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Zora Neale Hurston's symbolism in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is reawakening. Most metaphors and symbolic elements are related to Janie's womanhood and the sense of freedom. Symbols represent the evolution and ultimate development of Janie's character, who blossoms, matures, and finds her identity. Hurston uses the recurring motif of symbolization of the protagonist's hair, the pear tree, and the horizon to illustrate not only Janie's growth but also other characters' position towards her.

One of the strongest symbolic motifs is Janie's hair, which represents her pitch of freedom. Joe Starks is mesmerized by her hair, but after they marry, he orders Janie to hide the hair as a symbol of his ownership (Hurston 64). On the other hand, Tea Cake sees her hair as a token of good luck – after combing Janie's hair, he brings a few hairs with him to a card game (Hurston 148). Yet, after Tea Cake dies, Janie lets her hair down, claiming a new beginning as a woman who is in control of her own destiny. This motif was also reinforced in her childhood, when the protagonist used to wear her hair down. As such, it becomes evident that Janie's hairstyle is a symbol of her inner and outer freedom.

Horizon is a strong symbol in Hurston's novel, which has a religious Vodou background besides its primary meaning. Some scholars interpret Janie's character through the prism of feminism (Thomas 1285). Hence, she can be interpreted as corresponding to Erzulie Freda, the Vodou goddess associated with love and femininity. Janie reflects the main characteristics of the goddess: sensual nature, skin tone, and preference for the color blue (Hurston 137). While Janie can be interpreted through the figure of Erzulie, Tea Cake can be associated with Legba, the Vodou gatekeeper of the crossroads who mediates between the spiritual and material worlds.

Through this association, Tea Cake becomes a figure who opens a "gateway" for Janie toward new possibilities, represented by the recurring symbolism of the horizon.

For Janie, the horizon became a symbol of the opportunity for a better life, the future.

Using the revelation about the Vodou, the sense of the horizon becomes deeper – Tea Cake, as the representation of the spirit, opened the horizon for Janie.

Eventually, it turns out that she could only pursue her bright future after meeting Tea Cake.

A pear tree is one of the most obvious symbols used by Hurston, which translates into life, love, and one's own sexuality.

The blossoming tree is a standard representation of growing into a mature woman, exploring love and own sexuality.

When Janie is lying beneath the tree, she watches a bee gather pollen from the pear flowers (Hurston 14).

The scene becomes an idea of a perfect relationship for her, and she later says that Logan and Joe were not letting her blossom.

Janie's quest for identity is strongly bonded with the idea of love and idealistic marriage she discovered under the pear tree.

When she meets Tea Cake, her dreams of love and an ideal relationship become true.

Janie says that "he could be a bee to a blossom" (Hurston 126), meaning that he could be the one bringing her satisfaction.

The repeating motif of a blossoming pear tree allows readers to see how the main character's attitude towards love and womanhood changes through time.

To sum up, there are three main recurrent symbols in the novel.

These are Janie's hair, the horizon, and the blossoming pear tree.

The symbolic motifs used by the author give out the narrative of Janie's development as a character and as a woman.

The symbols have become an essential part of Janie's personality.

They represent how free she feels, how she foresees her future, and how she perceives love.

FAQs

What is GPTZero?

GPTZero is the leading AI detector for checking whether a document was written by a large language model such as ChatGPT. GPTZero detects AI on sentence, paragraph, and document level. Our model was trained on a large, diverse corpus of human-written and AI-generated text with support for English, Spanish, French, German, and other languages. To date, GPTZero has served over 17 million users around the world, and works with over 100 organizations in education, hiring, publishing, legal, and more.

When should I use GPTZero?

Our users have seen the use of AI-generated text proliferate into education, certification, hiring and recruitment, social writing platforms, disinformation, and beyond. We've created GPTZero as a tool to highlight the possible use of AI in writing text. In particular, we focus on classifying AI use in prose. Overall, our classifier is intended to be used to flag situations in which a conversation can be started (for example, between educators and students) to drive further inquiry and spread awareness of the risks of using AI in written work.

Does GPTZero only detect ChatGPT outputs?

No, GPTZero works robustly across a range of AI language models, including but not limited to ChatGPT, GPT-5, GPT-4, GPT-3, Gemini, Claude, and AI services based on those models.

What are the limitations of the classifier?

The nature of AI-generated content is changing constantly. As such, these results should not be used to punish students. We recommend educators to use our behind-the-scenes [Writing Reports](#) as part of a holistic assessment of student work. There always exist edge cases with both instances where AI is classified as human, and human is classified as AI. Instead, we recommend educators take approaches that give students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in a controlled environment and craft assignments that cannot be solved with AI. Our classifier is not trained to identify AI-generated text after it has been heavily modified after generation (although we estimate this is a minority of the uses for AI-generation at the moment). Currently, our classifier can sometimes flag other machine-generated or highly procedural text as AI-generated, and as such, should be used on more descriptive portions of text.

I'm an educator who has found AI-generated text by my students. What do I do?

Firstly, at GPTZero, we don't believe that any AI detector is perfect. There always exist edge cases with both instances where AI is classified as human, and human is classified as AI. Nonetheless, we recommend that educators can do the following when they get a positive detection: Ask students to demonstrate their understanding in a controlled environment, whether that is through an in-person assessment, or through an editor that can track their edit history (for instance, using our [Writing Reports](#) through Google Docs). Check out our list of [several recommendations](#) on types of assignments that are difficult to solve with AI.

Ask the student if they can produce artifacts of their writing process, whether it is drafts, revision histories, or brainstorming notes. For example, if the editor they used to write the text has an edit history (such as Google Docs), and it was typed out with several edits over a reasonable period of time, it is likely the student work is authentic. You can use GPTZero's Writing Reports to replay the student's writing process, and view signals that indicate the authenticity of the work.

See if there is a history of AI-generated text in the student's work. We recommend looking for a long-term pattern of AI use, as opposed to a single instance, in order to determine whether the student is using AI.