

Name: _____ Date: _____

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Background Knowledge Text Set Handout

Part 1: Reconstruction and Jim Crow

Directions: Watch the video "[The Story of Reconstruction](#)" (CBS Sunday Morning) from 00:00–06:06 and answer the following questions.

In what ways was the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War a time of hope for African Americans?

What ended Reconstruction and began the Jim Crow era of segregation?

Directions: In the article "[Jim Crow Laws](#)" (HISTORY), read the opening paragraph and section entitled "Ku Klux Klan" and answer the following questions.

What were Jim Crow laws, and when did they exist?

What were the consequences for African Americans who defied Jim Crow laws?

How did the Ku Klux Klan affect the lives of Black Americans during the Jim Crow era?

Directions: Read through the [Jim Crow Laws](#) and look at the signs of the Jim Crow era from the Segregated America section of the Separate is Not Equal: Brown v. Board of Education exhibit (Smithsonian National Museum of American History), and answer the following questions.

What aspects of African American life were impacted by Jim Crow laws?

Based on the laws and signs, what was it like living as a Black person in the Jim Crow South?

Part 2: The Great Migration

Directions: Watch the video "[History Brief: The Great Migration](#)" (Reading Through History) and answer the following questions.

What are some of the reasons why African Americans moved from the South during the 1910s and 1920s?

Which are some Northern cities that experienced a surge in their African American population?

How did the Great Migration contribute to the Harlem Renaissance?

Part 3: Zora Neale Hurston

Directions: Watch "[Chapter 1](#)" of the documentary *Zora Neale Hurston: Claiming a Space* (PBS American Experience) from 00:00–05:55 and answer the following questions.

This resource explores Zora Neale Hurston's background as an anthropologist and later a fiction writer. **Anthropology** is the study of human societies and cultures. In particular, Hurston researched African American culture and **folklore**, which is the traditional beliefs and customs shared among a group or community and often passed down orally from generation to generation. Folklore includes songs, tales, jokes, poems, stories, rituals, etc.

How did Hurston study Black culture and folklore?

What was Hurston's approach to studying culture? How was it different from the science of anthropology at the time?

How did her anthropological research enhance her fiction writing?

How did Hurston's childhood in Eatonville shape her worldview and later work as an anthropologist?

Part 4: African American Dialect

Directions: Watch the video "[Accent Expert Gives a Tour of U.S. Accents](#)" (WIRED) from 04:40–07:04 and answer the following questions.

Hurston writes her fiction using African American Vernacular English (AAVE). AAVE, also known as African American English or Black English, is a dialect of English spoken by many (but not all) African Americans. **Dialect** is a particular form of a language specific to a region or social group.

What circumstances influenced the formation of AAVE?

What are 1–2 sound changes you learned about in the video?

Directions: Watch the video "[AAVE Explained: A Dialect That Transcends Internet Culture](#)" (Babbel USA) from 02:56–05:44 and answer the following questions.

What are some of the features that many of the forms of AAVE share?

What is metathesis, and an example of it? How do non-AAVE speakers often respond to metathesis?

At the end of the video, what is Sierra's message about how we should discuss AAVE?

Directions: Read the article ["African-American dialect the heart of Penumbra's 'Spunk'"](#) (MPR News) and answer the following questions.

What does Sarah Bellamy mean by calling the African American dialect of the time a "tool for an oppressed culture"?

Why are some people offended by Hurston's use of dialect? How does Bellamy respond to that criticism?