

### Their Eyes Were watching God

She tore off the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair. The weight, the length, the glory was there. (8.45) That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. That was all. She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others. (6.31)

**Hair** Represents her freedom. Her hair is normally straight and down but whenever she feels imprisoned such as the time when she was with Joe she starts her hair is up, enclosing this freedom and independence.

[Janie to Joe] "Freein' dat mule makes uh mighty big man outa you. Something like George Washington and Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln, he had de whole United States tuh rule so he freed de Negroes. You got uh town so you freed uh mule. You have tuh have power tuh free things and dat makes you lak uh king uh something." (6.60) "Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see...De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see."

**Mule** Symbol of victimization such as Janie. Appeared first when Nanny mentions it stating how black women are just as mules, they are nothing to no one and white people rule this world. Joe starts purchases the mule off Matt Bomer as a symbol of freedom, Janie saw the mule as herself being trapped by Joe but in the end realized she was just being used and trapped away from her freedom just how the mule felt when he was being made fun of by the townspeople.

### Their Eyes Were watching God (cont)

[Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think. Ah..." (3.26-28) Janie] was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid.

**Pear Tree** Sexual awakening. First introduced when Janie observes a bee interacting with a tree and discovers she wants to find this sexual awakening, and throughout the book finds love until the very end of the novel in which she achieves full happiness and finds this awakening not just sexually but also independence.



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### Their Eyes Were watching God (cont)

"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."

**Horizon** Begins and ends with the horizon. Realm of possibility, hence why when she met Joe starks she was happy and ran away from her arranged marriage with Logan since Joe taught her the way of life. In the end Joe treated her poorly, Tea cake was the only one who really taught her about love and life satisfaction, independence, where she found her horizon.

The wind came back with triple fury and put out the light for the last time. They sat in company with the others in other shanties, their eyes straining against crude walls and their souls asking if He meant to measure their puny might against His. They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God. (18.39) [Motor Boat]: "Ah'm safe here, man. Go ahead if yuh wants to. Ah'm sleepy." "Whut you gointuh do if de lake reach heah?" "Go upstairs." "S'posing it come up dere?" "Swim, man. Dat's all." (18.75-79)

**Hurricane** Represents bad side of nature, everytime something bad happens nature appears. Here towards the end of the novel when this occurs Motor boat believes in god hence he states he will stay and sleep to go to heaven whereas Tea cake and janie first question whether god exists or not. Tea cake sacrifices himself due to his true love for janie hence making her a happy widow due to his sacrifice when he dies from rabies, selfless love.

### TEWWG Themes

Theme: Significance:

**Sexuality** Janie learns sexuality through nature by observing the bee and the pear tree rather than learning from nanny who thought that it was threatening and after janie kissed the boy nanny made her marry Logan Killicks for money and shelter and protection rather than love.

**Power, judgement, jealousy** Joe starks

**Appearance of race** townspeople judged Janie when she came back to town after her experience with Tea Cake, classified her as a boy due to her overalls and dirt on her hands from running all the way back to the town. Women make fun of Janie due to how she dresses and acts around people sometimes, stereotypes of women.

**Work/money** Joe starks

**Voice** Janie was never able to voice herself until Joe Stark came into her life. Her whole life she could never stand up for people such as her nanny and Logan, but when Joe came she was able to finally stand up for herself, this is the point in the novel where Janie slowly starts to discover who she is and what she wants in life

**desire, love independence** search for independence and love



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### TEWWG Themes (cont)

race and racism Janie is half white and black. People are jealous of her and caucasm features and how she acts because she is the only person who breaks norms and is able to be who she wants to be. People both hate her and admire her for her bravery.

gender roles and relations Joe starts- made her work, enclsloed her freedom, women housewife did chores, higher status of men compared to women.

### Sorrow of war symbols

"After the downpour the sun came out" "kien felt imprisoned by the rain" kien looks out of the window trying to lighten his mood" "the rain brough sadness, monotony and starvation" "though it rained day and night"

Water Symbol that emphasizes the terror and fear of war. Can symbolize the change before and after the war. Water is important in vietnamese culture due to its abundance. People incorporated water and more into their lives, it was a large part of their culture especially since it supported rice agriculture, also spirit of agriculture and goddess of water were popular object of worship.

"Phuong was totally nkaed, her pale body very clear. Behind her was a grassy plot and some bushes. She faced teh clear water of the lake. She was beautiful like a green meadow after spring rains."

"Kien dreamed that his life had been transformed into a river stretching before him. He saw himself floating towards his death. Then at the very last moment, when eh was about to go over the edge, he heard phuong's call echoing from that biter duck of the marhs near the school. It was the final call of his first love."

### Sorrow of war symbols (cont)

"Let our stories become ashes now." "It was a memorable happy evening around the campfire amidst the trees with a background of the darkest of seas."

"...burning his precious, strange canvases one by one the night he imagined death had called him" "she had forgotten that he'd once decided to throw the lot into the fire. She ahd kept the pages, not burned them."

"deathly yellow paintings..." "the characters wandered aimlessly...they wore dismal expressions, their faces long and drawn.... the paintings were utterly depressing" "nearing the end of his life with no exception they the paintings were all done in varying tones of yellow. yellow.no other colours. just yellow."

Colours Vietnamese culture- white worn in funerals and associated with death. Black associated with fear, death and evil. Red means good and happiness and love. Blue is calming and used as peace and serenity. Yellow death because it is interpreted as death of agriculture because autumn all crops with die.

Two types of yellow 1. golden yellow symbolises weath and property



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### Sorrow of war symbols (cont)

"when the flood receded everything dried in the heat of the sun into thick mud and stinking rotting meat. And down the bank and along the stream Kien dragged himself bleeding from the mouth and from his body wound. The blood was cold and sticky like blood from a corpse. Snakes and centipedes crawled over him and he felt death's hands on him."

Fading yellow is seen as a harsh color, which is the colour Kien's father uses in his paintings. Can also represent the hopelessness Vietnam has during the war

### Similar themes

Love	Alienation
Hope	Loneliness
Abandonment	Idealism
Loss	

### Important character

**Mute Girl** can't speak like most of Vietnam about the war, hence why she keeps Kien's manuscript in order to show others the truth and what the war does to a person. She loved Kien hence why she kept his story so people could understand what it's like and how people never really get over the war.

**Phuong** Kien's first love, becomes a prostitute and Kien neglects her after she gets raped and doesn't know who she is anymore hence he leaves her.



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