

Name _____

Date _____

Zora Neale Hurston - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Zora Neale Hurston's best known work, **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, tells the story of protagonist Janie Crawford, a Black woman living in the American South in the early 20th century. Containing lyrical prose and character speech that is authentic to local dialects, the novel realistically depicts the complex inner lives of its characters as Janie recounts her life story to a friend. Its themes include Black female identity, love, sexuality, and self-actualization. Throughout the novel, Hurston crafts a cast of characters with rich psychological dimensions. The setting is drawn from her detailed observations of the book's real-life inspirations.

Which of the following aspects of **Their Eyes Were Watching God** most shows the humanity of its characters?

A. The setting of the American South in the 20th century



B.

The use of authentic dialects in their speech

According to the passage, Hurston uses "speech that is authentic to local dialects" throughout the book, which draws "from her detailed observations of the book's real-life inspirations," to create complex characters.

C. The lyrical prose that Hurston uses to describe their feelings

D. Hurston's anthropological research on Black American folklore

2. In the early 20th century, the Great Migration saw thousands of Black Americans move from the South to Northern cities. As a result, throughout the 1920s and '30s, Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City, became a cultural center for Black art, music, literature, and more. This period was known as the Harlem Renaissance. Many influential authors lived in Harlem around this time and produced enduring works of literature. These include Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston. The word “renaissance” comes from the idea that this cultural movement was a rebirth for Black art. In the decades after the abolition of slavery, African Americans had new agency over their lives. Some of the most prominent and influential artists and writers in American history were working in Harlem around this time.

Why is the word “renaissance” used to describe this period of Black American culture?



- A. To demonstrate the idea of a “rebirth” of Black culture in the wake of slavery’s abolition and the Great Migration
- According to the passage, “The word ‘renaissance’ comes from the idea that this cultural movement was a rebirth for Black art” in the decades “after the abolition of slavery” and the Great Migration.*
- B. To emphasize the direct influence artists took from the European Renaissance
- C. To highlight the change in cultural attitudes about Black Americans in the early 20th century
- D. To suggest that many Black artists believed they needed to radically change the status quo

3. Zora Neale Hurston's career can be described as one of advocacy for Black culture and traditions. Hurston was an anthropologist as well as a fiction writer. Anthropology is the study of human beings, especially human culture and society. Hurston studied anthropology at Barnard College and Columbia University, focusing her research on Black Southern folklore. She also visited Haiti and Jamaica to document Black culture in those countries. This work would later influence her fiction writing, as evidenced by the authentic, multidimensional depictions of Black Southern life in **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and other stories. One of Hurston's other anthropological achievements was the preservation of 19 Black folk songs through recordings that contain her own performances of and commentary on the pieces.

How did Hurston's work as an anthropologist influence her creative writing?

- A. It influenced her understanding of cultures throughout the world.
- B. She used her knowledge of American society to write about fictional places.
- C. Her novels contained stereotypical depictions of Black culture.



D.

Her writing depicted Black Southern life with depth and authenticity.

According to the passage, Hurston's novels contained "authentic, multidimensional depictions of Black Southern life" that derived from her anthropological work documenting Black culture.