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Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

*Their Eyes Were
Watching God
by Zora Neale Hurston*

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Their Eyes Were Watching God

To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Class Record Sheet

[illegible]

Response Sheet

Name_____

Section_____

Date_____

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Chapter 1

1. Zora Neale Hurston begins her novel with these words: “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.” Do you have a dream that seems unattainable, forever just out of reach? Write a letter to the author telling her about your dream. Describe in it what you might do to make the dream attainable.
2. “Women forget all those things they don’t want to remember, and remember everything they don’t want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.” Is there something in your life you would like to forget or something you want to be sure to remember always? Create a short poem of eight to twelve lines, describing the memory you would like to forget/retain.
3. Janie walks past her old neighbors with only a brief greeting, knowing full well she is going to be the subject of their conversation. Have you had a similar experience in the cafeteria or a school corridor? Write one or two paragraphs, telling a friend how the experience made you feel.
4. Janie sits on her porch with her friend Pheoby “full of that oldest human longing – self revelation.” Have you felt that longing, a need to share something of yourself with someone else? Write a ten-line poem in free verse, expressing how you felt at the time.

Chapter 2

5. Pheoby refers to her porch-sitting neighbors as “zigaboos,” an outdated term of contempt for African-Americans. Use of racial or ethnic slurs in literature is a much-debated topic, often the subject of controversy in newspapers and magazines. Write a letter to the editor in response to a newspaper columnist who argues that such language should never be used. State your reasons why such language should or should not be used.
6. Janie was raised with a family of white children. She thought that she was just like them, until they had their picture taken, and she realized she was “colored.” Have you had an experience in your life where you realized you were different or unique in some way? Write a note to a friend describing the incident. Include how it changed your understanding of yourself.
7. Janie and her Nanny lived in a house on the white employer’s property. Her schoolmates teased her about her absent mother and father and her home. Why do you think they behaved that way toward her? How might she have dealt with them more effectively? Write a paragraph explaining your thoughts on the matter as if you are writing to Janie.
8. Janie engages in romantic daydreams in the springtime garden and ends up kissing Johnny Taylor. She “decided that her conscious life had commenced at Nanny’s gate.” Have you experienced a similar moment in your own life? Describe the experience for your diary or journal.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

9. Nanny had dreams for her daughter that were never realized. She hoped they would be realized in Janie. Grandparents take on special challenges in raising grandchildren. Write a letter to Nanny, giving her some practical advice that might help her to understand Janie better.

Chapter 3

10. Janie asked the question, “Did marriage compel love like the sun the day?” Imagine you are Janie; write an entry in her diary giving her answer to the question after she has married Logan Killicks.
11. Nanny was concerned for Janie’s material well being, but Janie had no use for Logan’s sixty acres. She was looking for something else altogether. Have you ever experienced a longing for something you couldn’t name? Write about your thoughts and feelings as you wrestled with that longing, or if you prefer, express them in a poem.

Chapter 4

12. Logan felt that the problem with Janie was that she had been spoiled both by her grandmother and by him as well. Write a letter to Logan trying to help him understand what Janie was going through and suggesting how he might deal with it.
13. Joe Starks had come to Florida to be a “big voice.” Write a poem expressing Joe’s dreams for the future of black folks in this new Florida he is hoping to build.

Response Journal

14. Imagine that Nanny's ghost comes to Janie in a dream to chastise her about her decision to leave Logan. Develop a dialogue between Nanny and Janie as they contend over her decision. You might begin like this:

Nanny: You know that marriage means forever.

Janie: Maybe before, when you were alive, but...

15. Pretend that Nanny is still alive, and write the note to her that Janie might have left behind, explaining why she left with Joe.

Chapter 5

16. When Coker and Starks discuss Joe Starks' attempt to develop the town, Coker says, "Us colored folks is too envious of one 'nother... Us keeps our own selves down." Write a short e-mail to Coker, expressing your agreement or disagreement with his judgment.
17. Janie is asked to make a speech at the store's grand opening, but Joe dismisses the invitation. "It must have been the way Joe spoke out without giving her a chance to say anything one way or another that took the bloom off of things." Write an entry in Janie's journal, expressing how she feels about this slight and what it has done to her.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

18. After the lamp lighting ceremony, Jody tells Janie he's just getting started. Her reaction is completely different from his: "A feeling of coldness and fear took hold of her. She felt far away from things and lonely." Describe Janie's feelings in a short poem.

Chapter 6

19. In the town, Matt Bonner is the butt of jokes over his mule. He gets flustered and angry each time he is made fun of. Write a letter to the editor of your school paper explaining how teasing or bullying is wrong.
20. Janie writes to you about her frustration in trying to handle the complexities of store transactions. Write her a note in reply, advising her how she might be better able to handle the transactions as well as her feelings.
21. Jody makes Janie wear a head rag in the store without telling her why. In a journal entry, describe his motives for the action, his feelings for Janie, and his jealousy over her.
22. The dragging out of the dead mule becomes a focus of activity for the whole town. Write a brief newspaper account of the day's ceremonies. In the first paragraph, be sure to include the how, when, where, and why of the occasion.

Response Journal

23. Janie had spirit and intelligence as well as good looks, but Joe “wanted her submission and he’d keep on fighting until he felt he had it.” Why did Joe find Janie’s spirit threatening? Imagine you are Janie’s friend. Write a note to Janie attempting to help her understand Joe’s attitude toward their relationship.
24. Over time the relationship between Jody and Janie underwent a drastic change. “The spirit of the marriage left the bedroom and took to living in the parlor.” Imagine Janie visiting a marriage counselor. Write a description of her explanation to the counselor of what had changed in the relationship. Include dialogue about the “host of thoughts she had never expressed to him, and numerous emotions she had never let Jody know about.”

Chapter 7

25. When Janie humiliates Joe in the store, he “didn’t know the words for all this, but he knew the feeling.” Write an entry in Joe’s journal, describing how he felt and why he struck Janie. Take a point of view and stick to it. For example, he might be sorry or glad that he did it.

Chapter 8

26. Town gossip and a quack healer have Joe convinced that Janie is the cause of his illness. Write a letter to Joe, trying to “talk some sense into him.”

Their Eyes Were Watching God

27. After Joe's death, Janie "thought back and forth about what had happened in the making of a voice out of a man." Joe had sacrificed personal relationships for a life of accomplishment. Was the tradeoff worth it for him? For Janie? Write a paragraph on each of them, giving your own thoughts on the tradeoff.
28. "Years ago, she had told her girl self to wait for her in the looking glass." As a young girl, Janie had hopes and dreams for her future that hadn't been fulfilled. Make a list of your hopes and dreams for the future. Beside each hope for the future, write down what you might do to accomplish it. Try to list at least six items. Your list could be arranged like this.

HOPE

1. Go to college

WAY TO ACHIEVE

1. Study

Chapter 9

29. When Janie thought back to her grandmother, she realized "she hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love." Why was it that she hated her grandmother after the woman had devoted her life to Janie? Write a letter from Janie to her grandmother explaining her feelings.
30. Now that she was alone after Joe's death, Janie was struggling to understand her feelings. She wanted to "show her shine." In Janie's name, write a poem about what she was now experiencing.

Chapter 10

31. When Tea Cake invites Janie to play a game of checkers, she responds readily. Jody had always told her she wasn't capable of playing the game. Have you ever had someone affirm your talents or abilities in a way that made you even more eager to try? Perhaps, you've had someone criticize you in a way that made you reluctant to try. Write a paragraph about experiences that you might have had with this situation.

Chapter 11

32. Janie worries about her age difference with Tea Cake. Have her write a letter to "Dear Abby" for some advice; then give the columnist's answer.
33. Janie quickly falls in love with Tea Cake, but she is assailed by doubts about his feelings for her. Write a journal entry for Janie, exploring her attraction and reservation.

Chapter 12

34. The town becomes angry after it begins to notice the relationship developing between Janie and Tea Cake. Write a paragraph about how you would feel about the town's reaction if you were Janie and another paragraph about how you would feel if you were Tea Cake.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

35. Pheoby goes to Janie to “talk sense to her” as her best friend, but she listens to her and doesn’t try to dissuade her. Do you have a good friend like that, one who is able to listen closely to you? Write to the friend, and describe what you value in your relationship.

Chapter 13

36. After Janie and Tea Cake marry in Jacksonville, Janie wakes one morning to find her hidden two hundred dollars and Tea Cake both gone. She worries all day if she has been tricked and abandoned like the ill-fated Mrs. Tyler. Have you ever had the experience of wondering and waiting for something to happen while fearing the worst? Describe the experience in a page of reflection.
37. Tea Cake returns, very apologetic about his splurging with Janie’s money. He explains that the folks he spent the money on were too low class for her, but he would like to have had her with him. Janie tells him she would have wanted to be with him, no matter what. The incident seals their relationship even more strongly than their marriage vows. In one page, write about an experience you have had that has deepened and sealed your friendship with someone.
38. Imagine that the police have been called to the knife fight that ends the card game. Write the report that the investigating officer would have filed to describe the incident and its aftermath. Just include the facts as the officer would have observed them.

Chapter 14

39. Janie was impressed with the bigness of everything in the Everglades: the lake, the cane, the weeds. Write a want ad enticing job seekers to come to the Everglades. Describe the attractiveness of the locale and the work to be found there. Try to write as if it were a real ad.
40. Tea Cake taught Janie to play checkers, to drive, and to shoot. Write an entry in her journal, describing how she felt about his efforts to teach her things and expose her to a wider world
41. After Janie and Tea Cake set up house in the 'Glades, the area soon filled up with a flood of new arrivals, "people ugly from ignorance and broken from being poor." Write a social worker's report, describing the newcomers and the conditions they were forced to live in with some recommendations to your agency for remedial measures.
42. Tea Cake and Janie quickly become the center of social life on the job. Do you know someone that people naturally gravitate to and want to be around? Describe the appeal that person has to others.

Chapter 15

43. Janie is happy with Tea Cake during their Everglades sojourn, until she begins to grow suspicious about his relationship with Nunkie. Write a journal entry for Janie about her fears and her feelings when the fears are resolved.
44. Janie's anger with Tea Cake about his interactions with Nunkie springs from her deep love for him. Write a definition poem about what propels her anger. Here is an example of a "definition" poem:

Happiness is
a warm kitten purring in the sun,
knowing the answer before the question is asked,
winning the game,
sunshine and french fries,
love.

Try to write yours in a similar short way. You may choose any word that fits Janie's situation in this section.

45. Imagine you are Nunkie. Write a letter to a friend about Janie and Tea Cake. Tell how you see their relationship and how you feel about Tea Cake. Describe what kind of relationship you would like to have with Tea Cake.

Chapter 16

46. When Mrs. Turner, who prides herself on what she thinks of as her white features, visits with Janie and launches into her tirade against black folks, Janie wishes she could make some reply. Oftentimes in such a situation, a person thinks afterward what ought to have been said. Pretend you are Janie, and make a reply for her to Mrs. Turner's prejudicial outburst.
47. Mrs. Turner was willing to endure Janie's snubs because she felt Janie looked more white than she and was entitled to be cruel to her, just as she was entitled to be "cruel to those more negroid than herself in direct ratio to their negroness." What experiences have you had of people, perhaps yourself, being judged solely on physical characteristics? How can someone be led to see beyond such superficial criteria? Describe your experiences with prejudice or thoughts on the matter in a one-page theme.
48. The author writes that "all gods dispense suffering without reason. Otherwise they would not be worshipped. Through indiscriminate suffering men know fear and fear is the most divine emotion...Real gods require blood." Do you think her view of the Divine is justified? State your beliefs about religion to a close friend in a short letter. It might begin like this:

Dear _____,

Janie, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, feels that God makes people suffer. It's my belief that...

Chapter 17

49. Tea Cake whips Janie out of a jealous fear when Mrs. Turner brings her brother around to attract Janie's attention. Were there other more positive ways he could have dealt with the situation? Write Tea Cake a letter, advising him how he might have better handled the situation.
50. Imagine that you've heard the rumor around Belle Glade that Sterrett and Coodemay are set to start a brawl in Mrs. Turner's cafe to teach her a lesson about her racial attitudes. Write to a friend about the fight. Include the reason why you thought it was or was not justified under the circumstances.
51. Belle Glade is a real place that exists today in Florida. Do some research, either on the Internet or in your school library on this community to answer the following questions.
- A. What is/was the population in 2000 and in 1937?
 - B. What is one connection between Belle Glade and AIDS?
 - C. What is the average income in the town?
 - D. Where in Florida is it located?

Chapter 18

52. Janie and Tea Cake had befriended the “Saws,” the Bahamian workers in the Glades. As a result, the Saws were drawn into a larger circle that also embraced the American workers. Is there a group or person in your school or neighborhood that you would like to draw into your circle of family or acquaintances? Write a letter to someone who is greatly different from you that you would like to get to know better. Explain to this person why you’d like him or her to be a part of your group of friends.
53. When Janie inquired why the Indians were migrating east, two of them explained that a hurricane was coming. Later, even the animals began to be on the move. Most of us live today separated from nature and are far less aware of some of the signs of activity in the natural world. List the signs you are familiar with. You might start the list like this:

ACTIVITY

1. Leaves turn color
2. Animals hide

WHAT IT INDICATES

1. Autumn is close
2. Possible earthquake or eclipse

54. Some of the Bahamian workers offer to take Janie and Tea Cake with them, but Tea Cake declines their offer of a ride to a safer place. As a friend of Tea Cake, try to convince him that he and Janie should leave while they can. Write down the arguments you would use in an attempt to convince him to leave.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

55. “If the castles thought themselves secure, the cabins needn’t worry.” The pickers who remained behind in their shacks felt safe because the white people in their big houses had also stayed. Have you ever left an important decision to someone else’s initiative? How did it turn out? Were you satisfied with how you had acted?
56. The pickers all huddled in their shacks, powerless to affect the ferocious course of the hurricane banging at their doors. For them, their fate was now in God’s hands. In a paragraph or two, explain what your thoughts are about religion and God’s interference, or non-interference, in human affairs.
57. You are writing a screenplay based on the book and would like to convince a producer that it would make a terrific movie. Write him a note about how the hurricane sequence will make the movie a surefire hit. Those who make movies have little time to read long paragraphs, so limit yourself to fewer than 50 words. You could start like this:
- Dear _____,
Imagine a storm ripping people’s homes...
58. The author describes the awesome ferocity of the hurricane in almost poetic language, conveying a sense of the storm’s power and the fear it invoked. Try to express in poetic form what she has expressed in prose, especially the fear and awe that this display of nature called forth in those caught up in its wrath.

Response Journal

59. Although they've found an empty house to take refuge in, Janie and Tea Cake decide to press on, because of the ever-rising lake waters. Their friend Motor Boat decides to stay, feeling safe where he is. If you were part of the group, which course of action would you have chosen? Write about your choice and the reasons that one choice made the most sense under the circumstances.

Chapter 19

60. After Tea Cake's experience of forced labor, Janie and Tea Cake feel trapped in Palm Beach, and both are afraid for their safety. Janie laughed, and Tea Cake laughed with her when she told him, "De ones de white man know is nice colored folks. De ones he don't know is bad niggers." How have black/white relations changed in the intervening years since then? What has brought about the change? Develop your ideas in a well-written essay of two or more paragraphs.
61. Janie is distraught when the doctor gives her the bad news about Tea Cake's illness and his poor prognosis. Janie wonders why God is doing this to Tea Cake and her. She looks to the heavens for a sign, but there is none. What words of comfort could you find for her under the circumstances? Write her a note of comfort.
62. After Janie shoots Tea Cake, "she had to hold him tight for soon he would be gone, and she had to tell him for the last time." What was it she had to tell him? Write out Janie's last words to Tea Cake as he lay dying in her arms. Use your imagination.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

63. After the doctor's description of Tea Cake's death, the authorities decide to prosecute Janie immediately. As she looks around, she sees a courtroom full of people: the judge, the jury, some white women onlookers, the prosecutor, her lawyer, but "none of them knew." What was it that these people didn't know? Relate Janie's description of it to her lawyer.
64. Janie could see that the black folks crowded in the back of the courtroom were convinced of her guilt, even after her verdict of not guilty was handed down. Why do you think they were set against her? In a short paragraph, explain your answer.

Chapter 20

65. Without Tea Cake, Janie had no desire to remain on the muck; therefore, she gave her things away and prepared to leave. Pretend you are Sop, leading a group of friends to say goodbye to Janie. Write a brief speech of farewell for Sop to deliver to Janie, apologizing for their attitude at the trial and expressing the nature and meaning of their friendship.
66. Janie tells Pheoby, "Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves." What preparations have you made to live on your own. Make a list. The items on the list do not have to be material things, like saving money; they can be more abstract like, "I saw how my cousin lives by herself and I want something just like that for me."

Response Journal

67. Janie climbs the stairs to her room and is comforted by the vivid memory of Tea Cake. She is still relatively young. Do you think she will be content to live the rest of her life with just those memories or will she be open to another relationship? Have her write a letter to a 'Glades friend with her thoughts about the possible course her life might now follow.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Test

1. Janie marries Logan Billicks because
 - A. Nanny wants her to be pampered and secure.
 - B. she needs to be put on a pedestal and appear important.
 - C. she is in love with him and hopes to make a happy home.
 - D. she is very mature for her age.

2. Which of the following incidents best illustrates Janie's belief that men don't understand the feelings of women?
 - A. Tea Cake teaches Janie to play checkers.
 - B. Logan is going to buy a gentle mule so Janie can help him plow.
 - C. Tea Cake persuades Janie to join him working in the fields.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C

3. Nanny refers to women as "de mules uh de world" because
 - A. they are stubborn creatures who depend on men for their food.
 - B. they are born to do the work of the white women.
 - C. they are considered to be no better than animals to the white man.
 - D. the white man gives work to the black man, who in turn gives it to black women to do.

4. Janie's grandmother, born in slavery, dreamed that
 - A. one day her daughter would be free.
 - B. her granddaughter would live better than she had.
 - C. that she wouldn't die in slavery.
 - D. she would preach a great sermon about colored women sitting on high.

Response Journal

5. Jody Starks was heading to Florida
 - A. because he couldn't make a go of it in Georgia.
 - B. so that he could have a big voice.
 - C. to make his fortune.
 - D. because Blacks were more accepted there.

6. Jody Starks keeps Janie down because
 - A. he thinks women are naturally inferior to men.
 - B. he's afraid that Janie will leave him for another man.
 - C. it shows the townsfolk how important he is.
 - D. he's her husband and has a right to treat her that way.

7. Mrs. Turner is prejudiced against
 - A. all black people.
 - B. only poor black people.
 - C. only dark-skinned black people.
 - D. white people.

8. Which of the following incidents in the story best supports Janie's belief that things happen in life because it is God's will?
 - A. Joe comes along at the right time, just when she is ready to leave Logan.
 - B. Tea Cake, Janie, and the other blacks stuck in the Everglades will live or die when it is their time, not just because there is a hurricane.
 - C. Nanny drops dead shortly after Janie tells her she is unhappy with her arranged marriage.
 - D. The cow comes swimming by just in time to save Janie.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

9. When Janie awoke to find Tea Cake and her money gone,
 - A. she wasn't afraid, because she still had money.
 - B. she was afraid he'd found another younger woman.
 - C. she went looking for him all day.
 - D. she knew he would be back.
10. Janie decided to leave Logan because
 - A. she didn't like his infrequent bathing.
 - B. she had tired of the housework.
 - C. Jody Starks had caught her fancy.
 - D. she felt confined and unfulfilled in her life with Logan.
11. Tea Cake wins Janie's love because, unlike her other husbands, he
 - A. talks to her about how beautiful her hair, eyes, and lips are.
 - B. teaches her new things and helps her to gain experience in the world.
 - C. wants her to fit in with the other black people in the community.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
12. Which of the following statements about Janie's abuse by her husbands is true?
 - A. Tea Cake never hits Janie.
 - B. Joe hits his wife because she ruins dinner and makes him appear foolish in front of his friends.
 - C. Logan hits Janie for not cleaning out the manure in the barn.
 - D. Joe hits Janie for making mathematical mistakes in the store.

Response Journal

13. Sterrett and Coodamay brawl in the Turner's café, because
- A. they've been drinking and are looking for a fight.
 - B. they want to teach Mrs. Turner a lesson.
 - C. the waitress doesn't serve their food as they want.
 - D. the bystanders urged them on.
14. Which of the following incidents from the story best illustrates the bigotry black men have toward black women?
- A. Tea Cakes' friends want to testify against Janie at the trial.
 - B. Mrs. Turner wants to "lighten" up the race.
 - C. Janie can't stand her first husband's dirty feet.
 - D. Joe won't let Janie go to the mule funeral.
15. Janie is granted a speedy trial because
- A. the judge is worried about trouble from the black men at the back of the courtroom.
 - B. the doctor, the sheriff, and the judge know she is innocent and don't want her to stay locked up.
 - C. the white women in the courtroom insist Janie is treated fairly.
 - D. they want her out of their jail because she is infected with rabies.
16. Janie wears overalls to Tea Cake's funeral because
- A. he likes her in overalls and doesn't approve of her fancy blue dresses.
 - B. she doesn't want to appear uppity to Tea Cake's friends.
 - C. all of her fancy clothes are ruined in the hurricane.
 - D. her grief for Tea Cake is real so she doesn't need to dress up in fancy clothes and put on a show of grief.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

17. What are the two things Janie says people must do for themselves?
- A. They must go to God and find out about living themselves.
 - B. They must follow their dreams and save for their future.
 - C. They must dress to please themselves and find a man who accepts them for who they are.
 - D. They must keep a sense of humor and follow their dreams.
18. Janie thinks love is
- A. something only men feel.
 - B. like the sea, constantly changing and different for everyone.
 - C. rare and found only once in your life if you are lucky.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
19. Janie's father is
- A. the white master of the plantation where Nanny is a slave.
 - B. a rapist who forces himself onto her mother.
 - C. a farm worker like Tea Cake.
 - D. Mrs. Washburn's husband.
20. The bigotry of whites is demonstrated by which of the following incidents?
- A. the fight in Mrs. Turner's restaurant
 - B. the white women at Janie's trial
 - C. the burial party Tea Cake is part of after the hurricane
 - D. Tea Cake's rejection of Nunkie

Response Journal

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Test

Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

4. _____

14. _____

5. _____

15. _____

6. _____

16. _____

7. _____

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

Response Journal

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Response Journal

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Test

Answer Key

1. A

11. E

2. B

12. B

3. D

13. B

4. D

14. A

5. C

15. B

6. B

16. D

7. C

17. A

8. B

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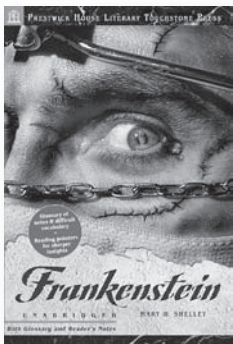
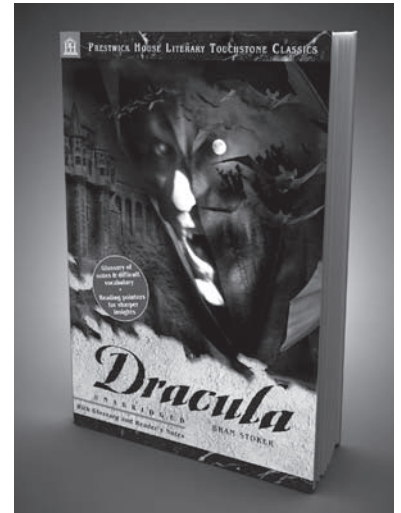
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