

10th Grade Language Arts Lesson Understanding Grief Reactions in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Brief Summary: The lesson described below would be part of a larger unit in which one focus in analyzing *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston would be to understand how the main character reacts to grief. This ties to what I learned through externing with the Hospice of Anchorage and learning about their grief support programs.

The main character in the novel, Janie, loses a number of people in her life to death and goes through a series of changes as a reaction to these losses. Students will learn how to recognize grief reactions in these various forms: physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. As they read the novel, they will look for and discuss Janie's various reactions. The culminating activity for the unit would be a literary analysis paper in which students argue what they feel the author, Zora Neale Hurston, suggests about the meaning of living. See the prompt below:

Consider this quote from *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston: "Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves." The first part explains that everyone is going to die and 'go to God', and the second part explains that everyone needs to find out how to live for themselves. What does Janie mean by this? Explain how Janie's experiences with death and grief taught her to live for herself. Use quotations from the novel to support your responses, and cite examples in proper MLA format.

They will cite appropriate evidence from the text to support their ideas about Janie's reactions to grief, and work these into a formal paper. In the activities section of this lesson plan, I have described the first day of drafting the essay, where students gather their ideas into a graphic organizer, begin their rough draft, and review the rubric to be certain they are on the right path. I have assumed that before hand there have been multiple class discussions on Janie's grief reactions as the novel was read.

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1](#) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2](#) Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1](#) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1a](#) Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1b](#) Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1c](#) Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1d](#) Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1e](#) Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Assessment/Evaluation: See attached rubric for writing an argument

Materials/Supplies/Equipment:

- Class set of novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*--one per student
- Graphic Organizer Handout (see attached)
- Rubric (see attached)

Activities: Since students have already read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the activities in this lesson will assume that they have had an opportunity to discuss the novel in class and focus on Janie's reactions to grief together. Now, they will be expected to find their own examples and create a rough draft for their essay. Our class sessions are 90 minutes long.

Time	Teacher will...	Students will...
5	Review the four categories of grief reactions by asking students to share what they remember, along with examples of what each grief reaction may look like.	Raise their hand to respond, or be called upon randomly, to share what they remember about the four categories of grief reactions.
15	Begin talking about Janie from TEWWG, and some of her grief reactions. Ask students to share parts of the text where they could see a grief reaction from her. Go to specific page numbers as a class, and choose one example from a student to note in the graphic organizer. Make sure students know you are modeling how to fill out the graphic organizer, so they cannot use the example you write down.	Share their ideas about Janie's grief reactions. Look at page numbers for quotes and discuss what part of quote would be best to use. Active participation is expected--they might not say anything but they should look like they are following along and understand, especially through the modeling process.
20	Instruct students that now it's their turn to find their own examples for the graphic organizer. Walk around and help those who made need a little more guidance.	Find examples of Janie reacting to grief from TEWWG. Note examples on graphic organizer.
10	Pause the class to go over the rubric together and discuss questions. Then, talk about how to start their paper--what does the rubric say about the introduction? Model an introduction for students based on the rubric requirements for an A.	Share their ideas for an introduction, ask questions, active participation.
35	Give students the rest of class time to draft their essays. Walk around and conference with students who may be struggling. If they don't finish in class, then the rest is homework.	Work on rough drafts of essays. Ask questions if confused.