Thier Eyes Were Watching God Essay, Research Paper

Love and Marriage

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

is a novel about a Southern black woman and her

experiences through life. Janie, the main character, is

forced at a young age by her grandmother, into an

arranged marriage with a man named Logan. Janie is told

to learn to love Logan, but the love never comes for

Logan in Janie?s heart so she leaves him. She meets a

man named Joe. Soon after they are married. Joe was

sweet at first, then his true feelings about women come

out and Janie looses her love she thought she had for

him. He soon dies after their separation. Janie then

falls in love with a man named Tea Cake. He is the man

with whom she has a wonderful, loving, happy marriage.

Janie, through youth and lack of empowerment, is mislead

to believe other people?s definitions of love and

marriage until she is strong enough to find a

relationship on her own which satisfies her personal

definitions of love and marriage.

Nanny, Janie?s grandmother, leads her to believe

that love comes after marriage though love is secondary

to the security marriage provides. Nanny feels marriage

was simply for security and to start a family. ?Taint

Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have baby, it?s

protection.?(pg. 14). Nanny says this to Janie before

her arranged marriage to Logan. Nanny wants Janie to be

financially set with her life before she dies and leaves

Janie to fend for herself. Nanny wants her to start a

family. Nanny makes Janie think that love is just

going to come along after the marriage. Right after

Janie?s marriage to Logan, Janie says she is going to

go into her kitchen and wait for the love to begin.

Nanny lets Janie believe that you need a man to take

care of you and provide for you. According to Nanny,

you have to marry a man who has money because too much

trouble comes with marrying a poor man.

Joe marries Janie strictly for social appearance.

Joe wants to have empowerment and he thinks a woman,

like Janie, would help his image. He wants to run a

town and the only way he feels he can look good is to

have a pretty woman by his side. In the beginning of

their marriage Joe treats he like a queen. He tells her

that his woman needs to relax in the shade sipping on

molasses water and fanning herself from the hot sun.

Janie fell in love with the idea. Joe?s words, however,

were deceiving. He actually means that woman need to

stay home to cook and clean while the man goes out to

make the money. Joe often puts Janie down in public

saying things like, ?Thank yuh fuh yo compliments, but

mah wife don?t know nothin bout no speech makin. Ah

married her for nothin lak that. She?s a woman and her

place is in de home.?(pg. 40-41). Joe publicly

humiliates Janie constantly saying she is as low as

mules. Joe feels that his marriage is a part of his

image, a part of his job. He does not marry her for

love. Joe marries Janie to look good in front of the

people who look up to him.

Her marriage to Tea Cake is opposite from both of

her previous marriages. Tea Cake teaches Janie that

women can do the same fun things that men can, like

fishing and playing checkers. Tea Cake makes Janie feel

like she can do anything. Tea Cake makes Janie a part

of his social life and this is something new to Janie?s

life. Tea Cake gives Janie a wonderful feeling. Tea

Cake makes her feel like an equal human being. The love

she feels for Tea Cake and the love she is given in

return helps Janie truly understand what love means.

Janie, finds in the end, that love is undeniable.

It is a different experience for each person you spend

your time with. Janie finds different kinds of ?love?

with each of her husbands. Her marriage to Logan makes

her realize that marriage does not bring love. This

experience makes her grow into a real woman. She grows

up and starts to think for herself. Janie?s marriage to

Joe is also a growing experience for her because it let

her know that a man?s sweet words are not always true.

She realizes that you have to get to know a person and

build some trust and get to know a person before you get

into a relationship. ?Love is lak de sea. It?s a movin

thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de

shore it meets and its different with every shore.?

Janie is saying that love takes a different form

depending on who you are with, each different person

representing the shores. This shows Janie?s growth

because she says that no matter what you do you have to

grow into a love and you can not predict what your next

experience is going to be or even who it is going to be

with. You can not prejudge love. It just comes

naturally or it does not. You either connect with a

person or you do not.

Janie takes each person she is close to and all the

situations her life brings to her forms her own opinions

on love. Janie grows from a dreamy child with her fairy

tale thoughts on love to knowing that you can not

predict what comes in the future. Janie went from

letting everyone in her life telling her what love means

to having a set definition, a personal definition, on

what love really means to her. Not one person can come

and tell Janie anything different about love. Janie

finally has a mind of her own.