

I'm not a bot

































[illegible]



melody is finally listened to and her soul sings cloud-high along Tea Cake's sweet-scented one while they both stare at the dark waters, while their eyes are watching God. But nature, as life, can be miraculous one minute and treacherous the next, and Janie will have to face the tide of misfortune and swim with courage in order not to be dragged by the relentless currents of injustice and despair.Zora Neale Hurston writes with the vivid force of the unheard and the defeated, revealing uncomfortable truths about race and gender while kissing each one of her words with uncanny lyricism and giving voice to the silenced by the weight of history. The shores are waiting to be shaped by the sea of love and waves of memories will sweep the tragedy of mortality imprinting a permanent image on a never-ending horizon. It's only a matter of keeping the watch in the darkness, trusting that God is looking back. "Love is lak de sea. It's uh movin' thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it's different with every shore." (p. 284) February 23, 2021A re-read. Of everything I've ever read, I may love its ending more than the ending of any other novel: "Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see."October 3, 2022As Darla Dykstra stated in her review, in audio form this book is transformed into a "superstar". Ruby Dee put out a magical performance when she narrated this book. It added so very much to hear all the dialects pronounced correctly. (I wonder if there's an audio version of Huckleberry Finn narrated by Ossie Davis.)I miss Ruby Dee and her husband Ossie Davis, but with performances like this their contribution to our culture can continue on.November 20, 2016I am not African American, and no matter what genuine empathy is in my heart, there is no way a white woman can truly understand the life experiences and the collective family experiences of my girlfriends and guy friends who are in fact black. But reading this classic by Zora Hurston let me pretend to do so for a while.Wow, what a book! When Ms. Hurston, born in 1891 ,wrote this, she had already attended Howard University and Barnard College studying anthropology and attended Columbia for graduate studies in the field. She also taught for some years at North Carolina College for Negroes. She was on the staff of a little place called THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS too. Long story short, for a woman born before the turn of the century, she was amazing. For a woman of color to break through these sorts of barriers during this time in American history? Incredible. Ms Hurston's mom and dad, both former slaves, had to be the proudest parents ever.So when she wrote this story about Janie, granddaughter of a former slave, we might expect some huge accomplishments written about this main character. But Ms. Hurston - always the anthropologist - wrote Janie's story in rural Florida. Although the novel takes place nearly 100 years ago, I can see her description of certain people fitting those living around us today: "People ugly from ignorance and broken from being poor...Much of Janie's tale is set in a little town that was founded by, organized by, and lived in by people of color. The town is real, and it is where the author grew up. I grew up in South Florida myself and had no idea! My ignorance of history is shameful.As to the story, we see Janie's life plotted out for her by the grandmother who loves her and wants her protected. But when that protection means being married off to an older man, one Janie does not love but who owns plenty of property, she initially acquiesces but still pines for the feeling of deep love. As a young girl, she lies under a pear tree one spring day smelling the sweet, heady perfume of its blossoms and sees drowsy bees, laden with pollen, as they lumber between the pistols and stamens, nuzzling into the petals. For the rest of her days, this image will define love for Janie. When opportunity arrives by chance to offer her a shot at deep love, Janie does not hesitate, and she goes. Leaves. Sets out for parts unknown, only with those blossoms and nectar to sustain her.I'll skip the plot elements and forego a book report for you, but will comment that one thing that really surprised me was the introduction of a character called Mrs. Turner. She is the voice for, I suppose, a certain section of the black population who prided themselves in those days on their physically Caucasian-looking characteristics. Lighter skin, more aquiline profiles, smoother hair. Although at this section of the book, Janie is a very happily married woman, Mrs. Turner wants to introduce her brother to Janie, as he is as light skinned as she is, and she disregards Janie's husband Tea Cake because of his dark complexion. In real life, I've had conversations touching on this subject with friends who are African American, but it has made me squirm. But reading this book, by myself, allowed me to gawk openly and to wince. No matter how many personal stories my black friends have told me over the years- being shadowed by salespeople at the department store, getting shoddy service from waiters who were overly obsequious to white diners all around, being asked about inner city successes (this was directed to a co-worker friend who had grown up with more money than God - truly affluent - but because she was black, the men in the car with us assumed she had overcome some sort of ghetto nightmare), etc - there is no way for me to walk in their shoes.Thank you, Zora Hurston, for letting me pretend to do so for awhile this week.NOTE: unless you are a native Southerner, reading the text of this book might be a challenge. The author wrote dialogue colloquially and somewhat phonetically, just as was done in Wuthering Heights. I'm not just a Southerner but live in south Louisiana where the "yat" accent is commonplace, so after about five pages, it was pretty easy for me to follow. It was the same with me for Wuthering Heights (Irish grandparents and a Scottish step-dad). That said, if reading vernacular that is unfamiliar can cause you to toss the book aside, please check out the FREE AUDIO of this book from Hoopla (you need a library card). Ruby Dee is the narrator, and oh-my-gawd is the audio amazing. If you want to read a classic but are as lazy as I can sometimes be, let Ruby Dee climb into your ears and Zora Hurston crawl into your heart. No bees or blossoms required.Displaying 1 - 30 of 22,981 reviewsGet help and learn more about the design. Zora Neale Hurston was born on Jan. 7, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama. Hurston moved with her family to Eatonville, Florida, when she was still a toddler. Her writings reveal no recollection of her Alabama beginnings. For Hurston, Eatonville was always home. Growing up in Eatonville, in an eight-room house on five acres of land, Zora had a relatively happy childhood, despite frequent clashes with her preacher-father. Her mother, on the other hand, urged young Zora and her seven siblings to "jump at de sun." Hurston's idyllic childhood came to an abrupt end, though, when her mother died in 1904. Zora was only 13 years old. After Lucy Hurston's death, Zora's father remarried quickly and seemed to have little time or money for his children. Zora worked a series of menial jobs over the ensuing years, struggled to finish her schooling, and eventually joined a Gilbert & Sullivan traveling troupe as a maid to the lead singer. In 1917, she turned up in Baltimore; by then, she was 26 years old and still hadn't finished high school. Needing to present herself as a teenager to qualify for free public schooling, she lopped 10 years off her life—giving her age as 16 and the year of her birth as 1901. Once gone, those years were never restored. From that moment forward, Hurston would always present herself as at least 10 years younger than she actually was. Zora also had a fiery intellect, and an infectious sense of humor. Zora used these talents—and dozens more—to elbow her way into the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, befriendng such luminaries as poet Langston Hughes and popular singer/actress Ethel Waters. By 1935, Hurston—who'd graduated from Barnard College in 1928—had published several short stories and articles, as well as a novel (Jonah's Gourd Vine) and a well-received collection of black Southern folklore (Mules and Men). But the late 1930s and early '40s marked the real zenith of her career. She published her masterwork, Their Eyes Were Watching God, in 1937; Tell My Horse, her study of Caribbean Voodoo practices, in 1938; and another masterful novel, Moses, Man of the Mountain, in 1939. When her autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road, was published in 1942, Hurston finally received the well-earned acclaim that had long eluded her. That year, she was profiled in Who's Who in America, Current Biography and Twentieth Century Authors. She went on to publish another novel, Seraph on the Suwanee, in 1948. Still, Hurston never received the financial rewards she deserved. So when she died on Jan. 28, 1960—at age 69, after suffering a stroke—her neighbors in Fort Pierce, Florida, had to take up a collection for her funeral. The collection didn't yield enough to pay for a headstone, however, so Hurston was buried in a grave that remained unmarked until 1973. That summer, a young writer named Alice Walker traveled to Fort Pierce to place a marker on the grave of the author who had so inspired her own work. Walker entered the snake-infested cemetery where Hurston's remains had been laid to rest. Wading through waist-high weeds, she soon stumbled upon a sunken rectangular patch of ground that she determined to be Hurston's grave. Walker chose a plain gray headstone. Borrowing from a Jean Toomer poem, she dressed the marker up with a fitting epitaph: "Zora Neale Hurston: A Genius of the South."