

Directions: Take notes of the discussion in preparation for seminar. Create a google doc and share it with each other and me as well. Record your responses and be sure to support your interpretations with significant quotes from the book.

Goal: Develop an interpretation of Hurston's use of symbolism and the theme of power and oppression in the novel.

Essential Question: What is the role of the individual in breaking the cycle of oppression? How do characters in the novel either perpetuate or attempt to break that cycle?

Discussion Questions

1. What does the Mule represent in this novel? Compare Nanny's quote on page 14 beginning with "Come to yo' Granma, honey" to Hurston's description of Matt Bonner's mule in chapter 6. In what ways does the treatment of the mule parallel the way Janie's two husbands treat her?
2. Describe the relationship between Janie and Jody as it unfolds in chapters 6-8. How does Joe treat Janie? In what ways does he try to control her? What do you think of Joe's character and his motivations/ambitions? Is Joe an "evil" character? Explain.
3. Attempt to answer the essential question.