Their Eyes Where Whatching God Essay, Research Paper

Their Eyes Were Watching God – Finding the Woman in Janie

People grow and develop at different rates. The factors that heavily influence a person’s development seem like heredity and environment. Genetics can play a key role in what kind of person one becomes. Environment seems like the factor that most often and influentially affects a person’s development. The people one meets and the experiences one has seem very important in what makes a person who he or she is. Janie develops as a woman with the three marriages she has. In each marriage she learns valuable lessons, has progressively better relationships, and realizes how a person is to live his or her life. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston, Janie’s marriages to Logan Killicks, Jody Starks, and Tea Cake seem like the most crucial elements in her development as a woman.

Throughout the story Hurston uses different men to portray the continuum that men fall into in their society. Janie’s marriage to Logan Killicks seems like the first stage in her development as a woman. She hopes that her forced marriage with Logan would end her loneliness and desire for love. Right from the beginning, the loneliness in the marriage shows up when Janie sees that his house feels like a “lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been” (Hurston 20). This description of Logan’s house seems symbolic of the relationship they have. Janie eventually admits to Nanny that she still does not love Logan and cannot find anything to love about him. “She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie’s first dream was dead, so she became a woman” (Hurston 24). Janie’s prayer seems like her final plea for a change in her life. She says, “Lawd, you know mah heart. Ah done de best Ah could do. De rest is left to you” (Hurston 23).

Janie’s prayer gets answered with her next husband, Jody Starks. He seems like the man who fills the voids of loneliness and love, and continues her development as a woman. When they first meet, Jody bestows compliments on Janie, convincing her of her special qualities. For two weeks, before they married, they talked and Janie believed that Jody “spoke for change and chance” (Hurston 28). The problem Janie found with Jody dealt with him not treating her as an equal. He would not let her speak in front of people, teach her to play checkers, or participate in other events. Like Janie, Hurston’s voice seems dismissed- as not bitter enough, not depicting the harsher side of black southern life. Janie notices the problem early in the relationship and confronts Jody about it when she says “it jus’ looks lak it keeps us in some way we ain’t natural wid one ‘nother. You’se always off talkin’ and fixin’ things, and Ah feels lak Ah’m jus’ markin time. Hope it soon gits over” (Hurston 43). Janie realizes that she cannot be open with Jody and that he does not seem like the same man she ran off with to marry. Jody has many of his own interests, and none of them are concerned with Janie. “She found out that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him … She was saving up feelings for some man that she had never seen” (Hurston 68). Jody only gave material goods to Janie. His lack of love and his faults make her realize the next man she meets seems perfect for her. Her development as a woman feels complete after living and learning with Vergible “Tea Cake” Woods.

Tea Cake seems like the catalyst for the final stage of development of Janie as a woman. From Tea Cake, Janie learns to love and what it feels like to be loved. Through Janie, Hurston gives an example of a women in society who follows her dreams and takes control of her soul. Tea Cake not only makes Janie feel special with his words, but proves it as well by taking her fishing, hunting, to the movies, dancing, gardening with her, and other “signs of possession” (Hurston 105). For a while, Janie and Tea Cake worked the fields together. For the first time in her life, Janie seems to enjoy life. She says “…we ain’t got nothin’ tuh do but do our work and come home and love” (Hurston 127). Eventually Tea Cake dies and Janie goes back to Eatonville. From her marriage with Tea Cake, Janie experiences love. This seems like something she believes very few people have experienced. Janie’s marriage with Tea Cake finishes her development as a woman.

Janie clearly progresses in her development as a woman through the three marriages she had. Logan Killicks formed her starting place. From him, she learns that she didn’t have love. Joe Starks gives her what she thought seemed like love. It appears only as a show to win her over, which eventually gives way to his ulterior motives of building himself a name. His death gives Janie a new chance. Tea Cake receives the privilege of being the next to marry Janie. He teaches her what love feels like. Although Janie formed as a woman when her first dream got broken, she completes her growth as a person when she learns about love. Zora Neale Hurston died in 1960, but her works have increased in popularity and seem to transcend the test of time with staying power.