

Zora Neale Hurston's Hurricane

Contemplations

Living in Florida, perhaps you have experienced a hurricane or tropical storm. Recently, we have had some torrid rainfall. Have you ever seen “horizontal” rain? For your next nature journal, consider writing about a weather event you have recently experienced. Watch the rain or even carefully walk out in the rain and record your sensory experiences witnessing it. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Perhaps feel?



Literary Connections

Morning came without motion. The winds, to the tiniest, lipping baby breath had left the earth. Even before the sun gave light, dead day was creeping form bush to bush watching man. Sometime that night the winds came back...It woke up old Okeechobee and the monster began to roll in his bed. Began to roll and complain like a peevish world on a grumble. The folks in the quarters and the people in the big houses further around the shore heard the big lake and wondered. The people felt uncomfortable but safe because there were seawalls to chain the senseless monster in his bed. The folks let the people do the thinking. If the castles thought themselves secure, the cabins needn't worry. Their decision was already made as always. Chink up your cracks, shiver in your wet beds and wait on the mercy of the Lord. The bossman might have the thing stopped before morning anyway. It is so easy to be hopeful in the day time when

you can see the things you wish on. But it was night, it stayed night. Night was striding across nothingness with the whole round world in his hands. A big burst of thunder and lightning that trampled over the roof of the house. So Tea Cake and Motor looked up in angel-looking way and said, “Big Massa draw him chair upstairs...”They huddled closer and stared at the door. They just didn't use another part of their bodies, and they didn't look at anything but the door. The time was past for asking the white folks what to look for through that door. Six eyes were questioning *God*.

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*





Zora Neale Hurston was an anthropologist who came to Florida to study---observe---life in the first all Black American town of Eatonville, Fl, in the early 1930's. Her findings inspired her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, published in 1937. The novel is centered around the hurricane that hit Lake Okeechobee in 1928, and the passage above is Hurston's description of the Black workers huddled in one of the cabins while working "on the muck," picking beans, as they wait for the approach of the storm. The storm was devastating. Over 2,500 people were killed when a storm surge on Lake Okeechobee

breached the dike, flooding hundreds of square miles. Here, Hurston is personifying the storm, making it come alive.

Literary Link

Anthropomorphism is a specific form of personification in which an inanimate object or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or abilities. Hurston personifies the hurricane by commenting that the "monster began to roll in his bed...roll and complain like a peevish world on a grumble." "Complaining" and "grumbling" are human characteristics.