

Name _____

Period _____

Their Eyes Were Watching God - Chapter One

Standards Focus: Dialect

One of the ways an author develops his or her style is through the use of dialect. **Dialect** is the distinctive speech pattern of a particular region, class, or race. Unlike slang, dialect has a distinct and well-developed system of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Through the use of dialect, authors are able to create a realistic story, believable characters, and an authentic feeling setting.

In her research has an anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston collected African-American folk tales and developed a system to convert many of these spoken tales to a written form of the black dialect. To Hurston, the dialect was not a negative stereotype, but a musical and poetic language which is a natural part of the African-American culture. By writing in the realistic manner in which blacks in the South actually spoke, Hurston creates powerful, authentic characters and a realistic setting.

Directions: Replace the following sentences from Chapter One with a more familiar or modern "translation."

1. "Wat dat ole fort year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal?"

2. "If she ain't got manners enough to stop and let folk know how she been makin' out, let her g'wan!"

3. "The worst thing Ah ever knowed her to do was taking a few years offa her age and dat ain't never harmed nobody"

4. "De way you talkin' you'd think de folks in dis town didn't do nothin' in de bed 'cept praise de Lawd."

5. "Mah mullato rice ain't so good dis time. Not enough bacon grease, but Ah reckon it'll kill hongry."

6. "Ah see Mouth-Almighty is still sittin' in de same place. And Ah reckon they got me up in they mouth now."

7. "You know if you pass some people and don't speak tuh suit 'em dey got tuh go way back in yo' life and see whut you ever done. They know mo' 'bout yuh than you do yo' self."

8. “Most of these zigaboos is so het up over yo’ business till they liable to hurry theyself to judgment to find out about if they don’t soon know.”

9. “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 mout.”

10. “So long as they get a name to gnaw on they don’t care whose it is , and what about, ‘specially if they can make it sound like evil.”

11. “If they wants to see and know, why don’t they come kiss and be kissed?”

12. “Unless you see de fur, a mink skin ain’t no different from a coon hide.”

13. “It’s hard for me to understand what you mean, de way you tell it. And then again Ah’m hard of understandin’ at times.”

14. What can we infer about these characters from their speech patterns?

15. Is your inference stereotypical or realistic? Or both? On what evidence did you base your opinion?
