

Motif Handout

Motif: Porch

- "It was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk." (1)
- "Pheoby hurried off with a covered bowl in her hands. She left the porch pelting her back with unasked questions. They hoped the answers were cruel and strange. When she arrived at the place, Pheoby Watson didn't go in by the front gate and down the palm walk to the front door. She walked around the fence corner and went in the intimate gate with her heaping of mulatto rice. Janie must be round that side.

She found her sitting on the steps of the back porch with the lamps all filled and the chimneys cleaned." (4)

- "They sat on the boarding house porch and saw the sun plunge into the same crack in the earth from which the night emerged." (33)
- "They got up and sauntered over to where Starks was living for the present. Already the town had found the strangers. Joe was on the porch talking to a small group of men. Janie could be seen through the bedroom window getting settled. Joe had rented the house for a month. The men were all around him, and he was talking to them by asking questions." (36)
- "He sho did. Come off wid de papers in his pocket. He done called a meetin' on his porch tomorrow." (38)
- "Just about time for the committee meeting called to meet on his porch the next day, the first wagon load of lumber drove up and Jody went to show them where to put it." (40)
- "As time went on and the benefits he had conferred upon the town receded in time they sat on his store porch while he was busy inside and discussed him." (48)

Motif: Janie's Hair

- "The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume." (2)
- "Wat dat forty year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal?" (2)

- "Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband had stopped talking in rhymes to her. He had ceased to wonder at her long black hair and finger it." (26)
- "He didn't look her way nor no other way except straight ahead, so Janie ran to the pump and jerked the handle hard while she pumped. It made a loud noise and also made her heavy hair fall down. So he stepped and looked hard . . . " (27)
- "Whut make her keep her head tied up lak some ole 'woman round de store? Nobody couldn't *git* me tuh tie no rag on mah head if Ah had hair lak dat." (49)

Motif: Horizon

- "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." (1)
- "Janie pulled back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance. Still she hung back. The memory of Nanny was still powerful and strong." (29)

Motif: Janie's Voice/Silence

- "When she got to where they were she turned her face on the bander log and spoke. They scrambled a noisy 'good evenin' and left their mouths setting open and their ears full of hope. Her speech was pleasant enough, but she kept walking straight on to her gate. The porch couldn't talk for looking." (2)
 - "Ah don't mean to bother wid tellin' 'em nothin', Pheoby. 'Tain't worth de trouble. You can tell 'em what Ah say if you wants to. Dat's just de same as me 'cause mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf." (6)
 - "'Cause you told me Ah mus gointer love him, and, and Ah don't. Maybe if somebody was to tell me how, Ah could do it.'
- 'You come heah wid yo' mouf full uh foolishness on uh busy day. Heah you got uh prop tuh lean on all yo' bawn days, and big protection, and everybody go tuh tip dey hat tuh you and call you Mis' Killicks, and you come worryin' me 'bout love.'" (23)

- "'S'posin' Ah wuz to run off and leave yuh sometime.'

There! Janie had put words in his held-in fears. She might run off sure enough. The thought put a terrible ache in Logan's body, but he thought it best to put on scorn." (30)

- "'Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home.'

Janie made her face laugh after a short pause, but it wasn't too easy. She had never thought of making a speech, and didn't know if she cared to make one at all. 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." (43)