitida avtonomiya va o'zini o'zi anglashga intilishi kontekstida o'rganadi.*

**Kalit soʻzlar:** *Tadqiqot, o'z-o'zini kashf qilish, vakolat berish, qahramon, transformativ, o'zini namoyon qilish, o'rtada, avtonomiya, o'zini o'zi anglash.*

Zora Neale Hurston's seminal work, "Their Eyes Were Watching God," transcends its status as a mere novel; it is a literary masterpiece that resonates with readers across generations. At its heart lies the compelling story of Janie Crawford, a woman of color navigating the tumultuous landscape of early 20th-century America. Through Janie's narrative, Hurston explores themes of love, identity, and





resilience, but perhaps most profoundly, she delves into the importance of having a voice in a world that often seeks to silence those deemed unworthy.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of voice permeates every aspect of Janie's journey, from her early years spent under the care of her grandmother to her marriages with Logan Killicks, Jody Starks, and Tea Cake Woods. Each relationship serves as a crucible through which Janie must navigate the expectations and constraints placed upon her by society, particularly as a woman of color in the Jim Crow South.<sup>7</sup>

Janie's quest for voice begins in her grandmother's home, where she is sheltered but also constrained by Nanny's protective embrace. Nanny's insistence on Janie marrying for security rather than love reflects the limited options available to black women at the time, highlighting the intersection of race and gender in shaping one's ability to assert agency. Janie's first marriage to Logan Killicks is emblematic of the stifling effects of societal expectations, as she finds herself trapped in a loveless union that denies her the opportunity for self-expression and fulfillment. One of the novel's pivotal moments occurs when Janie stands up to Jody, her second husband, asserting her right to speak and be heard. In doing so, she shatters the constraints of silence and submission that have bound her for so long, reclaiming her agency and autonomy in the process. This moment symbolizes Janie's emergence as a fully realized individual, unapologetically embracing her voice and asserting her presence in a male-dominated society.<sup>8</sup>

However, it is through Janie's subsequent marriages that she begins to reclaim her voice and assert her identity. With Jody Starks, Janie initially finds herself enamored by his charisma and ambition, but soon realizes that he too seeks to confine her to a role that aligns with his own desires and aspirations. Jody's efforts to silence Janie and control her appearance and behavior serve as a stark reminder of the patriarchal forces at play in shaping women's lives. Moreover, Janie's relationships with her husbands serve as microcosms of larger societal power dynamics, highlighting the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in shaping one's ability to assert agency. Through her marriages, Janie confronts the limitations imposed upon her by patriarchal structures and racial hierarchies, ultimately transcending these constraints to claim her voice and her place in the world. It is not until Janie meets Tea Cake Woods that she truly finds a partner who respects and values her voice. Tea Cake encourages Janie to pursue her own dreams and desires, even at the risk of societal condemnation. Their relationship


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<sup>6</sup> Hurston, Zora Neale. (2006) "Their Eyes Were Watching God." Harper Perennial Modern Classics. P 125

<sup>7</sup> Walker, Alice. (1981) "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View." Ms., vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 41-48

<sup>8</sup> Boyd, Valerie. (2004) "Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston." Scribner. P 98





represents a departure from the conventions of Janie's previous marriages, as she finally experiences a sense of freedom and agency that had long eluded her.<sup>9</sup>

The novel's climax occurs during the devastating hurricane that ravages the Everglades, claiming Tea Cake's life and leaving Janie to confront her grief and resilience. In the aftermath of the storm, Janie returns to Eatonville, the site of her earliest struggles and triumphs, but now as a woman who has found her voice and forged her own destiny.<sup>10</sup>

The novel's conclusion sees Janie returning to Eatonville, the site of her earliest struggles and triumphs, but now as a woman who has found her voice and forged her own destiny. Her journey serves as a testament to the enduring power of resilience, determination, and self-discovery in overcoming adversity and claiming one's rightful place in the world.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God" stands as a testament to the enduring importance of having a voice in a world that often seeks to silence marginalized voices. Through the character of Janie Crawford, Hurston offers a poignant exploration of the human spirit's capacity for resilience, self-discovery, and empowerment. Janie's journey serves as a reminder that, no matter the obstacles we face, our voices have the power to transcend barriers, challenge injustice, and shape our own destinies.<sup>12</sup>

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