
Finding True Love in Their Eyes Were Watching God

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a story of one woman's growth as a person physically, emotionally, and intellectually while on a journey for life fulfillment. Throughout the novel a theme illustrating the value of finding true love and friendships rather than material possessions and power is developed. This theme is most apparent in the contrasting relationships that Janie shares with each of her husbands: Logan, Jody, and Tea Cake.

In her relationship with Logan, Janie's desires for reciprocated love are not satisfied. Despite the fact that Logan has sixty acres of land, their relationship lacks any kind of genuine mutual sensuality and leads to resentment and misery. The affection dying between them is displayed when Hurston says, "Janie noticed that her husband had stopped talking in rhymes to her. He had ceased to wonder at her long black hair." At this point, Logan does not appear to care for Janie at all; he does not admire her hair, the unique quality that is a symbol for her strength and independence. In fact, Logan has made Janie a slave to him. He "calls to her harshly" and demands her help in moving manure outside. When Janie responds, "you don't need mah help out dere, Logan," he threatens to kill her with an axe. They do not show any kind of respect or devotion to one another. Janie knows that she is unhappy in this relationship and could find someone who treats her better. She has plenty of land with Logan, a rare thing for an African American at the time, but she becomes a discontented slave in her own home because they do not love each other. This lack of compassion between the couple and the hope of real affection drives Janie away and causes the deterioration of their marriage.

In Janie's relationship with Jody, she finds someone her own age who reminds her that she is young, someone with dreams and aspirations like her, and someone who will take her away from Logan. However, Jody is a power-seeking womanizer who mistreats everyone around him in order to gain command. They do not truly care for one another and their relationship is going down the same road as Janie's relationship with Logan. Just one day after they're married Janie notices that Jody doesn't "make many speeches with rhymes to her." This foreshadows the similarity between the two relationships. When the town asks Janie to make a speech, Jody says, "She's uh woman and her place is in de home." This is one of the first signs that Jody has a blatant disrespect for women, which causes a great deal of turmoil between him and Janie. Jody will not allow Janie to participate in any town events and so she doesn't make any friends in town. He also makes Janie tie her hair back with head rags. This is a metaphor for how Jody is suppressing Janie's spirit and liveliness. Janie is married to the mayor of Eatonville but that does not create happiness in the absence of love. When Jody dies Janie celebrates her liberation inside herself.

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Janie's relationship with Tea Cake displays many significant differences from her relationships with both Logan and Jody. In Tea Cake, Jody discovers true love, friendships, and real happiness in life regardless of the fact that he has virtually no money. From their very first meeting Janie, "found herself glowing inside." Tea Cake does not have a desire for material things or power that causes him to mistreat or disrespect Janie. He is playful and young bringing Janie back to life after the years she spent aging under Jody's strict command. Tea Cake says that the, "Moons too pretty fuh anybody tuh be sleepin' it away," displaying the same appreciation for nature that Janie does. For the first time Janie is actually attracted to a man. She admires Tea Cake, "full lazing eyes with the lashes...and narrow waist." Tea Cake, as his name suggests, is sweet. He asks her to play checkers and shows a respect for Janie as a woman. He encourages her to participate in town activities. While Logan and Jody did not admire Janie's long rope of black hair, Tea Cake stays up at night dreaming about touching her hair. This shows the awe that he finds in Janie as their love begins to grow. Janie and Tea Cake move to Jacksonville, Florida and get married. There, Janie meets other people who have found enjoyment in things other than money and possessions. Here she makes friends and participates in conversation. Her experience here is a completely different life compared to her life with Jody. Janie and Tea Cake truly care for one another and share a chemistry that allows their love to last beyond the short duration of their life together. Despite Tea Cake not having very much money, Janie only finds the fulfillment she was missing in her life after she develops real friendships and a shared devotion with Tea Cake.

As Janie Crawford progresses through the journey of life in search of her horizon, she experiences three different relationships. Her first relationship with Logan supplies her with land but no love, leaving her in a position of servitude to her husband. Her second relationship shows her a life of suppression being controlled by her subjugating husband Jody. Finally, in her third marriage Janie finds happiness when she stumbles upon a real love with Tea Cake even though he doesn't have money. These relationships display how true happiness is not found in the objects of life but instead is found in the truly deep sharing of affection and admiration between people. Only in this environment filled with love and friendship could Janie reach her horizon.

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