

Abstract: A Celebration of African American Oral Tradition in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Teaching literature written in dialect presents special challenges. Students are mostly unfamiliar with reading non-standard spellings. Even if some have encountered this before, each writer from Mark Twain to Joel Chandler Harris to Charles Chestnutt to Zora Neale Hurston will represent what they hear in an idiosyncratic manner, depending on their individual style and the fact that dialect varies from one location to another and from one time period to another. Despite this hurdle, the reading of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in a literature class offers the teacher many opportunities. Hurston has incorporated many aspects of African American oral tradition in her novel. I believe the study of her use of dialect, her similarities to the Blues, and her references to folk tales would enrich the lives of our students.