

his own pride and ambition but because no nearer claimant remains alive.

Tiresias (ti-REE-sih-uhs), a blind seer of Thebes.

Jupiter (Zeus in Greek), the king of the gods, presented as majestic and awe-inspiring, a sort of ideal picture of a Roman emperor. It is his anger at the Greeks that allows the general catastrophe of the war.

Juno (Hera in Greek), the wife of Jupiter. She is generally presented as vile-tempered, jealous, and fiercely protective of those cities dedicated to her. She pleads for peace to protect her city of Argos but is cowed by Jupiter's power.

Venus (Aphrodite in Greek), the goddess of sexual love and beauty. She is not a warrior goddess but is made formidable by her guile and skill at seduction. She is a partisan of Thebes.

—*Jack Hart*

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Author: Zora Neale Hurston

First published: 1937

Genre: Novel

Locale: Florida

Plot: Bildungsroman

Time: c.1897-1921

Janie Crawford Killicks Starks Woods, the novel's central character, a beautiful, romantic, and hopeful black woman who, over the course of thirty years and three marriages, grows into an attractive, life-affirming, and independent woman. As an adolescent, Janie imagines life and especially marriage as a blossoming pear tree kissed by singing bees. She has her first experience of sexual ecstasy under the pear tree in her grandmother's backyard. Her first two marriages end in disappointment, but Tea Cake, her third husband, reminds her of a pear tree blossom in spring. Even after Janie kills Tea Cake in self-defense, he lives in her memory, associated with sunshine and life's plenty.

Nanny Crawford, Janie's grandmother, who rears Janie while keeping house for the white Washburn family. Born into slavery, Nanny flees a Georgia plantation when its white mistress, rightly suspecting Nanny to be her husband's lover, threatens to kill her and sell her daughter Leafy (later Janie's mother). Leafy is raped by her schoolteacher and leaves Janie to be reared by Nanny. Because experience has taught Nanny that "de nigger woman is de mule uh de world," she forces Janie to marry for protection rather than love. Nanny dies a month after Janie's first wedding, unforgiven by Janie.

Logan Killicks, Janie's first husband, an older, responsible, and well-to-do farmer and landowner. Janie, at the age of sixteen, thinks that he looks like "some ole skullhead in de grave yard" and marries him only because Nanny insists. When Logan decides to buy a second mule so that Janie can work in the fields, she runs off with Joe Starks and never sees Logan again.

Joe Starks, Janie's ambitious second husband, whose goal is to become rich and powerful. Janie runs off with him because he promises her comfort and social position and because he reminds her of rich white people. In the black town of Eatonville, Florida, Joe opens a store and is elected mayor. As he gains power, however, he becomes less loving and less loved: He resents Janie's desire for independence, as well as her youthful beauty, and he is resented by the townspeople because he demands their obedience. Mistakenly convinced that Janie is poisoning him, he dies a frightened, solitary, and pathetic man. His death leaves Janie an independently wealthy woman.

Vergible "Tea Cake" Woods, Janie's adored third husband, who is playful, charming, and vital. Although Janie suspects that the much younger Tea Cake might be after her money, she takes a risk, marries him, and never regrets her decision. Tea Cake not only loves Janie but also, unlike Joe, encourages her growth toward independence by teaching her skills and praising her talents. During a hurricane, Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog while protecting Janie. When he becomes mad himself, Janie must shoot him to save her own life.

Pheoby Watson, Janie's closest friend, a loyal, intelligent, and affectionate woman. Janie tells the story of her life to Pheoby, with the understanding that Pheoby will share it with others. When Janie finishes, Pheoby says, "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you."

Mrs. Turner, a prideful, thin-lipped, light-skinned black woman who worships Caucasian traits and cannot stand dark-skinned black people. She tries, but fails, to have her no-account brother win Janie away from Tea Cake.

—*Donald A. Daiker*

them

Author: Joyce Carol Oates

First published: 1969

Genre: Novel

Locale: The Midwest

Plot: Naturalism

Time: 1937-1967

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