The Eatonville Anthology Study Guide

The Eatonville Anthology by Zora Neale Hurston

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BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

First published in the fall of 1926 in the *Messenger* magazine, "The Eatonville Anthology" is one of Zora Neale Hurston's most important and interesting short stories because of its design, content, and use of authentic dialect. Hurston's collection of vignettes in "The Eatonville Anthology" do not conform to the narrative pattern that most readers expect from a work of short fiction Hurston's story is a collection of short profiles and anecdotes about a cast of characters who inhabit a small African-American community in central Florida during the early decades of the twentieth century. Together these individual voices are a powerful portrayal of black culture at a time when blacks were largely subsumed by the dominant white culture.

When "The Eatonville Anthology" was published, its design would have been familiar to readers of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), which was the first of its kind in American literature. Masters' *Anthology* is a collection of poetic monologues, or epigrams, by former inhabitants of an area in central Illinois. Hurston makes a direct literary allusion to Masters' work with her use of the word "anthology" in the title of her narrative and by composing the chapters of brief,,dialect-filled stories about residents of a small Florida town that exists on the outskirts of Orlando. Hurston's "Anthology" is recognized as an important early twentieth-century work for its blend of authentic folklore and fiction.

Author Biography

Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1903 in Eatonville, Florida, according to some sources. Others place her birth as early as January 7, 1891, but her headstone reads 1901-1960. She was the seventh of eight children born to John Hurston, a Baptist preacher, carpenter, and town mayor, and his wife, Lucy, a former schoolteacher. To the young Hurston, rural Eatonville was "a city of five lakes, three croquet courts, 300 brown skins, 300 good swimmers, plenty of guavas, two schools and no jailhouse." It also was an area rich in the black folk traditions and history that permeates Hurston's literature.

Hurston left her job as a wardrobe girl in Florida for a job as an actress in a traveling light-opera troupe. Eventually she found herself in Baltimore, Maryland. Determined to complete her education, she attended Morgan Academy in 1917 and 1918, and then went on to Howard University in Washington, D.C., where her first story was published in the campus literary magazine in 1921.

Hurston continued to write and publish while she studied anthropology at Barnard College in New York City from 1925 to 1927. She did her field anthropology work with the renowned Dr. Frank Boas at Columbia University in 1926 and returned to Florida in 1927 to collect folklore.' "The Eatonville Anthology," published in 1926, recorded much of the folklore and tradition that existed in her hometown of Eatonville. The story reflected her interest in anthropology and in preserving bits of die past for future generations.

Hurston was briefly married twice. Her first marriage was to fellow anthropology student Herbert Sheen in 1927, and her second marriage was to Albert Prince III in 1939. Both marriages failed because Hurston was more attached to her work and her independence than to either husband. This independence was reflected in the risks that she took as a writer, especially her renowned use of authentic African-American dialect in her fiction and her intent to break "that old silly rule about Negroes not writing about white people."

In her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), Hurston combined her knowledge of "Negro folklore " with biblical themes. Next, in *Mules and Men*, Hurston included many folktales that the tellers call "lies," which contain hidden social and philosophical messages. These messages were an important part of the culture surrounding Hurston's hometown. Critics maintain that Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, published in 1937, is her best work. In addition to these and many other literary and anthropological works, Hurston also worked for a short while on the wholly African-American play *Mule-Bone* with Langston Hughes.

Although Hurston was a prolific writer, by the mid-1940s her career had begun to wane. Poverty and ill health plagued Hurston until her death in the St. Lucia County Welfare Home in Florida on January 28, 1960. The burial was delayed ten days while friends raised $600 to pay for a funeral. Thirteen years passed before writer Alice Walker traveled to Florida to put a headstone on Hurston's grave. Walker began a crusade to

secure Hurston a place in the annals of literary history. The light-gray marker in the Garden of the Heavenly Rest, a segregated cemetery in Fort Pierce, reads: "Zora Neale Hurston: A Genius of the South. Novelist. Folklonst. Anthropologist."

Plot Summary

Hurston's "The Eatonville Anthology" is comprised of fourteen short sketches which offer humorous commentary on lives of residents in Eatonville, Florida. Several characters, such as Joe Clarke, owner of the general store and Eatonville's mayor and postmaster, and Elijah Moseley, appear in a number of the segments while many other characters appear only once.

In the first segment entitled "The Pleading Woman," Mrs. Tony Roberts begs for food for her family. First she begs for meat from Mr. Clarke who is annoyed, because he knows that her husband is a good provider and she does not need to beg. She then visits various homes until she has collected everything she wants for the day. Apparently, Mrs. Roberts is never satisfied with what she is given. The narrator explains that the next day her begging continues.

In "Turpentine Love," Jim Merchant's love for his wife endures, explains the narrator, despite the fact that she has had all her teeth out. When they were courting, the fact that she was "subject to fits... didn't cool his love" either. One Sunday Mrs. Merchant's mother tries to stop one of her daughter's fits by giving her a dose of turpentine and accidentally spills some in her eye. Somehow this cures her fits, and she never has another one.

In the unfilled Segment III, Becky Moore has "eleven children of assorted colors and sizes." The narrator pokes fun at Becky, claiming that the fact that Becky's children are fatherless is completely the men's fault, since she "has never stopped any of the fathers of her children from proposing."

Segment IV, "Tippy," focuses on "the most interesting member" of Sykes Jones's family, the dog. Tippy has been sentenced to death several times for a variety of food theft crimes. Despite these threats, he manages to remain skinny, alive, and friendly.

In Segment V, "The Way of a Man with a Train," Old Man Anderson lives in the country and has no interest in seeing a train. "Patronage and ridicule" finally force him to drive his horse and wagon into the woods beside the railroad to wait for a train. He secures his horse far from the tracks where it will be safe. When the train finally comes "thundering over the trestle spurting smoke," Old Man Anderson becomes so frightened that he drives away, damaging his wagon extensively.

Segment VI is entitled "Coon Taylor." Coon Taylor is said to have never done any real stealing, except for chickens, watermelons, and muskmelons. No one has ever managed to calch Coon stealing, but Joe Clarke decides to try. During the first attempt, Joe falls asleep and Coon ends up inadvertently cracking a melon on Joe's head. However, Clarke later catches Coon thieving during sugar cane season and makes him sit down and eat all the cane he has stolen. Joe also banishes Coon from the town for three months.

"Village Fiction," Segment VII, features Joe Lindsay, Lum Boger, and Brazzle, three residents who compete for the title of town liar. A tall tale is recounted in this section, entitled "Exhibit A," and it is unclear who actually tells this lie. The unspecified storyteller claims to have witnessed a doctor cut up a woman in Orlando one day, remove all her organs, wash them, dry them, and put them back. The phrasing of the section makes it difficult to know who is actually telling the lie.

Segment VIII is another example of a "village fiction" concerning a character named Sewell. According to Elijah Moseley, Sewell moves so often that every time he enters his backyard, the chickens expect another move and "lie down and cross their legs, ready to be tied up again."

Segment IX concerns Mrs. Clarke, Joe Clarke's wife. Clarke yells at her and beats her whenever she makes a mistake working in the store. In church on Sunday Mrs. Clarke closes her eyes and "shakes the hand of fellowship with everybody in the Church ... but somehow always misses her husband."

Segment X describes the behavior of another woman in church, Mrs. McDuffy. Her husband also beats her at home, because he does not like her shouting in church. Mrs. McDuffy tells Elijah Moseley that she cannot stop shouting, but Mr. McDuffy tells Elijah that she shouts because she knows Mr. McDuffy dislikes it.

"Double-Shuffle," Segment XI, concerns the kind of dancing people did in the "good old days" in Eatonville before World War I and before the age of the fox trot. The grand march of Eatonville, unlike the grand march performed by whites "still has a kick .. . [and is] too much for some of the young folks."

Segment XII, "The Head of the Nail," features Daisy Taylor, the town vamp. Daisy torments the timid Mrs. Laura Crooms about her alleged affair with Laura's husband. The teasing occurs one Saturday night when the town gathers on the post office porch in its customary fashion "to tell stories and treat the ladies." Laura Grooms surprises everyone by beating Daisy with an ax handle because Daisy refuses to stop taunting. The beating is so thorough that Daisy falls into a ditch. Defeated, Daisy leaves Eatonville for Orlando.

"Pants and Cal'line," Segment XIII, is the story of Mitchell Potts who cheats on his wife and buys his mistress shoes. Unlike Laura Crooms, Mitch's wife Cal'line is known to "do anything she had a mind to." This sketch ends inconclusively, with Mitch "smiling sheepishly" as he passes the porch sitters on his way to visit Miss Pheeny, and Cal'line following two minutes behind him, "silently, unsmilingly," carrying an axe.

The final segment of "The Eatonville Anthology," Segment XTV, recounts a version of the Brer Rabbit tale, when "animals used to talk just like people." In this version of the story, "dogs and rabbits was the best of friends—even tho' both of them was stuck on the same gal which was Miss Nancy Coon." Miss Nancy likes both Mr. Dog and Mr. Rabbit, but she seems to be favoring Mr. Dog who has the sweeter singing voice. Mr. Rabbit cannot sing at all, but promises his friend that he can help him sing even sweeter

if Mr. Dog will stick out his tongue. Instead of helping, Mr. Rabbit splits Mr. Dog's tongue with a knife, and "the dog has been mad at the rabbit ever since."

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

I - The Pleading Woman

As the story begins, the reader is introduced to Mrs. Tony Roberts who is known as the "pleading woman." She asks her husband and neighbors for various items. She begs Mr. Clarke, one of the neighbors, for a piece of meat to season a pot of greens. Mrs. Roberts claims that her husband doesn't provide for her and her children, but Mr. Clarke knows differently. Still, he relents and gives her the meat and Mrs. Roberts venerates him, telling him that God will bless him for doing so because he loves those who give. When Mrs. Roberts follows Mr. Clarke to get the meat, she even asks for more than what he's cutting off the bone. She leaves, but not without chastising Mr. Clarke. Clearly disappointed in him, she feels that he should have given her more meat. After she's gone, Mr. Clarke adds the charge for the meat to the Tony Roberts' account.

On her way home, Mrs. Roberts visits several other neighbors, gathering more items for the day. She takes greens from Mrs. Pierson's place and bemoans Tony for not providing for the family. She also accuses Mrs. Pierson of being stingy with the greens. Mrs. Pierson gives Mrs. Roberts a bit more. The next day, Mrs. Roberts will repeat her actions.

II - Turpentine Love

Jim Merchant is a jovial, married man who fell in love with his wife at first sight. At present, his wife has no teeth, having had them all pulled. Jim married her even though she suffered from fits when they first met. Her mother gave her turpentine to try and stop the fits. The turpentine got into her eye and, strangely enough, cured her.

III - (no title)

Becky Moore has never married, but she has eleven children. Other mothers won't allow their children to play with her children, because they are fearful that Becky's lifestyle will rub off on their own children.

IV - Tippy

The Jones' families are crapshooters. Tippy is Sykes Jones' dog. The dog is skinny and goes into the neighbors' houses and steals meat. As a result, the townspeople try repeatedly to kill Tippy to no avail. Now, they tolerate him and Tippy gets along with whomever he comes across.

V - The Way of a Man with a Train

Old Man Anderson lives in the countryside outside of town. He purchases food for months at a time so that he doesn't have to come into town. He is also chided for not having ever seen a train. Many people tell him that he should see a train, and after much pestering, he decides to get up early and drive to Jacksonville in order to see one. While waiting for the train, he remembers people talking about fire and smoke coming from the engine, so he decides that he needs to be further away from the tracks. While moving his cart, the train roars by, scaring him so badly that he races off into the woods, never seeing the train.

VI - Coon Taylor

Coon Taylor is a petty thief, stealing small items like melons. People are aware that he is stealing from them, but are unable to prove it or catch him. After taking a bunch of melons from Joe Clarke, Joe loads a shotgun with rock salt and waits up to catch Coon. Joe falls asleep and doesn't wake up and see Coon until it is too late. The next time that Joe waits up for Coon is during the sugarcane season. Joe catches him and makes him eat all of the sugarcane he steals right then. Joe then banishes Coon from the town for three months.

VII - Village Fiction

There is some debate over who has the largest business in the state. Lum Boger insists that Joe Lindsay has the biggest, while Brazzle claims to own the largest himself. Brazzle also asserts that his wife is "the biggest liar in the world" (pg. 63). This is evidenced by a tale regarding a doctor's removal of a woman's organs and then replacing them so that she could go back to work.

VIII - (no title)

Sewell is a man who moves around frequently and lives by himself. He is also bald.

IX - (no title)

Mrs. Clarke is married to Joe Clarke. When they are first married, Joe beats her, but doesn't any longer. On Sundays, she shakes every hand in the congregation except Joe's.

X - (no title)

Every Sunday Mrs. McDuffy goes to church and when she gets home her husband beats her. He beats her because she shouts during the church service. Elijah asks Mrs. McDuffy why she won't quit shouting so that he won't beat her; she replies that she can't because she is so filled with the spirit of God. Elijah then asks her husband to quit beating her, but he informs him that the routine is done out of spite and that he plans to keep it up as long as his wife.

XI - Double-Shuffle

Before the World War, the town of Eatonville held dances during which younger residents do the two-step and waltz. The older residents perform a grand march. The grand march is described and compared to the way it is performed in other locations. Without an orchestra playing, the dancers count out a beat and people shout and clap. When the boys' dance is over, it is the girls' turn. Afterwards, Mr. Clarke announces that refreshments are available.

Since the war, the boys and girls now dance the fox trot and there is a new piano.

XII - The Head of the Nail

Despite being unattractive, Daisy Taylor is regarded as "the town vamp." (pg. 67). She goes to Clarke's store to see if any mail has come for her, but it is very rare that anyone writes to her. The two single men in town aren't interested in her at all, so she flirts with married men.

Many of the wives complain about Daisy, but it is her affair with Crooms, a fruit-picker, that causes the most trouble. The affair goes on for some time and Crooms even purchases Daisy a pair of shoes. Mrs. Crooms cries about the affair and most other things, but ultimately leaves it up to God to handle.

One Saturday evening, Daisy approaches the men who are gathered around the storefront playing games and telling stories. When none of the men offer to buy her a soda or candy, she declares that she doesn't need anything from them, because Crooms will buy her anything she wants. Mrs. Crooms is approaching, but Daisy doesn't seem to care. In fact, Daisy quite likes rubbing the affair in Mrs. Crooms' face. Mrs. Crooms strikes Daisy with an ax-handle and continues to do so every time that Daisy tries to get to her feet. The following week, Daisy relocates to Orlando.

XIII - Pants and Cal'line

A quiet woman, Cal'line Potts may keep to herself, but she's apt to do whatever she pleases. Though she is not regarded as a jealous woman, she does certain things to the women that her husband fooled around with. Mitch Potts, her husband, becomes irritated with Cal'line and tells her off. He later comes home with a rectangular box. Cal'line stands barefoot while she irons. Mitch takes the box into the woods. A short time after, Cal'line follows Mitch, but before leaving the house, she picks up the axe.

XIV - (no title)

A tale about how animals used to be able to talk like people, this section details Miss Nancy Coon being approached by Mr. Dog. They flirt and play and Miss Coon tells the dog that she likes the sound of his voice. A short while later, Mr. Rabbit comes along and asks Miss Coon to marry him.

Having been proposed to by both Mr. Dog and Mr. Rabbit, Miss Coon explains that she needs to think the proposals over and asks them both to come back the next day.

Before they leave, Miss Coon tells them that she likes the way Mr. Dog sings, but she also likes the way Mr. Rabbit dances.

Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Dog both leave. On their way home, Mr. Rabbit tells Mr. Dog that he would like to help Mr. Dog improve his singing voice. He tells Mr. Dog to meet him at the huckleberry patch in the next day and Mr. Dog agrees excitedly.

The next day, Mr. Dog meets Mr. Rabbit. Mr. Rabbit slices the dog's tongue with a knife and runs like crazy. Dogs have been mad at rabbits ever since and the proof is in a dog's tongue and the thin line that runs along it.

Analysis

Told through a series of vignettes, Zora Neale Hurston paints a vast portrait of a town through its people. Not much in the way of physical description is offered; instead, Hurston relies on describing the inhabitants, more importantly, conveying their personalities.

The first character introduced is Mrs. Roberts. She is referred to as "the pleading woman." In a way, Mrs. Roberts foreshadows many of the characters, particularly the women that appear throughout *Eatonville Anthology*. She begs for items she does not need and cares little for. Mrs. Roberts also parallels Tippy. Both are beggars and both are tolerated for their dedication and resiliency. It is ironic that a woman and dog are paralleled, as it would seem that women, in this town, are treated like dogs. Through their determination and perseverance, much like Tippy surviving his various death sentences, the women prevail.

Unconditional love and a good marriage are represented by Jim Merchant and his toothless wife, but beyond that, the relationships in the story are severely flawed. The breakdown begins with Becky Moore and her eleven children with different fathers. Without fathers, it is symbolic of the children's isolation from the community.

Old Man Anderson is one of two men specifically portrayed as outsiders. (Sewell is the other.) Old Man Anderson is the outsider that resides on the outskirts of town. He is chided for not ever having seen a train, yet when the opportunity arises, the sound of the train spooks him and he doesn't see it after all. He rejects the idea of travel because he is set on staying in one place. The train signifies movement from one destination to another and Old Man Anderson rejects this. Sewell differs from Old Man Anderson by being a loner, an outsider, within the town limits.

Two church-going women are subject to beatings by their husbands. One, Mrs. Clarke, used to suffer at the hands of her husband, but he no longer beats her. Yet, in a place of worship, Mrs. Clarke rejects him by shaking hands with everyone in the congregation except her husband.

Mrs. McDuffy fares differently. Her beatings are weekly, but when Elijah asks both Mrs. McDuffy and her husband about the beatings, neither is willing to stop. It's a familiar dance, almost as if it's expected of them.

The section that details the dance rituals shows a shift in time. The dance is described in great detail of what happened prior to the World War. (Though it is not specifically referenced, it is inferred that the war in question is World War I.) The dances are symbolic of mating rituals, but also the change that comes with the next generation.

Another change that occurs after the section that references the war is how women deal with infidelity. First, Mrs. Croons beats Daisy with an ax-handle, which ultimately results in Daisy fleeing the town. However, when Cal'line picks up an axe, she is taking out her revenge on her husband. A shift takes place in which the women see themselves as a collective whole. Recognizing that the men share responsibility in the affairs, Cal'line takes it out on her husband instead of another woman.

The men are portrayed as abusive womanizers, almost as though Hurston makes the men caricatures so that not much in the way of sympathy can develop for them. Instead, the focus is primarily on the women and the women as victims. Even Daisy, the town vamp, is viewed as sympathetic. She is not a beautiful creature. She is portrayed as unattractive and undesired by the two single men in town. That she would seek the attention of married men seems reasonable, if not sad.

If "The Pleading Woman" opens the story fittingly, it is just as fitting that the story concludes with a tale about animal relations. In this portion, a dog and rabbit vie for the attention - and commitment of marriage - of a female coon. The female has trouble choosing between them and wants to take time to consider her decision, but the decision is ultimately not left up to her. Instead, the men take matters unto themselves. The rabbit deceives the dog and wounds him, thus causing the familiar pursuit of dog after rabbit.

A woman is at the center of the dispute through no fault of her own. The women in *Eatonville Anthology* are in a similar situation.

Characters

Old Man Anderson

Old Man Anderson is a farmer who lives outside the city limits of Eatonville and only comes to the town two or three times a year. He has never seen a train and the townspeople look down on him because he has no interest in seeing the train go through the nearby town of Maitland. Observing the train is a big event for Eatonville residents, and Anderson finally gives in to their ridicule. When he travels into Maitland the sound of the train scares him so badly that he drives his horse and wagon deep into the forest without ever seeing the train at all.

Mr. Clarke

Mr. Clarke is one of the shopkeepers in "The Eatonville Anthology." He appears in several other sections of the story in addition to his part in Section I. He and his wife own one of the main stores in Eatonville (perhaps the general store) and he is involved in many of the affairs of the community. It is revealed later in Section VI that Clarke is also the town mayor, postmaster, and has several other duties. His wife, who refers to him as "Jody," is the main character of Section DC.

Mrs. Clarke

Mrs. Clarke helps her husband, Joe Clarke, run their store in Eatonville. Section TX describes her behavior in church every Sunday and her relationship with Mr. Clarke. The narrator describes a fairly volatile relationship with Mr. Clarke reprimanding his wife for her mistakes and sometimes beating her.

Jody

See Mr. Clarke

Joe

See Mr. Clarke

Sykes Jones

Sykes Jones is the owner of a dog named Tippy. Tippy is the main focus of Section IV, rather than Sykes. Tippy has a reputation around Eatonville as a scrounger of food and various residents have tried to get rid of the dog by feeding him strychnine, bluestone,

and other poisons. The dog survives however, and remains skinny despite the food he steals.

Joe Lindsay

Joe Lindsay is one of the town liars and a subject of Section VII. It is said that he is "the largest manufacturer of prevarications in Eatonville" by another resident, Lum Boger. In other words, he is the biggest liar in town. Another character, Brazzle, regards himself as the biggest liar in town. A description of one of the character's lies is briefly recounted in Section VII. The phrasing of the two short paragraphs in this section, entitled "Exhibit A," makes it unclear who actually tells this lie.

Lizzimore

Lizzimore is a blind guitar player who played at the Methodist church during "Double-Shuffles" in Eatonville in "the good old days before the war." The "Double-Shuffles" are the focus of Section XI. They are dances that were very popular with the townspeople, and are part of the tradition and lore of the town. Attended by the Clarkes, Moseleys, and numerous others, the dances are events remembered by everyone.

Mrs. McDuffy

Mrs. McDuffy is another resident of Eatonville, and her behavior in church is the focus of Section X. The narrator describes her shouting in church and her husband's aversion to such behavior. He beats her at home for her shouting and does not understand her need to yell. Like the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Clarke, the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. McDuffy includes beatings that seem to be an accepted part of life in Eatonville.

Jim Merchant

Jim Merchant and his wife are the subjects of the second section of "Anthology." He is a minor character in relation to the rest of the story. Section II recounts his first meeting with his wife, who has "fits." Her cure is brought about by spilling turpentine into one of her eyes.

Becky Moore

Becky Moore is the unwed mother of eleven children who have been sired by a variety of men. Other mothers in Eatonville will not let their kids play with the Moore children. According to the narrator, Becky believes that the fathers of her children are to blame for her unwed status. The other mothers are apparently afraid their children will adopt

Becky's behefs or will become like the missing fathers and not take responsibility for their own offspring.

Narrator

The narrator of "The Eatonville Anthology" represents the community of Eatonville as a single voice. The special feature of this voice is the way in which it presents each citizen or incident with a tone of approval and acceptance as a separate part of the whole town. None is subjected to negative judgment or criticism. In this way, the character of the community is preserved and reflected positively in the light and role of each of its citizens.

The Pleading Woman

See Mrs. Tony Roberts

Cal'line Potts

Cal'line Potts is the main character in Section XIII. The narrator describes her as a fiercely independent person, who "kept the town in an uproar of laughter." Her husband, Mitchell, "takes up" with another woman named Delphine, also known as Mis' Pheeny. When Cal'line catches Mitch all dressed up for an evening with the other woman, she grabs an axe and follows Mitch through the town on his way to Delphine's. This section ends with no resolution to this conflict, and critics maintain that part of this section was lost during publication. However, Cal'line's character and strength are amply developed throughout this section of "Eatonville."

Brer Rabbit

See Brother Rabbit

Brother Rabbit

Brother Rabbit is a character in Section XTV of "The Eatonville Anthology." This final section is a retelling of the Brer Rabbit story and contains other animal characters such as Miss Nancy Coon and Mr. Dog. In this Eatonville version of the story, competition between Mr. Dog and Brother Rabbit to win the favor of Miss Coon results in dogs and rabbits becoming enemies because of the trick Brer Rabbit plays on Mr. Dog. Convinced that the rabbit is going to help him learn how to sing sweetly, Mr. Dog sticks out his tongue to receive a gift from Brother Rabbit Brother Rabbit then splits Mr. Dog's tongue with a knife and runs away.

Mrs. Tony Roberts

Mrs. Tony Roberts is the main character of the first section of "The Eatonville Anthology." She goes about the town of Eatonville whining, begging, and pleading with shopkeepers for free merchandise or for goods at a discount. According to the narrator of the story, Mr. Roberts gives her enough money to support their family, and her whining seems to be a bargaining tool in her dealings with the shopkeepers.

Sewell

Sewell is the town hermit. Section VIII recounts his frequent moves and his relationship with his chickens, who have "gotten accustomed to his relocations." Sewell is another example of a character around which Eatonville residents have made up stories and myths.

Coon Taylor

Coon Taylor is the subject of Section VI. He is a thief who steals frequently from Joe Clarke's gardens. On one occasion, Clarke has fallen asleep in his melon patch while waiting for Coon to show up. When Coon bursts open a melon on what he thinks is a tree stump, it turns out to be Joe's head. In another episode, Clarke catches Coon in his sugar cane patch and makes Coon leave town for three months.

Daisy Taylor

Daisy Taylor is the town vamp. She is a flirt who comes to the town post office to socialize with the men who gather there. After a series of flirtations with different men, Daisy focuses on Mr. Albert Crooms, who is married. One Saturday evening, Daisy boasts of her supposed relationship with Albert in front of his wife, Laura. After encouragement from another resident, Laura takes an axe handle and beats Daisy senseless. Readers are apt to be sympathetic toward Mrs. Crooms because of Daisy's taunting, and the beaten Daisy flees Eatonville at the conclusion of this section.

Themes

Community

Many of the fourteen profiles in "The Eatonville Anthology" open with a statement on the outstanding quality of the character they feature. This statement typically defines the character's social status in the community. Whenever this introduction focuses on a negative quality, the narrator defends the character's negative trait with a modification or explanation. With this strategy the narrator signals acceptance of each individual and describes the response of the community. In general, the people of the town are amused and entertained by the eccentric characters being described.

The vignettes in Hurston's "The Eatonville Anthology" collectively reflect the powerful sense of community found in areas where certain cultural groups fight for existence within a larger dominant culture. The African-American, Latin-American, and Asian-American cultures are examples of the many cultural systems that subsist within the dominant Anglo-European culture of the United States. Often the need for community is emphasized by both the culture itself and the individual's need to develop a sense of safety and self-identity. Community is more than a shared genetic code in "Anthology"; it is a bond among people who share common life experiences. The people in Eatonville draw together because they acknowledge shared experiences, and they preserve those experiences through stories. By doing so, the community is assured of its continuity, and members of the village are assured a sense of safety and belonging. Preservation of their community is especially important because it exists within the context of a larger dominant culture.

Preservation of Culture

Storytelling guarantees that a social system endures. A community and its people can be remembered and its customs preserved through the telling of stories. The individual stories in "The Eatonville Anthology" demonstrate how the citizens of a small, rural community are connected in spirit and culture. As a whole, the stories present a coherent picture of the lives, language, and social structure of Eatonville in the early 1920s.

The Art of Storytelling

Storytelling is an integral part of community life in Hurston's Eatonville. Literary scholars and critics alike have come to understand that not only is the act of telling a story an art, but it is also an inherent part of the modern African-American tradition. The oral tradition of storytelling usually reflects the lack of a system of concrete signs for the spoken word. Sometimes the language itself does not have an alphabet or other concrete images for communication; at other times, the people using the language do not have access to these symbols. In the case of African-American slaves, most never learned to

write. Thus, their initial decades in the United States were recorded and preserved largely through oral traditions.

The term "storytelling" also refers to exaggerations or outright lies that are told to emphasize a point. Several of the stories in "The Eatonville Anthology" play with the other implied meanings of the word "storytelling." By providing examples of local myths and exaggerated tales, the "stones" of "Anthology" capture the people and character of the town. The woman who begs for food when she is able to afford it, the thieving dog Tippy, and the tall-tale about the old man and his first encounter with a train are all examples of tales and personalities that have been embellished by the local townspeople.

Style

Point of View

"The Eatonville Anthology" is an excellent example of those literary texts in which the narrative exists primarily to demonstrate forms of traditional oral narration. The work consists of fourteen parts based loosely on folktales, jokes, and the author's childhood memories. The thirteenth piece appears unfinished, whether by authorial intent or publishing error. Although each of these stories is itself a separate tale, the impression given is that the narrator is a member of the community and is conveying a running history of Eatonville. The sense that this history has been an accepted part of the town's culture for many years is also conveyed in the text. Despite this, the final narrative impression is that of a third-person, objective observer.

Structure

"The Eatonville Anthology" is broken into fourteen separate stones. Originally, an"anthology was a collection of short poems. Today an anthology consists of any collection of poems, stories, songs, or excerpts, which are chosen by a compiler, usually an editor. In this case, the narrator functions as the editor because he or she has chosen which stories to tell.

Local Color

The term "local color" refers to the way a writer exploits the speech, dress, mannerisms, habits of thought, and topography specific to a certain geographical region in an attempt to portray a community as realistically as possible. The Florida community of Eatonville and its townspeople were the models for Hurston's factual and fictitious tales in the "Anthology." In addition to the recognizable Florida landscape and landmarks that fill the stories, Hurston contributes realistic voices to her narrative by reproducing as precisely as possible the sounds of the spoken dialect used in this 1920s African-American rural community.

Signifying as a Literary Device

"Signifying" is a literary device of great interest to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a renowned critic and scholar. His complete investigation and explanation of this literary phenomenon is found in his seminal text, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory ofAfrican-American Literary Criticism. The concept of signifying has been defined by Rita Hooks as "rhetorical games played out in the black vernacular tradition." Signifying has also been called "playing the dozens"—a contest in which people insult each other to gain an upper hand—and "specifying." Signifying combines all three levels of storytelling; relating a story, exaggerating, and downright lying, into a complex narrative design. The

storyteller consciously manipulates the narrative and the audience and "signifies on" them by tacking the audience with different levels of meaning. Signifying is often used to rectify an imbalance of power. By writing about the community of Eatonville, Hurston is not simply relating local legends and folktales, but also preserving history. The Eatonville residents play the dozens with each other and exaggerate tales about their neighbors. For example, Mr. McDuffy insults his wife by telling her "there's no sense in her shouting, as big a devil as she is." He also says that "his fist was just as hard as her head." Section VII of "Anthology" describes several residents of the town who are great liars. One resident contends, for example, that he witnessed a doctor remove all the organs of a patient and then reinstall them without any harm to her at all. These exchanges of insults and exaggerations run throughout the story, and Hurston uses the characters who signify on each other to make a larger point. Her interest in anthropology—the study of human beings, social relations, and culture—is reflected in "The Eatonville Anthology." Hurston's combination of African-American folklore, anthropological concerns, and childhood memories in "Anthology" enables the story to record history, study a culture, and comment on relations between people all at the same time. By disguising such a study within the form of simple stories, Hurston has employed the literary device of signifying in "Anthology" to great effect.

Historical Context

Cultural Pride

The period of the 1920s was marked by a boom in economic prosperity followed by a stock market crash in 1929 and a depression lasting well into the next decade. "The Eatonville Anthology," published in 1926, describes a black community in the South and touches little upon affairs outside of the community. Mentioning the World War in Section XI gives readers some historical context, but the main focus of the story is on Eatonville and its residents. Racial conflicts, economic hardships, and other issues are not major themes in the story. The story captures the traditions and lore of Eatonville's people in its brief sketches, and Hurston's pride in her African-American heritage is clearly evident. Her use of dialect in the story, and her description of customs and folklore provide readers with a piece of Eatonville's history.

The Great Migration

During the period of 1910-1950, many blacks moved from the agricultural South to the industrial North in an effort to secure jobs. This "Great Migration" was opposed by the white power structure in the South. Needing the labor that black sharecroppers provided, states such as Alabama and Mississippi attempted to prevent blacks from leaving. However, cities such as Detroit, New York, and Chicago received hundreds of thousands of black immigrants who migrated North in hopes of finding economic prosperity and less oppressive conditions than those existing in the South. Harlem became a haven for many blacks fleeing the South, and the city experienced a cultural awakening known as the "Harlem Renaissance."

Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was the first intellectual and artistic movement that brought African-American writers and artists to the attention of the entire nation. Critics mark the defining event of the Harlem Renaissance as the 1925 publication of *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, an anthology edited by Alain Locke. The major force of the movement was generated from a large group of black artists who lived in New York during the 1920s. This gathering of artists and intellectuals led to an outburst of literary, artistic, and musical work that began to receive widespread recognition and critical appraisal. African-American writers in this group included: Langston Hughes, poet, novelist, and playwright; Jean Toomer, author of the distinguished collection of poetry and poetic prose entitled Cane; the poets Countee Cullen and Claude McKay; the novelists Eric Waldron and Zora Neale Hurston; and the poet and novelist Arna Bontemps, who was to become the historian of the movement.

Folklore and Tradition

After graduating from Barnard College in New York City, Hurston returned to Eatonville to study her townspeople. As an anthropologist, she treasured the myths, legends, and folklore that combined to create the unique African-American culture. Hurston's cultural pride and anthropological interests fused in her fiction. She recorded the voice of her native townspeople in an authentic manner, effectively capturing the mood, speech patterns, attitudes, and customs of Eatonville. Today, one of the most noted features of Hurston's fiction is her use of the African-American dialect in the speech of her characters. The movement toward declaring and preserving black pride and identity that began in the 1920s continues to grow.

Critical Overview

After suffering many years in obscurity, Hurston's work began to garner more critical attention in 1973. In that year, noted African-American author Alice Walker travelled to Alabama to find and mark Hurston's grave. This event marked the beginning of a renewed interest in Hurston's work.

"The Eatonville Anthology" has attracted critical attention for a variety of reasons. Initially, critics examined this story in relation to other anthologies such as *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters and *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson. In his essay entitled "The Establishment of Community in Zora Neale Hurston's "The Eatonville Anthology' and Rolando Hinojosa's 'Estampas del valle'," critic Heiner Bus sees similarities between the works of such mainstream male writers and Hurston's story. The need for community and identity is felt particularly by minorities who live within a larger mainstream society, claims Bus. He writes: "The trust in the power of the word as a tool to overcome powerlessness, forced muteness, is a first step towards identity and visibility as a group."

Robert Hemenway discusses the significance of "The Eatonville Anthology" in his book *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*. He calls the story Hurston's "most effective attempt at representing the original tale-telling context [and] the best written representation of her oral art." Hemenway further praises "The Eatonville Anthology" for its festive mood, which conjures the image of Hurston telling stories at a party. Integrating her interest in anthropology into her fiction, Hurston incorporated traditional African-American folklore into her tales of Eatonville.

As a source of local color, "The Eatonville Anthology" is a treasure of African-American dialect and central Florida rural geography. Critic Geneva Cobb-Moore discusses this aspect of the story in her essay "Zora Neale Hurston as Local Colorist." Cobb-Moore writes: "Florida's rich topography, the Eatonville community, and Joe Clarke's store porch are permanent features in Hurston's local colorist works." The critic elaborates on Hurston's significance, noting that literary critics "have come to acknowledge the national or even universal dimensions and implications of regional literature and see it as echoing certain moral and historical truths about our humanity."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Judy Sobeloff is an instructor at the University of Michigan and the winner of the PEN Northwest Fellowship writing residency award. In the following essay, Sobeloff discusses the themes, origins, and construction of Hurston's story "The Eatonville Anthology."

A major figure of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, Zora Neale Hurston published more books in her lifetime than any other African-American woman, spoke at major universities and received honorary doctorates, and was described in the New York Herald Tribune as being one of the nation's top writers. Her 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is widely considered a masterpiece today, and one of the most important works of fiction ever written by an African-American woman. Alice Walker insists in the foreword to Hurston's biography: "There is no book more important to me than this one." Yet Hurston died in poverty in 1960, and was buried in an unmarked grave. In an essay published in 1972, biographer Robert Hemenway describes her as "one of the most significant unread authors in America." The following year, however, Walker traveled to Florida to find and honor Hurston's grave. According to scholars Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Sieglinde Lemke in the "Introduction" to *The Complete Stories* a rising black feminist movement "seized upon [Hurston] as the canonical black foremother." This recognition thus restored Hurston's place in the American literary landscape.

Hurston was notable as a novelist, short story writer, critic, and also as the country's most important collector of African-American folklore. Born and raised in the small, all-black community of Eatonville, Florida, she had a lifelong interest in anthropology and returned to Eatonville after graduating from Barnard College in New York City to study her townspeople. She frequently used material she gathered in her anthropological work in her fiction. "The Eatonville Anthology" is based on real people and real events of Eatonville, and Hemenway considers it to be Hurston's most successful attempt to "fuse folklore and fiction."

While Hurston achieved success during her lifetime, she could be controversial and provocative as well. Her writing might be considered "politically incorrect" by some. Hurston's use of dialect and stereotypes in her writing has received praise from critics, but she has also been faulted for portraying African Americans negatively. Hurston's views on race relations were also controversial. She told at least one reporter that she opposed desegregation, though as Walker pointed out, a woman from an all-black town where blacks held all positions of power could quite reasonably see little to be gained from integrating with whites.

Hurston's writing differed sharply from other women writers of the Harlem Renaissance. It frequently rejected upper middle-class values, it employed African-American dialect, and her female characters were interested in sex. Critic P. Gabrielle Foreman holds in her essay in *Black American Literature Forum* that Hurston was unlike other black women writers such as Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen. Foreman feels that

these writers "composed books, draped among other things, with women who don heavy silks and satins and who adorn their satiny yellow skin with pretty party dresses described in detail." Hurston wrote of characters whose response to life was visceral, and who lived according to the rituals of their own communities.

Hurston frequently had to struggle to make a living in the latter part of her life. After interest in black literature and art waned at the end of the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston ceased to write about the people and customs of Eatonville. She turned toward a more conservative choice of material: her last published novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, concerned the lives of white characters, a radical change in subject matter for Hurston. Her book after that, which she had been toiling over when she died, was a biography of the Roman ruler Herod the Great, the rebuilder of Jerusalem's Great Temple.

Hurston's "The Eatonville Anthology," first published in The *Messenger* magazine in three installments in 1926, has attracted attention for a variety of reasons. Critic Heiner Bus examines "The Eatonville Anthology" in his essay "The Establishment of Community in Zora Neale Hurston's 'The Eatonville Anthology' and Rolando Hinojosa's 'Estampas del valle'." Bus discusses Hurston's story in the context of other well-known works about American small-town life, such as Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* (1920), and Thornton

Wilder's *Our Town* (1938), all of which were written by white men. Bus sees similarities between the works of mainstream and minority authors but believes that themes like community and continuity, certainly prevalent in "The Eatonville Anthology," (in segment XI, Double-Shuffle, for example), have "special connotations in the work of ethnic writers." The need for community and identity is particularly felt by minorities who live within a larger mainstream society. Bus writes: "The trust in the power of the word as a tool to overcome powerlessness, forced muteness, is a first step towards identity and visibility as a group." Hurston's portrayal of Eatonville gives her community visibility and power. Hurston's remarkable ear for dialect and use of authentic detail captures the words of her townspeople just as they would have spoken them.

Hemenway sees the significance of "The Eatonville Anthology" as "Hurston's mosteffective attempt at representing the original tale-telling context [and] the best written representation of her oral art."

He further observes that "The Eatonville Anthology" is the "literary equivalent of Hurston's memorable performances at parties. The reader has the impression of sitting in a corner listening to anecdotes." Some of the events described in "Anthology" actually occurred in Eatonville—for example, the thieving dog Tippy and Mrs. Tony Roberts, the pleading woman, among others, were real according to Hemenway. Other events in the story are based on "folktales or jokes known not only to Hurston but to many other traditional storytellers. " Hemenway continues: "Joe Lindsay, the greatest liar in the village, tells a tale so common that folklorists have classified it as Type 660: 'The Three Doctors.'" Heiner Bus comments on Hurston's use of the Brer Rabbit tale in a footnote to his essay, noting that the Brer Rabbit story appears in both the *Funk & Wagnalls*

Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend and in The Book of Negro Folklore. According to his interpretation, "projecting human behavior into the animal world signifies ... an effort to conjure up imperial power in a situation of oppression."

Hurston incorporated pieces of traditional African-American folklore into "The Eatonville Anthology, " and one of the most interesting aspects of the story is the way she later used bits of it again and again in her other works. Alice Walker observes: "Everything she experienced in Eatonville she eventually put into her books. Indeed, one gets the feeling that she tried over and over again with the same material until she felt she had gotten it right." For example, the real mayor of Eatonville, Joe Clarke, appears in "The Eatonville Anthology" and also turns up later in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, as Mayor Jody Starks. Segment JX of "Eatonville" which focuses on Joe's unhappy "soft-looking, middle-aged" wife becomes the seed for Jody and Janie's relationship in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Bus observes that Daisy Taylor, of segment XU, reappears in an unpublished play Hurston wrote with Langston Hughes entitled *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life*. The Brer Rabbit segment appears again in Hurston's collection of folklore, *Mules and Men*. Critic JoAnne Corawell sees Brazzle's mule of segment VII in "Anthology" in the mule belonging to Matt Bonner in Their Eyes and pleading Mrs. Roberts, of segment I, still pleading in the form of Mrs. Robbins, also in Their Eyes. Hemenway reports that the events of segment II, Turpentine Love, are repeated in *Seraph in the Suwanee*, except with white characters instead of blacks. He also points out the events described in "Pants and Cal'line" are based on Hurston's Aunt Cal'line and her Uncle Jim in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, with one notable difference.

The difference highlights a further reason "The Eatonville Anthology" is important to study: the story was overlooked (or treated carelessly) in much the same way Hurston herself was overlooked in the latter part of her life. According to Hemenway, a "printing mishap" caused "Pants and Cal'line," (Segment XIII) to "go incomplete" when the printer or editor apparently lost part of the story. In the real-life incident that is the basis for this section, Hurston's aunt tracked down her husband at the home of one of his mistresses and returned home with his pants slung over an axe. In "The Eatonville Anthology," the axe that Cal'line is mysteriously carrying on her way to Delphine's is never explained. The reader never learns the outcome of the confrontation, nor is the significance of the "Pants" of the title ever explained. According to Hemenway, "the error does nothing more than indicate some of the loose editorial practices of the understaffed, underpaid, overworked Messenger office," the Messenger being the "only radical Negro magazine in America" at that time. The omission was not intentional, but nonetheless, as Andrew Crosland points out, "The Eatonville Anthology" has been reprinted in several anthologies, due to "the Hurston revival," but without the explanation necessary to understand the story.

Hurston's talents were recognized and applauded during the Harlem Renaissance, then largely forgotten for years. Studying "The Eatonville Anthology" will further the reader's understanding and appreciation of the town that gave rise to this story and the larger works that grew out of it as well.

Source: Judy Sobeloff, for *Short Stories for Students*, Gale Research, 1997.

Critical Essay #2

In the following article, Cobb-Moore analyzes Hurston's writing as an example of "local color," stories that represent the everyday life of a particular region, in this case, Eatonville, Florida.

Since Zora Neale Hurston's death in 1960, an impressive number of artists and scholars have rescued her from an undeserved obscurity, best symbolized by her burial in an unmarked grave in a segregated potter's field. They have restored to her in death the fame and following that eluded her in life. Hurston's rescue began in 1973 when Alice Walker flew to Florida and visited Lee-Peek Mortuary in Fort Pierce to locate the cemetery where Hurston is buried. Finding what she believed was the grave, Walker then had a monument erected for the site. In 1977, Robert Hemenway published her biography, *Zora Neale Hurston,* to national acclaim. Both Walker and Hemenway pay respect to a writer whom Barbara Christian in Black Women Novelists and Henry Louis Gates in "A Negro Way of Saying" correctly assert is the literary model for the contemporary African-American female writer who writes realistic fiction of black women seeking self-fulfillment and self-empowerment. Since Mary Helen Washington's lament in *Black-Eyed Susans* (1975) about Hurston's neglect in literature and women's studies courses across America, Hurston's mostpopular novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), has become a perennial classroom favorite. There is an annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival in Hurston's hometown, Eatonville, Florida, which N. Y. Nathiri, one of Hurston's most devoted loyalists, coordinates. In 1991, Nathiri edited an informational book, Zora!, on Hurston and Eatonville, containing memories of the writer by relatives and friends.

From those who misunderstood her, like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, who thought her "black-minstrel" characters were created to humor a patronizing white audience, to those who loved her, like Alice Walker, Mary Ellen Washington, and Barbara Christian, who thought her a controversial but brilliant feminist, Zora Neale Hurston has stirred the emotions of critics and devotees in a variety of ways and has been called alternately minstrel, novelist, anthropologist, voodoo priestess, feminist, and folklorist. I think her real significance as writer-folklorist is best summarized by her biographer, Robert Hemenway, who writes:

Zora was concerned less with the tactics of racial uplift than with the unexanuned prejudice of American social science. She became a folklorist at a time when white sociologists were obsessed with what they thought was pathology in black behavior, when white psychologists spoke of the deviance in black mental health, and when the discipline of anthropology used a research model that identified black people as suffering from cultural deprivation. Hurston's folklore collections refuted these stereotypes by celebrating the distinctiveness of traditional black culture, and her scholarship is now recognized by revisionist scientists questioning the racial assumptions of modern cultural theory

Because the Eatonville townspeople were the models of Hurston's factual and fictive folksy, cultural richness, I find that she emerges most clearly as something that no critic, to my knowledge, has yet remarked upon: local colorist. Local color as a genre and technique emerged after the Civil War in 1868 with Bret Harte's "fresh pictures of California mining camps," although in its mne-teenth-century manifestations local color often painted a rather shallow, genteel picture of life. But the concept has undergone considerable changes because of writers like Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Zora Neale Hurston. Critics now acknowledge the national or even universal dimensions and implications of regional literature and see it as echoing certain moral and historical truths about our humanity....

Florida's rich topography, the Eatonville community, and Joe Clarke's store porch are permanent features in Hurston's local colorist works. Eatonville is at the heart of her upbringing, from living in this all-black town to attending an all-black school to being an inheritor of an all-black oral tradition, revived gloriously and hilariously on a local entrepreneur's frontporch where people gathered to bask and bake in a hot Florida sun. When Hurston writes in "How It Feels to be Colored Me" that she is not "tragically colored" and does not belong to the "sobbing school of Negrohood who hold[s] that Nature somehow has given them a ... dirty deal," we look to the proud racial heritage of the Eatonville community to understand and appreciate her racial pride.

This was no easy feat in the Jim Crow decades of the 1920s, 30s and 40s when African-Americans were made to feel their apartness from the rest of humanity by ubiquitous signs that read "For Whites" and "For Coloreds." Hurston's attitude and her emergence as a local colorist was bolstered by Columbia University anthropologist and scholar Franz Boas, a German emigre, who encouraged Hurston as a Barnard College student to develop the anthropological tools required to enable her to return to Eatonville and collect, record, and examine the rich folk material passed around matter-of-factly on Clarke's store porch. It was Boas who questioned the theory of Anglo-Saxon superiority in the twentieth century, stating it "is hardly possible to predict what would be the achievement of the Negro if he were able to live with Whites on absolutely equal terms."

Hurston's return to the South and to Florida was essential to her development as scholar of local culture and to her legacy as a precursor of Afrocentric scholars. Boas and Hurston knew that unlike black Northerners, black Southerners retained distinct Africanisms due to the rigidity of a Southern antebellum and post-bellum racial system that kept whites and blacks separated, culturally as well as physically. In *Mules and Men* Hurston writes: "I hurried back to Eatonville because I knew that the town was full of material and that I could get it without hurt, harm or danger ... As I crossed the Maitland-Eatonville township line I could see a group on the store porch. I was delighted."

Many of the folktales Hurston retells are a curious blend of the townspeople's healthy racial ethnocentrism, rooted and nurtured in a region that appears lovely but primeval, and their hilarious racial stereotyping. Consider the tale of Gold, a bold woman who

enters the male-dominated sanctuary of Joe Clarke's porch and tells the tale of how God "gave out color":

... one day He said, 'Tomorrow morning, at seven o'clock sharp, I aim to give out color. Everybody be here on time. I got plenty of creating to do tomorrow, and I want to give out this color and get it over wid. Everybody be' round de throne at seven o'clock tomorrow morning. So next morning at seven o' clock, God was sitting on His throne with His big crown on His head and seven suns circling around His head. Great multitudes was standing around the throne waiting to get their color God sat up there and looked east, and He looked west, and He looked north and He looked Australia, and blazing worlds were falling off His teeth So He looked over to His left and moved His hands over a crowd, and said, 'You's yellow people' .. He looked at another crowd... and said, 'You's red folks!'___He looked towards the center and moved His hand over another crowd and said, 'You'swhite folks!'.. .Then God looked way over to the right and said, 'Look here, Gabriel, I miss a lot of multitudes from around the throne this morning'. .. Gabriel run off and started to hunting around. Way after while, he found the missing multitudes lying around on the grass by the Sea of Life, fast asleep. So Gabriel woke them up and told them___Old Maker is might wore out from waiting. Fool with Him and He won't give out no more color'... they all jumped up and went running towards the throne, hollering, 'Give us our color! We want our color1 We got just as much right to color as anybody else'.... [they were] pushing and shoving___God said, 'Here! Here! Git back! Git back!' they misunderstood Him, and thought He said, 'Git black1' So they just got black, and kept thething-a-going1

A favorite Hurston remark to be found in almost all of her fiction is "the porch laughed" or "the porch was boiling now." The use of metonymy stresses the communal gathering on Joe Clarke's store porch and the townspeople's enjoyment. The tall-tales had, also, the distinction of breaking the monopoly of daily tedium while encouraging the socialization of men and women who were miraculously transformed on the porch into griots, poets, and philosophers. Hurston makes the reader cognizant of a congenial, group-like ethos of Eatonville society. The people were one. According to Levine, even this communal oneness is rooted deeply in the early African-American experience and its slave legacy. Levine argues that "in the midst of the brutalities and injustices of the Antebellum and post-bellum racial systems, black men and women were able to find the means to sustain a far greater degree of self-pride and group cohesion than the system they lived under ever intended for them to be able to do." Joe Clarke's store porch was not only a place for entertainment and cultural exchanges, it was, too, a safe haven, sheltering locals from a larger hostile environment while creating the illusion (or perhaps the reality) that no other world existed or mattered....

Finally, ZoraNeale Hurston develops a distinctive African-American female voice in literature. It is a voice deeply rooted in the African-American experience from Africa to America. As a local colorist, Hurston presents an intimate portrayal of lives changed and yet strangely unchanged by the experiences of the African Diaspora. By capturing the reality, the vivacity and the cultural wealth of the Eatonville community, Hurston immortalizes folk characters and their spirited survival and expands the meaning of local

color. She proves once and for all that while physical bodies can be restricted, the imagination is always free.

Source: Geneva Cobb-Moore, "Zora Neale Hurston as Local Colorist," in *The Southern Literary Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Spring, 1994, pp 25-34.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Crosland alerts readers of "The Eatonville Anthology" to editorial errors in one of the story's sections, which Hurston never corrected due to the story's lack of attention in her lifetime.

Several times during Zora Neale Hurston's career, the printed texts of her works did not reflect her exact intentions. These textual corruptions hurt her reputation as a creative artist. Unfortunately, the textual problems that recurred during her lifetime have also haunted the posthumous revival of her reputation begun by Alice Walker in 1975.

Zora Neale Hurston first published "The Eatonville Anthology" serially in the 1926 September, October, and November issues of the Messenger. The work consists of fourteen parts variously based on folk tales, jokes, or Hurston's childhood memories. This composite communicates the black ethos which nurtured the author in her early years.

The thirteenth piece in "The Eatonville Anthology," published at the end of the segment appearing in the October *Messenger*, treats a confrontation between Sister Cal'line Potts and her roaming husband Mitchell. She spots him sneaking away to visit his girlfriend with a gift of new shoes.

The betrayed wife picks up an axe and stalks him, much to the amusement of the idlers at Clark's store who watch both pass. Then the story ends abruptly.

Sister Cal'line and Mitchell are mentioned nowhere else in the "Anthology," and their fate is never disclosed. Readers are further perplexed by the title of this piece, "Pants and Cal'line," because the story contains no reference to pants. Robert Hemenway, Hurston's biographer, offers an explanation. He says that "a printing mishap caused ... "Pants and Cal'line" to go incomplete, the printer or editor apparently losing part of the story."

"The Eatonville Anthology" was not reprinted during Hurston's lifetime, so she had no opportunity to publish a corrected text. She did, however, tell the story again in her 1942 autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road. This version is about Hurston's Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim. In it, Caroline follows Jim to his girlfriend's house, breaks in using the axe, and chases away her husband, who is in his underwear. She follows him home, her axe draped with his pants and apair of new shoes. This telling of the story provides a satisfactory ending for "Pants and Cal'line" and explains the title.

Hurston died in poverty and obscurity in 1960, her literary reputation at its nadir. In 1975, Alice Walker published "In Search of ZoraNeale Hurston" in Ms,, beginning a revival of Hurston's literary reputation. Four years later, Walker edited a collection of Hurston's work titled *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing ... and Then When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive*. This book reprints the corrupted text of "The Eatonville Anthology" as well as the excerpt from which tells the story again. The two pieces are

not printed side-by-side, end no editorial note links them. Yet the alert reader should be able to determine what is missing from the "Anthology."

The Hurston revival is apparently successful, and a growing number of works by and about her are making their way into print. "The Eatonville Anthology" has been included in *The Norton Book of American Short Stories* (1988) and in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (1989)....

Source: Andrew Crosland, "The Text of Zora Neale Hurston: A Caution," in *CIA Journal*, Vol XXXVII, No. 4, June, 1994, pp 420-21

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Bus discusses "The Eatonville Anthology" as an example of a presentation of a stable community in which change is not desirable. Such a work is more correctly read as an example of storytelling, not drama.

... In his *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* Robert E. Hemenway highly praises "The Eatonville Anthology":

It is pure Zora Neale Hurston. part fiction, part folklore, part biography, all told with great economy, an eye for authentic detail, and a perfect ear for dialect ... It is Hurston's most effective attempt at representing the original tale-telling context .. the best written representation of her oral art

"The Eatonville Anthology" consists of fourteen individual pieces. In contrast to Edgar Lee Master's *Spoon River Anthology* (1915) the titles of the sections do not disclose an apparent ordering device, although the combination of place name and "anthology" implies a deeper kinship between the two works, particularly their view of small-town life as a feature of the past.

Most of the fourteen sections open with a statement on the outstanding quality of a character which defines his social status. Whenever this introduction refers to a negative quality, the narrator rushes to the character's help with a modification such as "Coon Taylor never did any stealing" or an extensive explanation like:

Becky Moore has eleven children of assorted colors and sizes. She has never been married, but that is not her fault. She has never stopped any of the fathers of her children from proposing, so if she has no father for her children it's not her fault. The men round about are entirely to blame

By this strategy the narrator signals approval of these individual attitudes and the responses of the community: stealing Coon Taylor has to "leave his town for three months" only. In the case of Becky Moore the women of the town isolate her children to prevent contamination. Only the town vamp, Daisy Taylor, eventually leaves for good after overstepping the limits of the townspeople's tolerance. But even here the narrator closes in an ironic and conciliatory tone: "Before the week was up, Daisy moved to Orlando. There in a wider sphere, perhaps, her talents as a vamp were appreciated."

Without deeply probing the psyche or the history of these figures, the narrator and the citizens of Eatonville pragmatically consider even the self-imposed isolation of some of its members constituent for their community. This fact accounts for the static, anti-climactic nature of the place had its portrayal. In hardly any of the stories are the basic situations subject to change. We learn of some unsuccessful efforts in the past to correct obvious iniquities. Generally, however, people just feel amused and entertained like the prospective reader or listener.

The World War, the coming of the railroad, and the departure of individuals occasionally cause physical and spiritual movement depicted as the loosening of morals and the questioning of social rituals. Only when these phenomena endanger institutions guaranteeing the survival of the community do people start reacting: The women e.g. violently defend the family. Normally, the communal self-defense mechanisms are still functioning. Change but complicates matters as the narrator indicates: "Back to the good old days before the World War, things were simple in Eatonville." Continuity is felt or at least pretended within a generation and between the older and younger ones. The general refusal to examine the many dimensions of an individual character perfectly matches with this denial of change by eagerly overrating the stereotypical, the communal rituals. The reader perceives change mainly as a function of biological processes, i.e., the eventual death of the people portrayed.

Though the narrator makes frequent use of irony, he basically shares the attitudes and values of Eatonville. Quite often he adapts his syntax and vocabulary to the plainness of what he is telling. The repetition of words, phrases and situations, the narrator's and his figure's falling back on proverbial wisdom, expose the ritualistic quality of the experience. In the "Village Fiction" sequence the narrator even joins the lying contest with one of the town characters. Nevertheless, his command of various language registers signals detachment. With the exception of the closing formula, Black English is exclusively used whenever the characters are allowed to speak up for themselves. With evident delight in verbalization and in the tasks of the arranger he draws Eatonville as a collection of types permanently re-enacting stereotypical social encounters, thus assigning to this community permanence and continuity, affirming his characters' desire to resist fundamental change.

The selection and positive acknowledgment of repetitive social action as a typical feature of a small Black community is based on a profound respect for individual conduct and a deep trust in the correspondence of human emotions. Hurston closes her "Anthology" with a Brer Rabbit tale explaining why the dog and rabbit hate each other. In contrast to the preceding "crayon enlargements of life," the folk tale displays a firm cause-and-effect relationship. But it refers to a collective, not an individual phenomenon of the animal world, detached from a specific time and place. It is set "Once way back yonder before the stars fell." Projecting human behavior into the animal world signifies a reality-thinking desire, an effort to conjure up imperial power in a situation of oppression.

These observations should make us see the stabilizing functions of storytelling as demonstrated in the folk tale and the whole "Anthology." By closing with a brer Rabbit story, Hurston transfers its strengths at weaknesses to her portrait of a specific community. The formula "Stepped on a tin, mah story ends" lifts the spell on the folk tale and the whole cycle whose individual themes and situations were already adapted to the typical features of the folk tale. The re-construction of Eatonville as a community establishes a complex interrelation between the narrator and his material and an equally strong communion between storyteller and his prospective audiences; it is folklore in the making. Storytelling is as repetitive as the situations re-enacted and described. Zora Neale Hurston hints at the importance of cultural identity through ritualization in "Double-Shuffle" where the males turn the formal dancing into a celebration of the Black

musical folk traditions. Before releasing the listener into his own ambiguous world, the process of selection, verbalization and repetition, affirming and denying the restrictions of the individual life, of the singular community, of place and time, has magically fulfilled the basic human need for identification and permanence and has defeated the notions of isolation and transitoriness....

By a process of transformation Hurston retrospectively liberates her characters and their stories from the conditions dominating the individual life, change and eventual death. This procedure asks for the capturing of a phase of small-town life, freezing it, making it disposable exactly as her characters prefer the collective, repetitive, stereotypical phenomena to experience continuity and familiarity. Whenever and wherever change occurs, Hinojosa's characters tend finally to accept it in view of their own ineffectuality. Hurston's figures frequently ignore or deny change in spite of their just-as-remarkable powers of acceptance.' "The Eatonville Anthology" deliberately withdraws this place from the temporal process while Hinojosa leaves Belken County open for change and extinction, as his authorial retreat at the beginning implied. Of course, both techniques basically acknowledge the fact that the two traditional societies have been destroyed..,.

Zora Neale Hurston returned to the Eatonville setting in various stories, novels, her autobiography, a folklore documentation, a drama, and in some of her essays. Her hometown provides a positive communal mood and morality, source of identification for herself, her characters, and a place where storytelling is practiced. This locality is never exposed to change and development; sometimes even characters and situations recur in later works.

The pervasive spirit of the place just receives different status among the structural elements of the texts. Only in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in her autobiography, and in *Mules and Men* do we occasionally get contrastive images of other places and social entities. Some texts appear to be mere enlargements of the condensed Eatonville sketches, reversals of the folklore-in-the-making process.

The static quality of the place in the "Anthology" and in all her works seems to contradict Hurston's belief in vitality, in her well-developed sensitivity to contradictions as displayed in her essays and her autobiography. These irritations can be dissipated when we take into consideration that the author assessed the values of Eatonville retrospectively, with a sense of loss, from the distance of her Northern experience. The term "anthology" in the title confirms this perspective. Eatonville is conceived and presented as a reconstructed phase of Black communal life before the distortions through acculturation claimed their toll. For didactic purposes the illusion of permanence has to be established to re-activate the sources of communal ethnic identity. In some of her essays Hurston refused to let the racial question confine her life and art. She rather dedicated her fictional and documentary works to the re-vitalization and celebration of the heritage, putting it out of the reach of the majority culture....

Source: Heiner Bus, "The Establishment of Community in Zora Neale Hurston's 'The Eatonville Anthology' (1926) and Rolando Hmojosa's 'Estampas del valle' (1973)," in

European Perspectives on Hispanic Literature of the United States, edited by Genvieve Fabre, Arte Publico Press, 1988, pp. 66-81

Adaptations

Zora Is My Name! is based on the life of *Zora Neale Hurston,* and stars Ruby Dee and Louis Gossett, Jr. Originally aired as a part of PBS's American Playhouse series, this 90-minute production is available for purchase through PBS Home Video, Karol Video, Facets Multimedia, Inc.

Topics for Further Study

Community is a consistent theme in the works of Zora Neale Hurston and the primary bond among the smaller stories contained in "The Eatonville Anthology." How does the image of a front porch act as a symbol of the social concept of community? Cite specific incidents from the story that prove this connection.

How does the narrator's viewpoint direct the reader's understanding and approval of the citizens presented in "The Eatonville Anthology" ? Discuss specific examples.

Hurston has been hailed as a "local colonst." What elements found in "The Eatonville Anthology" are specific to the rural area of central Florida where Eatonville is located? What descriptive details contnbute to the reader's understanding of the location?

Do the characters' speech patterns contribute to the story's presentation of local color? If so, how?

How is the issue of race perceived in Eatonville?

How does myth differ from folklore? Which African-American myths or folktales are most recognizable in this work? Discuss the significance of these tales within the context of this story.

Compare and Contrast

1920s: In 1920, Marcus Garvey organizes the first Universal Negro Improvement Association which opens with 25,000 delegates in attendance, and Garvey begins to promote his "back to Africa" movement.

1990s: On October 16, 1995, Louis Farrakhan organizes the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. Hundreds of thousands of men gather on the Mall in a demonstration of unity, pride and brotherhood.

1920: Women's suffrage is proclaimed in effect August 26 following Tennessee's ratification of the nineteenth amendment.

1990s: In 1991 Anita Hill charges that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas made indecent remarks to her eight years earlier while he served on the Equal Opportunity Commission. Sexual harassment in the workplace becomes a focus of national attention.

1920s: The National Woman's party meets in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1922 and endorses an Equal Rights Amendment drafted by founder Alice Paul.

1990s: Though the Equal Rights Amendment was never ratified, women such as Loida N. Lewis, the chairperson and CEO of Beatrice International, a company with $2.1 billion in revenues, continue to assume important roles in business, politics, and culture.

What Do I Read Next?

Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston's most celebrated novel, first published in 1937. A classic of African-American Literature, it tells the story of Janie Crawford's evolving selfhood through three marriages.

The Bluest Eye, written by Tom Morrison and published in 1970, is the story of Pecola Breedlove, an eleven-year-old black girl who believes she is ugly and longs for blue eyes. Her obsession with blue eyes turns to insanity after her father rapes her and she gives birth to a premature baby who later dies.

The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (1988) by Henry Louis Gates, Jr is a study in which Gates explores the relationship between the African and African-American vernacular traditions and black literature. Gates explains anew critical approach located within this tradition that allows the black voice to speak for itself.

ZoraNeale Hurston: A Literary Biography (1980), by Robert E. Hemenway, is the story of Hurston and her extremely colorful life and career. It features a foreword by Alice Walker and contains extensive notes and bibliography. In addition to the details of Hurston's life, this text is a good source for information on the Harlem Renaissance.

The Power of the Porch: The Storyteller's Craft in Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, and Randall Kenan by Trudier Harris, a professor of English at the University of North Carolina, discusses how Southern literature is celebrated. Harris asserts that Hurston, Naylor, and Kenan skillfully use storytelling techniques to define their audiences, reach out and draw them in, and fill them with anticipation. Harris gives Hurston special recognition as a woman writing during the Harlem Renaissance and discusses how her various roles as an anthropologist, folklorist, and novelist impact her work

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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