**Their Eyes Were Watching God**

Novel / Realistic Fiction

**Biographical Information:**

* January 7, 1891, Notasulga, Alabama-Zora Neale Hurston
* Her father was a Baptist preacher and her mother was a former schoolteacher. Grew up in Eatonville, Florida, the first all-black incorporated town in the United States.
* Three years after graduating high school, Hurston enrolled into Howard University to begin her writing career. After Earning her associate's degree from the university, she published her first story in a magazine in 1921.
* She later moved to New York, where she became a significant component in the Harlem Renaissance; Joining Langston Hughes and Wallace Thurman, she organized the journal *Fire!, which* was known as one of the most defining publications of the era.
* Hurston attended Barnard College to study anthropology on rural black folklore.
* In 1937, after the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston was able to publish *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Critics proposed *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was not a "serious fiction" and that it "carries no theme, no message, no thought."
* Although Hurston was able to achieve the Guggenheim Fellowship and published prolifically, she still fell into obscurity for some years. Hurston's work was further ignored during the 1960's because it did not relate to the counterculture revolution literary movement.
* During the 1950's, Hurston was forced to enter into a welfare home in Florida, after surviving a stroke. Hurston died penniless and was buried in an unmarked grave.

**Literary Historical Period/Movement and Pertinent Background:**

Their Eyes Were Watching God: published in 1937

**Major Characters, Their Relationships, Their Conflicts:**

* **Janie**- Janie is the main character who tells the story of her journey to Pheoby. Along her journey, Janie shares her life with three different men. Janie's first marriage with Logan Killicks was arranged by her grandmother, and Logan is often described as a dull, almost elderly person who Janie never could find any real happiness with. The second marriage Janie was in was with Jody Sparks who was more of a dreamer and brought excitement into Janie's life a while. However, Jody's overbearing nature was suffocating Janie, preventing her from becoming her own person. Once Jody became ill and passed away, Janie was able to find her own voice, becoming a more independent woman.Soon after the death of Jody, Janie marries Tea Cake, a significantly younger man, who loved Janie for who she was.
* **Tea Cake**- Tea Cake is the driving factor who helps Janie discover who she can be in life, thus helping her find her own identity. Instead of silencing her and treating Janie like a pack mule, Tea Cake stimulates her by conversing with her and involving her in his life. This helps Janie by showing her that love exists and the relationship between man and woman can be equal. Tea Cake's ultimate role in the novel was not to make Janie be dependent upon him or any other man to find happiness and security , but to find it on her own.
* **Jody Sparks**- Jody is the complete opposite of Tea Cake. Jody is cruel and controlling when it comes to power, and he doesn't seem interested in Janie as a human being. Jody relies on the exertion of power to define who he is. Jody only seems to be happy if he believes that he is in control. His whole life has been about: buying, building, bullying, and owning. He did not marry Janie because he loves her, but saw her as an object and away to gain more control over a person. Jody used Janie as a trophy wife, allowing her beauty to be flaunted without displaying her inner self.

**Brief Plot Summary:**

Their Eyes Were Watching God tells the life of the young and beautiful Janie Crawford. Janie Crawford returns back home to Eatonville, Florida, where she is greeted by the gossip of the towns people. The only person who Janie can confide in is her friend Phoeby Watson. The novel is based on Janie telling her experience to Phoeby. The novel is the journey of young Janie on the search for enlightenment and self-identity. Janie's journey begins when her grandmother marries her off to Logan Killicks, a farmer who is much older than Janie. When she moves in her life becomes miserable. She is treated like a pack mule and unloved by her new husband. After flirting with man named Jody Sparks, she decides to run off with him and get married. Jody shows himself to be ambitious and controlling by becoming mayor. He also shows Janie that he thinks that he is in charge of this marriage by beating her after she yells at him. This marriage does not end happily. Janie is not able to a quire the "big voice" that she is looking for, but in return is stifled by Jody's chauvinistic attitude. After Jody dies, Janie feels free and alive for the first time, and loves her new independence. However, when Janie meets Tea Cake, a man much younger than she is, she falls in love. Nine months after Jody dies, Janie and Tea Cake get married. At first their marriage is rough, but it soon becomes one that Janie is comfortable with. After the two move down to the Everglades and cultivate their relationship. In the midst of their happy years, a hurricane hits. As they try to escape the torrential waters that are rising, Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog. Unaware of the dog's condition, Tea Cake soon falls ill. Due to an outburst of madness caused by the rabies, Tea Cake begins to assert that Janie had been cheating on him. In this fit of madness, he begins to fire a pistol at Janie, forcing her to kill him to defend herself. She is immediately tried for murder in court, but the jury finds her not guilty. Janie then returns to Eatonville and finds peace within herself.

**Motifs (Recurring Images, Ideas, Figures of Speech, Symbols, Colors) & Their Thematic Significance:**

* **Race and Racism:** In the novel, Janie and Tea Cake face experiences of prejudice from both whites and blacks.One moment occurs between Janie and Mrs. Turner, a black woman with a racist view about black people. Another occurrence, the court room scene, after the trial Janie is comforted by white women, but is pushed aside by her black friends. In the novel the motif of race and racism is seen to affect everyone who is weak enough to fall into its trap. In the novel, racism presents itself as a cultural force. A person can either struggle with it or yield to it. It challenges Janie in her quest for peace and her identity.
* **Community:** In both Eatonville, and the Everglades, Janie constantly interacts with the community around her. In Eatonville, the novel focuses on the people sitting on the porch gossiping. In the Everglades, Janie wishes to be part of the social life where at times it offers comfort, warmth, and security Then at other times, Janie finds the gossip that the community does is petty because it is often about her due to jealously because of her independence and strong will.
* **Religion:** God is an important factor in the novel as Janie tries to find herself. Organized religion is not emphasized in the novel, but the characters find themselves relying on God in crises. The novel seems to look at God to be an all powerful force. This is shown through the way Janie and Tea Cake react to the hurricane in the Everglades.

**Other Significant Thematic Elements (Significant Character's Names, Significant Quotations, Significant Actions/Events):**

* **Hair:** Janie's hair symbolizes her strength and identity in two ways. First, it shows her independence and defiance over the community's standards. Secondly, since Janie's hair is long and straight, it symbolizes whiteness. Mrs. Turner loves Janie because of her hair and the other white qualities that she has. Janie's hair disrupts the normal traditional power (males over females,and whites over blacks).
* **The Hurricane:** It symbolizes the destructiveness of nature. The hurricane represents how chaotic and unpredictable the world can be. It forces the characters to question who they are and how do they function in the universe. It also shows how in their distress people turn to God.
* **The Pear Tree and The Horizon:** The Pear Tree and The Horizon symbolizes Janie's ideal views about nature. Janie is able to witness a perfect moment of life, full of energy, passion, and harmony. The horizon symbolizes the far off mysterious world that she wants to interact and connect with.

**Major Themes:**

* **Language: Speech and Silence:** The use of southern black dialect is often celebrated by people. Hurston's use of language parallels Janie's quest to find her voice. Jody goes to stifle Janie's speech; her hatred towards him comes from this suppression of her individuality. The opposite is found when she is with Tea Cake. Janie's love for him comes from the respect he shows her towards her becoming an individual. When Janie is able to define her speech, she also learns that silence too can be just as powerful. In the novel, Language becomes the source for empowerment and identity.
* **Love and relationships vs. Independence:** The novel is ultimately Janie's quest to find herself, but she does not find it alone. Hurston shows that men and women need each other to provide each other with things that they do not possess. Janie's view about relationships is that they should be equal; illustrated by her relationship with Tea Cake. Relationships are implied to be necessary to have a fulfilling life, but Janie's journey for independence is a spiritual quest that is self-centered. Janie is able to find independence, empowerment, and herself at the end of the novel and seems to be content of who and where she is at the moment.

**Power and Conquest as a means of fulfillment:** In the novel, Janie struggles to find herself by taking a spiritual quest towards love and self-awareness. On the other hand, Jody Sparks tries to gain fulfillment through power. He believes he will be happy and fulfilled in life if he has control over everything and everyone. When he becomes sick, the illusion that he can control the world around him is lost. Tea Cake also has difficulties when trying to fulfill life. He believes that he can survive the storm through his mastery of the muck. In the end, Tea Cake is forced to flee the storm and then struggles to survive the flooding. The world around them raises the fact that human power is limited.

**Othello**

**Literary Historical Period/Movement and Pertinent Background**

Othello is set during the Venetian/Turkish war, between 1489 and 1571. The story of Othello has another source other than the war;

an Italian prose tale written in 1565 by Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinzio. Cinzio composed a story about a Moorish general believing that his wife was being unfaithful. Cinzio's story was very bare so Shakespeare added more supporting characters and added more details to the plot.

**Major Characters, Their Relationships, Their Conflicts**

Othello: A Christian Moor and a general of the Venetian army. Although Othello is a powerful general, his tendency to trust others without certain facts cause him to be easily influenced by other people's words. His tragic flaw as a hero is that he trusts too readily. Othello trusts people without questioning their motives allowing him to be manipulated by Iago. The manipulation causes Othello's downfall.

Iago: Othello's ancient and the villain of the play. Iago desires Othello's demise because Othello overlooked Iago when appointing a new lieutenant. In the play, Iago's true motives are never clear, but his passion for manipulation and destruction is clearly presented to the reader. There is a possibility that Iago hates being the servant of a Moor.

Desdemona: Othello's wife and the daughter of Brabantio who is the Venetian senator. Desdemona and Othello are secretly married before the play begins without Brabantio's approval. Desdemona truly loved Othello for who he was. Some critics describe her as being too submissive of a character and that she is very weak.

Roderigo: Roderigo is obsessed with Desdemona and will do anything to win her heart over but Desdemona continues to reject him because of her love for Othello. Roderigo puts his trust in Iago who uses him for his money to get what he wants. Roderigo is seen as a weak, unintelligent character that falls for smooth-talking. In the end, Iago kills him by stabbing him in the back, literally.

Cassio: Cassio is Othello's lieutenant. He has flaws of being too "friendly" with the ladies and drinking way too heavily.

**Brief Plot Summary**

* The story begins in Venice when there is controversy over Cassio being appointed to Othello's lieutenant. It angers Iago because he wanted the position for himself.
* Iago gains Roderigo's trust in order to use him to his advantage later on.
* Shortly after talking to Roderigo, Iago boldly states in his soliloquy that he will make Othello jealous by attempting to make Cassio and Desdemona appear to be lovers.
* Barbantio is upset with his daughter Desdemona for running off and marrying Othello, an African-American Moor.
* The duke orders Othello to Cyprus in hope that Othello can help the defense against the Turks. Once on Cyprus, Roderigo's motives to break up the marriage of Othello and Desdemona are stated, and Iago quickly incorporates this motive into his own goal of bringing about Othello's demise.
* After Cassio gets drunk at a party and starts a fight with Roderigo(a recommendation from Iago), Othello strips the lieutenant of his new title.
* Iago plants Dedemona's handkerchief in Cassio's room as evidence of an extramarital affair.
* This planting is the biggest piece of evidence that Iago offers to Othello when trying to create the appearance of an unfaithful Desdemona.
* Othello begins acting on his uneasy suspicions towards Desdimona's relations with Cassio after he is presented with the handkerchief.
* Iago's plan to have Roderigo kill Cassio backfires when Roderigo's hesitation causes him to miss Cassio. In the end Cassio kills Roderigo.
* In the meantime, Othello is ready kill Desdemona in their bedroom as Desdemona attempts to tell her side of the story.
* Othello proceeds to smother his wife for her unfaithful ways.
* In the end Emilia realizes what Iago has done which leads to her demise after she tells Othello the truth.
* After Iago's mission is uncovered by Emilia, he flees only to be apprehended by Lodovico and Montano who bring Iago back captive.
* Othello, stricken with grief and shame, makes a speech about his legacy and kills himself as Iago is later executed.

**Motifs (Recurring Images, Ideas, Figures of Speech, Symbols, Colors) & Their Thematic Significance**

Appearance vs Reality - Iago puts up a front in looking like a true friend to Othello. Othello is blind to the fact that Iago is acting on jealous tendencies. In other instances of this motif, Othello acts upon 'evidence' Iago tells him about, therefore Othello has not actually witnessed any of the alleged events.

Reputation vs Honor- Cassio is a man of honor but lacks reputation. By contrast, Iago is a man with reputation, but lacks honor. Iago seems to value his reputation in the play far more than honor, and he does many dishonorable things to further his reputation. Iago also uses his reputation as a veil to hide true intentions in this play, telling Othello lies with evidence that is circumstantial. However, because of his reputation, he is believed without question and causes the death of Desdemona in an attempt to ruin Othello.

Handkerchief - According to Desdemona, the handkerchief is a symbol of her love for Othello and Othello's love for her, as the handkerchief was a gift from him. After speaking with Iago, Othello sees the handkerchief as a symbol of Desdemona's infidelity. The reason Iago is able to use the handkerchief as more than physical evidence is due to Othello's emotional ties to the handkerchief. Othello notes that the handkerchief is a work of art and the symbol of his mother and father's fidelity.

Willow - In Act V, Desdemona sings a song that presents the image of a woman cheated on by her lover. Desdemona's mother's maid died singing the song in a similar predicament. To Desdemona, the song is a symbol of Othello's ultimate disconnection of herself from his love.

**Thematic or Significant Events**

Emilia finding Desdemona's handkerchief. Emilia finding the handkerchief seems insignificant at first but when Iago takes the handkerchief from Emilia the reader becomes aware that Iago is taking something sacred to both Desdemona and Othello and turning it into evil.

Othello eavesdrops on a conversation between Iago and Cassio. Iago talks about Cassio's love, but whispers her name so that Othello thinks the two are talking about Desdemona. The conversation angers Othello and makes him even more suspicious than he already was.

Othello kills Desdemona out of suspicion. Her death is very tragic becuase it is due to lies contrived by Iago to dishonor Othello.

**Thematic or Significant Quotations**

*Were I the Moor I would not be Iago.*

*In following him I follow but myself;*

*Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,*

*But seeming so for my peculiar end.*

*For when my outward action doth demonstrate*

*The native act and figure of my heart*

*In compliment extern, ’tis not long after*

*But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve*

*For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.*

*Iago is speaking of how he follows Othello because he believes that he can exploit and take advantage of him. He also describes how he is not showing his true self, and that if he were to do so, then he would be very vulnerable (like Othello.) He is very cryptic throughout the passage and this helps us top descry his true nature, which is one of deception and treachery*.

*Haply for I am black,*

*And have not those soft parts of conversation*

*That chamberers have; or for I am declined*

*Into the vale of years—yet that’s not much—*

*She’s gone. I am abused, and my relief*

*Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,*

*That we can call these delicate creatures ours*

*And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad*

*And live upon the vapor of a dungeon*

*Than keep a corner in the thing I love*

*For others’ uses. Yet ’tis the plague of great ones;*

*Prerogatived are they less than the base.*

*’Tis destiny unshunnable, like death.*

Othello talks about how he feels that Desdemona has been unfaithful to him. He was sure that she would remain faithful, but in a short amount of lines his entire outlook changes as he now feels abandoned. His imagery of "toad" and "dungeon," where he is saying he would rather be a filthy creature living in a filthy place instead of having to keep the thing he loved for others to use, shows the depth of his love and, perhaps, foreshadows what he does later in the play by killing Desdemona.

*O, beware, my lord, of jealousy! It is the*

*green-eyed monster, which doth mock The*

*meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss*

*Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;*

*But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er Who dotes,*

*yet doubts--suspects, yet strongly loves!*

Iago (ironically) tells this to Othello to calm him down from the jealousy-induced rage he is currently feeling. Othello has succumbed to the feelings of suspicion that have been planted by Iago himself. Iago attempts to convince Othello to eavesdrop on a conversation between Iago and Cassio to further Othello's suspicions and jealousy.

**Major Themes**

Be careful of those you trust; the people you think are on your side could be out for your demise.

Jealousy can cause a person to make rash decisions.

Pride can overpower one's life and in the end the pain found in broken pride can be noticeably more powerful than happiness found in pride.

One may not be aware of their inner person. For example, Othello wouldn't have admitted he had a dark side in the beginning of the play. If one doesn't recognize the inner person, then the person can be vulnerable. Iago saw this vulnerability in Othello and used it to his advantage.

The quality of alternative race has a tendency to impact peoples' opinions. While Othello gained power despite the color of his skin, it is strongly implied that Desdemona's father opposed Othello's relationship with her because he was a black man. Because he is a black man in Venice, he is already considered an outsider who is exposed to racism.

Reputation can corrupt the honor of a man, causing him to lose sight of everything else and do horrible things to preserve or increase it.

**The Great Gatsby**

**Major Characters, Their Relationships, Their Conflicts**

-**Jay Gatsby:** Neighbor of Nick Carraway: Wants the love of an old lover, Daisy, who is currently married

-**Nick Carraway:** Wants to know what Mr. Gatsby is all about

-**Daisy Buchanan:** Cousin of Nick Carraway: Confused between her old lover and her current husband

**Brief Plot Summary:**

The Great Gatsby is the story of a millionaire, Jay Gatsby, told by Nick Carraway. Gatsby’s enormous mansion is beside to Carraway’s simple home. Nick then becomes curious about Gatsby after being invited to one of his parties. Nick soon learns that Gatsby is in love Daisy Buchanan, Nick’s cousin and the wife of Tom Buchanan. Tom takes Nick for a day in the city, where Nick learns that Buchanan has another lover, Myrtle, the wife of a long island mechanic. Gatsby sends a message through Jordan Baker, a mutual friend between him and Nick, insisting that Nick plan a “chance” meeting for Gatsby and Daisy. Nick learns that Gatsby, Jay Gatz at the time, and Daisy had once been in love, but Daisy married Tom while Gatsby was in Europe during the Great War. In the aftermath of this, Jay Gatz, became Jay Gatsby and gained his fortune with the help of a notorious criminal, Meyer Wolfsheim. Gatsby chose the site of his house in Long Island because it was across the bay from Daisy’s house, from which a green light could be seen at night. Nick manages to get Gatsby and Daisy together. Gatsby and Daisy begin to see each other secretly. Nick and Gatsby also become close. Buchanan eventually confronts Gatsby in Manhattan about the affair, and the two argue about who it is that Daisy truly loves. Daisy claims to love both of them, but she decides to return to Long Island with Gatsby, not her husband. Daisy then drives Gatsby’s car and accidentally kills a woman on the side of the road, and then speeds off. It turns out that this woman is Myrtle who had only run out to see the car because she thought it was Tom. Myrtle’s husband blames Tom for the death, but Tom informs him that it was Gatsby’s car that killed the woman. The mechanic goes to Gatsby’s house, where he shoots Gatsby and then himself. Daisy refuses to confess to her crime, and only a few people, including Gatsby’s father Henry, show up for Gatsby’s funeral.

**Motifs (Recurring Images, Ideas, Figures of Speech, Symbols, Colors) & Their Thematic Significance:**

**The Color Green:** Symbolizes Gatsby's hopes and dreams. Could also symbolize the American Dream.

**Weather:** Expresses the emotional state of the characters

ie. When Daisy and Gatsby are reunited it's raining

**Money:** fancy cars and homes were recurring images in this novel. It shows that in this society, the goal was to achieve the American Dream. Wealth determined the roles of people in the society.

**Dr. Eckleburg's Eyes:** Located on a billboard looking at society, these eyes represent the eyes of God. Those eyes are judging the society. For example, at one point in the novel looks at the eyes and says ""

**Other Significant Thematic Elements (Significant Character's Names, Significant Quotations, Significant Actions/Events):**

**Daisy:** Her name is like a flower, something that has bloomed, as well as something pretty to look at and admire.

**Nick Carraway:** Caraway is a type of seed/plant. Nick is similar to this because he was planted in a new spot and grew from the experiences he encountered in his new surroundings.

**Meyer Wolfsheim:** He is a leader of organized crime, therefore he could be described as a wolf.

**----**"He had one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced, or seemed to face, the whole external world for an instant and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself" (p. ??)

-This passage is a description of Jay Gatsby from Nick Carraway. In this description, it presents Gatsby as an unusual yet captivating man. Gatsby made people feel the way they want to feel, he makes them optimisitic. He is a rare man full of hope and imagination.

----"Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can" (p.116).

-This is a quote from Gatsby in response to Nick's statement that you can't repeat this past. This shows once again that Gatsby is a optimist. He seems to be living in a fantasy world and he thinks that the end will turn out just like a fairytale.

----"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (p.189).

-The future is too hopeless to imagine. Hope may be lost but they still keep trying, wishing that one day they will achieve their dream.

**Major Themes:**

-Society's idea of the American Dream has changed from freedom and individuality to wealth, power, and materialism.

-Love is often only a dream.

-Nobody can reach the future. Even when we try, we are brought back to our past.

-One may fool other men, but no man can fool God.

**The Awakening**

**Literary Historical Period/Movement and Pertinent Background**

The novel was written during the Industrial Period and during the beginning of the feminist movement. The Awakening is also a realistic work of literature.

**Major Characters, Their Relationships, Their Conflicts**

* Edna Pontellier, the protagonist, is married to Léonce Pontellier. She has two children--Etienne and Raoul. Edna struggles to deal with the expectations of a wife and the sacrifices that she must make to be a good mother. She longs for freedom and happiness within herself. The novel's title refers to the awakening of her emotions. During her awakening, Edna distances herself from the trap her marriage has become. She experiences new emotional and sexual freedom, which helps her to find true happiness. Ulitmately, her affair with Robert Lebrun and friendship with Adèle Ratignolle do not satisfy her and lead to her demise at the conclusion of the novel.
* Léonce Pontellier, the husband of Edna Pontellier, is a wealthy businessman who loves his family. However, because of the sucess of his business and his obsession with social popularity, he is unable to spend much time with him. He expects his wife to uphold the family's wealthy New Orleans appearance, though she dislikes playing the obediant housewife and hostess. He is oblivious to Edna's unhappiness.
* Robert Lebrun, a young man of twenty-six, befriends Edna. His summer ritual is to adopt a new married woman to woo with his charm. Robert and Edna begin their relationship as friends, while he occassionally jokes about feeling more toward her he tends be secretive about his true feelings. Eventually, the love he has for Edna is apparent and this complicates their relationship. Things are further strained when Robert leaves for Mexico, does not write letters to Edna during his absence, and returns with another girl. Toward the end of the book, the couple shares a passionate kiss and confess their love for each other. Robert then leaves her, leaving only a note saying "I love you. Good-by--because I love you." Edna commits suicide shortly thereafter.
* Adèle Ratignolle, Edna's friend, is protective and motherly. She is the epitome of a traditional Creole hostess, mother, and wife. However, the care free manner, which Edna yearns for, leads Edna to seek out a more expressive and satisfying lifestyle. Adèle's influence on Edna's transformation is unintentional, however, very powerful.
* Mademoiselle Reisz, a pianist and social outcast, was the greatest influence in Edna's awakening. As a pianist, Mademoiselle Reisz devotes her time and life to her music. She has no husband or children, music is her biggest passion. Edna's desire to paint pushes her to befriend Mademoiselle Reisz, who also acts as a mentor. Their friendship becomes more intense after Robert's departure. Edna visits Mademoiselle Reisz often and becomes distraught when she learns that Robert has been sending Mademoiselle Reisz letters, but not her.
* Alcée Arobin, seduces Edna with incesent, soft caresses. Although, Edna does not truly care for him, she strings him along because he satifies her sexual desires. He takes her to the races and other exotic social outings.

**Brief Plot Summary**

Married couple, Léonce and Edna Pontellier go to Grand Isle on a vacation with their two children. The Creole resort, owned and run by Madame Lebrun, is a place of relaxation for the young family. Léonce's demanding job allows Edna befriends the idealistic Creole wife, Adéle Ratignolle during his absences. Adéle is free-spirited and friendly. Adéle inspires Edna, unknowingly, to embrace her inner desires for satisfaction and other desires. Edna's friendship with Adéle begins her "awakening," the two women spend their time together and that is how Edna comes to know Robert Lebrun. Robert is the son of Madame Lebrun, he is a young man, who choses a woman to devote his time to every summer. The friendship between Edna and Robert is, at first, an innocent one. The two spend time together reclining and strolling on the seashore, and engaging in conversation. Robert often hints at his true feelings toward Edna, but she deflects them. Robert teaches Edna how to swim and Edna starts painting again. Painting, during this time period was deemed and idle thing for women to participate in, helps Edna to reveal the expression inside of her that has long been suppressed. Edna's reinvigorated spirits make her dread her duties as a wife and mother, straining her relationship with Léonce. Edna enjoys the time she spends with Robert immensely. However, the two never voice their love for one another. The Pontellier family returns from their vacation to their home in New Orleans. Back at home, Edna continues to paint, as she did in Grand Isle with Robert, and begins to shirk on her familial responsibilities. Léonce becomes concerned about Edna's lack of interest in the family and worries about how the community will react to her change of attitude. He enlists the help of a family friend and physician Doctor Mandelet, who suspects that Edna's change is directly related to an extramarital affair, but that Léonce's interjection could only egg on her behavior. So, with her husband away on business and her children away too, Edna moves out of their home into her own. This new house is comparable to a declaration of independence for Edna. With her new found independence, Edna pursues an affair with the community seducer, Alcée Arobin to satiate the yearning in her heart for young Robert. Alcée fulfills her sexual desires, but she is in no way emotionally attached to him. Edna also visits Mademoiselle Reisz, a pianist who was at Grand Isle the same time. Reisz, as a fellow artist forewarns Edna of the sacrifices one must make for the sake of your work. Reisz is also the only other person who knows of Edna and Robert's love for each other. Robert sends letters to Reisz, which Edna reads. Unable to stay away from Edna, Robert comes to New Orleans to clearly express his love for Edna. When Edna explains her new lifestyle and independence from her husband and family, Robert still refuses to join Edna in another affair. During this conversation, Adéle, another Edna's acquaintances from Grand Isle, goes into labor and Edna promised to be there with her. Edna begs Robert to wait for her return. Robert decides that he will not stay to wait for Edna, and instead leaves her a note of farewell. Edna, although upset, comes to terms with the fact that eventually would not have been able to fulfill her desires either and she becomes lonely. Alone in the world, Edna returns to the site of her "awakening," Grand Isle, and walks deep into the ocean during deep contemplation, leaving the reader to assume that she has committed suicide.

**Motifs (Recurring Images, Ideas, Figures of Speech, Symbols, Colors) & Their Thematic Significance**

Music - Music plays a large part in Edna's awakening. She first realizes how powerful music can be through Mademoiselle Reisz, who plays the piano as a way to express her emotions. The Farival twins play strictly to entertain, which is how Victorian women "should" be.

Children - Edna, herself, is a very childlike character in her selfishness and disregard for the consequences that come with her actions. Her children play a large part in her demise, as she is extremely concious of how society's view of their mother will effect the rest of their lives.

The Sea - To Edna, the sea stands for freedom, because of its vastness and its strength. Ultimately, Edna ends her life by drowning in the sea. "The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude," (p. 159).

Birds - Caged birds are a recurring image that symbolize the trap that is Edna's life, and the trap of Victorian women's lives. She is a bird with clipped wings, never able to fly far. Even Edna's "escape" to her "pigeon house" is only a reminder that she cannot completely remove herself from the life that she dispises, as it is located only "two steps away" from her former house. The use of birds is repeated right up until the second to last page of the book, where it states "A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water" (p. 159). Edna is like this bird in that her heart has been broken, and she decides that death must be the only escape from the life that she knows will never be full.

**Other Significant Thematic Elements (Significant Character's Names, Significant Quotations, Significant Actions/Events)**

* The Lady in Black: The Lady in Black represents the typical Creole woman. She wears black and mourns her husbands' death. This shows her sustaining obedience to her husband even after his death. If Edna had never awakened, she could have one day ended up like this woman.
* The Two Lovers: They represent the stage in a young people's lives when it socially acceptable to stray from traditional ways because it is expected. However, once they grow up they must learn to conform to the social aspects and responsibilities of their culture.
* "Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing against her; the exuberance which had sustained and exalted her spirit left her helpless and yielding to the conditions which crowded her in." (p. 52) Edna begins to realize the joys that she dreams of are impossible to fulfill in reality.
* "She wondered if her husband had ever spoken to her like that before, and if she had submitted to his command. Of course she had; she remembered that she had. But she could not realize why or how she should have yielded, feeling as she then did." (p.52) Edna has awakened to the fact that her husband does not allow her any freedom; she is constantly subjected to his needs and wants, instead of her own.
* “The years that are gone seem like dreams—if one might go on sleeping and dreaming—but to wake up and find—oh! well! Perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one’s life" (p. 154) Edna realizes that it is better to live for herself than to attempt to please everyone else.
* "I love you. Good-by--because I love you." (p.155) This was the message that Robert left for Edna. Sometimes, even though one loves someone else, love is not meant to last forever, and one should leave before things turn out badly.

**Themes**

Isolation as a consequence of independence - Edna believes that to be truly independent, isolation is necessary. As a Victorian housewife, she is expected to care for her family and the household, with little time for herself. During her awakening, she gradually learns more about herself and the things she needs in life, one of which is time for herself. This becomes an important factor in her ultimate demise. Edna learns to swim, which holds great pleasure for her, however she only realizes her strength when she is able to swim alone. She also loves to paint. Through this and through music she realizes the power that one person can have. Unfortunately, when Edna tries to tell people of her newfound independence, her husband and society restrain her. Once again she finds herself on her own, just as she is in her choice of death over an unhappy life.