Think Aloud with Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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 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 on back.

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 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 how not to mix them.

Janie bathed and put on a fresh dress and head kerchief and went on to the store before Jody had time to send for her. That was a bow to the outside of things.

Hurstons draws this connection to all women because it is something that all women who cook have dealt with. It is hard to get the recipes right every time.

What a wonderful image! When something falls off a shelf what is the effect? It is somewhat startling and then once you realize what happened you can move on. This is a moment of consciousness or realization for Janie. I wonder what she is going to realize.

I do that all the time. I don’t want people to know how I feel or I am afraid so I pack up and put away things in my heart like Janie.

I wonder if she will leave or if she will stay now that she has realized that Jody isn’t her dream man.

Do I have an outside and an inside? Do I act differently than I feel on the inside? Do I feel like I am conflicted like Janie? Janie is feeling like she is living one way but feels another.

She feels like she is bowing to the outside world because she is doing what she knows Jody wants her to do. I wonder how her new consciousness will motivate Janie’s actions and change the story?