

Read the article "Zora Neale Hurston" before answering Numbers 29 through 37.

Zora Neale Hurston

by Melanie Harris

Zora Neale Hurston was one of the most prolific black writers in America, yet her work was largely unappreciated during her lifetime. Between the 1930s and 1960s, Hurston published seven books along with many short stories, plays, and magazine articles. A combination of folklore and anthropology, her work differed from the politically slanted depictions of the struggles of blacks that were popular during her lifetime.

As a child Hurston was imaginative, colorful, and strong, traits she incorporated into many of her characters. Always reading and writing, she was introspective but passionate, so much so that her father once remarked that she would be hanged for sure. The fifth of eight children, Hurston was born around 1900 in Notasulga, Alabama. Her mother, Lucy, was a teacher, and her father was a carpenter and preacher who was elected mayor of their all-black community for three terms. Hurston's mother died about a year after she was born, changing what would have been a typical childhood for Hurston into a tumultuous one. Her father remarried, and Hurston was rejected by her new stepmother and sent to live with various relatives, most of which lived in Eatonville, Florida, an all-black town where African Americans felt free to express themselves in a nondiscriminatory environment. Hurston persevered and worked her way through school as a maid and manicurist. After graduating from Morgan Academy in Baltimore in 1917, Hurston attended Howard University, where she met other writers and her future husband, Herbert Sheen. Hurston put her career above all else, however, and the couple's brief marriage ended in an amicable divorce. From 1928 to 1932, she studied anthropology and folklore at Columbia University and was later awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for collecting folklore in Haiti and the British West Indies.

Hurston arrived in New York City in 1925 during the Harlem Renaissance, a black literary and cultural movement. With only \$1.50 to her name, Hurston published her



first short story, "Spunk," and later penned several novels, including the famous *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, first published in 1937, about a black woman's quest for identity and fulfillment. Janie, the protagonist of the novel, learns about herself through a series of marriages and relationships with whites. Critics originally dismissed the novel as a sentimental love story but later reconsidered the woman's relationships as a metaphor for her identity.

The popularity of Hurston's writing diminished with the publication of *Seraph of Suwanee* in 1948, a novel about a poor white woman struggling to survive in Florida's citrus industry. Neither critics nor the public were ready for a black woman author to speak through white characters. The novel was panned by both.

On the invitation of friends, Hurston returned to Florida, this time residing in Belle Glade. Penniless, she lived in a one-room cabin and earned her living working odd jobs, cleaning houses, and substitute teaching. Hurston was criticized for the dialect in the dialogue in her books. While realistic and accurate, it offended some readers who thought Hurston was making fun of her subjects. Hurston suffered with stomach ailments and money problems throughout most of her life. She died from heart disease in 1959 after suffering a stroke and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Interest in Hurston's work resurfaced during the 1970s, although her books were long out of print. She gained a loyal following, who felt her writing was denied the recognition it deserved largely because of discrimination. Other black women writers, including Alice Walker, the author of *The Color Purple*, considered Hurston's insight into black culture "genius." Walker published the article "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" in *Ms.* magazine in honor of Hurston. Much has been learned about Hurston through her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road*; her novels and articles have been republished, and some pieces unpublished during her lifetime have been published posthumously. Hurston's concluding words in her autobiography reflect her outlook on the predicament of her life: "Consider that with tolerance and patience, we goodly demons may breed a noble world in a few hundred generations or so."

Answer questions 29 through 37. Base your answers on the article "Zora Neale Hurston."

- 29 Read this sentence from the passage.

Always reading and writing, she was introspective but passionate, so much so that her father once remarked that she would be hanged for sure.

What does *introspective* mean?

- F. backward
- G. brilliant
- H. thoughtful
- I. impatient



- 30 How was Hurston's writing different from the writing of other African Americans during the same period? Use details and information to support your answer.
- 31 Which organizational pattern does the author use in this article?
- A. She relates the story of Hurston's career in chronological order.
 - B. She describes the similarities and differences between Hurston's work and life.
 - C. She lists reasons why the author's writing was so influential.
 - D. She poses questions about the writer and then answers them.

- 32 Read this sentence from the passage.

Hurston persevered and worked her way through school as a maid and manicurist.

What does *persevered* mean?

- F. gave up
 - G. survived
 - H. relaxed
 - I. changed
- 33 With which statement would the author of this article most likely agree?
- A. Excellent writing is always recognized by the reading public.
 - B. Hurston is one of America's most unappreciated writers.
 - C. A typical childhood does not prepare a person for a life of fame.
 - D. Hurston's writing was not accepted easily because it was not realistic.

- 34 According to the evidence in the article about Hurston, which of these reasons contributed most to the bad reviews for *Seraph of Suwanee*?
- F. People were not ready to read a book with white characters written by a black woman.
 - G. The book was condescending toward the people it portrayed.
 - H. Zora Neale Hurston was not ready to write about white characters.
 - I. The book was considered a sentimental love story by critics.
- 35 The author wrote this article mainly to
- A. describe what life was like for black woman authors of the past.
 - B. convince readers of the value of Zora Neale Hurston's writing.
 - C. inform readers about the life of Zora Neale Hurston, a now-famous writer.
 - D. explain why Hurston's work was largely ignored during her lifetime.
- 36 Which subhead would be most appropriate for the last paragraph of the article on Zora Neale Hurston?
- F. A Tragic Life
 - G. Alice Walker
 - H. Learning from the Past
 - I. Recognition at Last
- 37 Which pair of words best describes Zora Neale Hurston?
- A. obedient and hard working
 - B. independent and outspoken
 - C. insightful and sympathetic
 - D. intelligent and misunderstood