



ATLANTA CLASSICAL ACADEMY

Summer Reading Questions Rising 11th Grade

After reading the foundational texts of Western Civilization in 9th grade and the works that partially comprise the intellectual inheritance we received from the British in 10th, you will encounter the literature of your own country in your Junior year. To prepare for this, you are asked to choose between *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, two distinct novels that wrestle with themes that suffuse all of American Literature: the formation of the self, the role of social expectations in the development of identity, and what it means to live life on your own terms. You might find more cross-over between yourselves and the main characters of these novels than you expect.

Please choose one of the following texts and answer the questions provided in one to two paragraphs. Use evidence when appropriate to support your answers. Please have your responses available on the first day of class.

***The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

Set in the 1920s, *The Great Gatsby* pulses with the rhythm of the Jazz Age as it tells the story of Jay Gatsby, a mysterious millionaire, and his pursuit of the beautiful Daisy Buchanan. Loved by generations of readers for its absorbing plot and its portrait of American excess during a unique moment in history, *The Great Gatsby* is a classic.

1. *The Great Gatsby* is narrated by Nick Carraway. Do you think he is reliable or not? Why?
2. What is the climax of the novel? Explain your choice.
3. Suppose the novel was written from either Daisy or Gatsby's point of view. How would the novel be changed if it was written from either Daisy or Gatsby's point of view. (Only choose Daisy *or* Gatsby, not both, to answer this question.)

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston**

Set in the American South before the Civil Rights movement, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* follows Janie, the spunky, intelligent protagonist who refuses to live on anyone else's terms but her own. Out of print for decades and re-discovered for modern audiences, Hurston's soulful tale is a classic exploration of what it means to walk your own path.

1. How do Janie's visions and hopes for her future differ from the hopes and dreams of other characters? Why does she have such different plans than her peers? What does this say about her character?
2. How does Janie's journey – from West Florida, to Eatonville, to the Everglades – represent her as a character? What elements about her are revealed in each of these geographical places?
3. How is this novel a coming-of-age story? Who is Janie at the beginning of the novel and how does she grow and change as a result of her experiences?