

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)**

**Possible Claims**

The debatable issue for this unit is:

**"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" (192). This is the final thought that Janie imparts to her friend Phoeby in Their Eyes Were Watching God. Janie "finds out about livin'" from each of her three husbands -- Logan Killicks, Joe Starks, and Tea Cake -- but from her experiences with which one does she learn the most about life? What are Janie's most profound self-understandings and self-discoveries, according to the novel?**

**Position: Logan Killicks**

Janie learns through her marriage with Killicks that the institution of marriage itself doesn't bring with it love, that love is something that has to be nurtured through mutual caring.

Contrary to Nanny's imperative to marry for economic security, marriage with Killicks leads Janie to conclude that marriage should be separate from the search for material comfort.

Living with Killicks, Janie realizes that she married Killick to satisfy someone else, fundamentally the wrong way to make any important life decision.

**Position: Joe Starks**

One of the key lessons Janie learns about life from Joe Starks is that oppressive sexism is part of what drives powerful men.

Marriage with Joe Starks comes to symbolize for Janie the way that hunger for power in the world very often also spills over into hunger for power in the home.

Living in Eatonville with Joe Starks makes Janie realize that living for the respect and admiration of others results in a kind of hollow life.

**Position: Tea Cake**

Tea Cake's love of the simple pleasures in the moment helps Janie realize that she rejects American materialist and market-based values.

Marriage with Tea Cake shows Janie that a love based on gender equality is not only possible, it is also essential for a woman's happiness.

Through her relationship with Tea Cake, which has its peaks and valleys and ultimately ends in a primal death, Janie comes to recognize that it is almost a law of nature that all human relationships have flaws and negative emotions.