Chapter 6: Close Reading

1. Annotate the passage carefully:
   - Re-read the passage before you begin. It comes from pages 71-72 of Chapter 6 when Janie has her epiphany.
   - Place a box around any difficult or confusing words. Write the definition of these words in the margins next to the sentence in which they occur.
   - Write questions you have in the margins. Include “I don’t get it” questions, “I wonder” questions, and “How is this significant” questions.
   - Highlight all words and phrases that connect to the plant motif. In the margins, explain why Hurston is using these words and how they explain what Janie is feeling.
   - Underline and label all pieces of figurative language that Hurston uses (other than the examples that are part of the plant motif). In the margins, explain why the figurative language means and why it’s being used.
   - Mark anything else you find that seems significant. Explain why.

2. Analyze the passage by responding to the questions below. Use supporting details from the passage, and write your response in complete sentences on the reverse of this sheet.
   - What is the significance of the plant motif in this passage? Consider how Hurston harkens back to Janie’s awakening under the pear tree to describe a different kind of awakening.
   - How is Janie changing? Why are these changes important? Consider changes as an individual and as a partner in a marriage. Also, how does Hurston use figurative language to suggest these changes?
   - Make a connection to Janie. When have you felt that same sense of disappointment? Of resigning yourself to “handling” the situation? Explain. Is separating our “inside and…outside” an integral part of growing up?

She wasn’t petal-open anymore with him. She was twenty-four and seven years married when she knew. She found that out one day when he slapped her face in the kitchen. It happened over one of those dinners that chasten all women sometimes.

They plan and they fix and they do, and then some kitchen-dwelling fiend slips a scorchy, soggy, tasteless mess into their pots and pans. Janie was a good cook, and Joe had looked forward to his dinner as a refuge from other things. So when the bread didn’t quite rise, and the fish wasn’t quite done at the bone, and the rice was scorched, he slapped Janie until she had a ringing sound in her ears and told her about her brains before he stalked back to the store.

continued on reverse!
Janie stood where he left her for unmeasured time and thought. She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. Then she went inside there to see what it was. It was her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered. But looking at it she saw that it never was the flesh and blood figure of her dreams. Just something she had grabbed up to drape her dreams over. In a way she turned her back upon the image where it lay and looked further. She had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man, neither any glistening young fruit where the petals used to be. She found that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him, and numerous emotions she had never let Jody know about. Things packed up and put away in parts of her heart where he could never find them. She was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew not to mix them. (71-72)