

## Before You Read

# Why the Waves Have Whitecaps

## Connect to the Folktale

"Why the Waves Have Whitecaps" explains a natural event involving wind and water. Think of a powerful natural event, such as a thunderstorm, that you have experienced.

**Quickwrite** Freewrite for a few minutes about ways in which the natural world can seem human. Think about animals, plants, and landforms as well as such elements as wind, water, and storms.

## Build Background

This folktale is written in dialect. Dialect is a form of language spoken by people of a certain region or group. Features of the dialect in this folktale include dropped vowel and consonant sounds ('em instead of them).

Folktales were passed down orally before being written down. Folklorists use dialect to capture a traditional culture's speech and story patterns.

## Set Purposes for Reading

### **BQ** BIG Question

As you read, ask yourself, how does the depiction of wind and water help me to understand nature?

### **Literary Element** Style

**Style** is the way an author chooses and arranges words and sentences in a literary work. Style can reveal an author's purpose in writing and attitude toward the subject and audience. Diction, sentence structure, and use of imagery are some factors that make up an author's style. As you read, ask yourself, how does Hurston's style help me understand her purpose for writing?

### Learning Objectives

For pages 369–372

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objective:

**Literary Study:** Analyzing style.

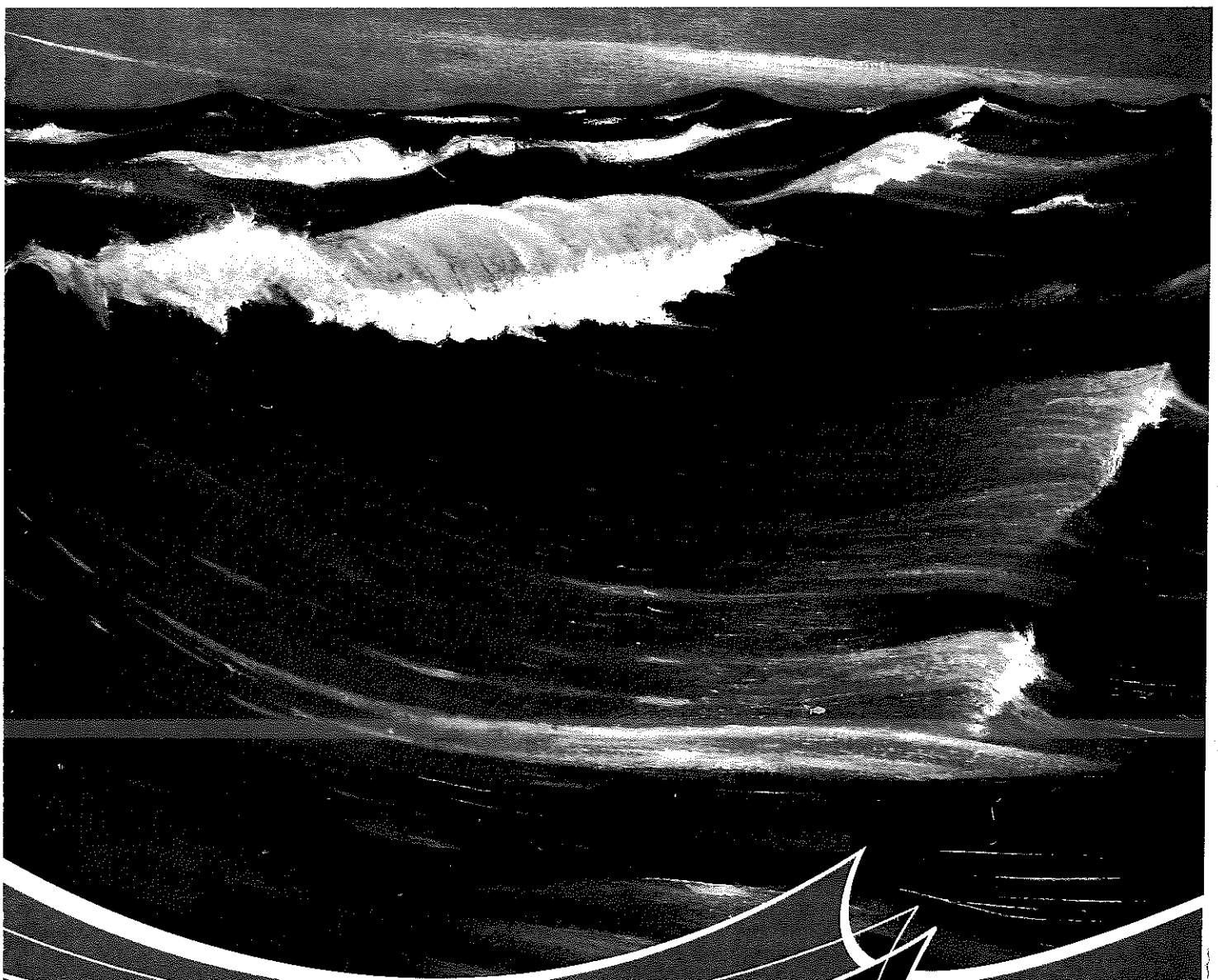
## Meet Zora Neale Hurston



**Folklorist and Writer** Zora Neale Hurston grew up in Eatonville, Florida, the country's first self-governed African American city. Sharing folktales was a common pastime in her close-knit community. She became interested in preserving African American folklore and began to collect tales in the rural South. Hurston is best known for her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. She also published plays, stories, essays, and two collections of folklore. Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 and died in 1960.

### **LOG ON** Literature Online

**Author Search** For more about Zora Neale Hurston, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and enter QuickPass code GL29763u3.



*Waves*, c.1917. Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Why the **Waves** Have  
**Whitecaps**

Zora Neale Hurston

**D**e wind is a woman, and de water is a woman too. They useter<sup>1</sup> talk together a whole heap. Mrs. Wind useter go set down by de ocean and talk and patch and crochet.

They was jus' like all lady people. They loved to talk about their chillun, and brag on 'em.

Mrs. Water useter say, "Look at *my* chillun! Ah<sup>2</sup> got de biggest and de littlest in de world. All kinds of chillun. Every color in de world, and every shape!"

De wind lady bragged louder than de water woman:

"Oh, but Ah got mo' different chilluns than anybody in de world. They flies, they walks, they swims, they sings, they talks, they cries. They got all de colors from de sun. Lawd, my chillun sho is a pleasure. 'Tain't nobody got no babies like mine."

Mrs. Water got tired of hearin' 'bout Mrs. Wind's chillun so she got so she hated 'em.

One day a whole passle<sup>3</sup> of her chillun come to Mrs. Wind and says: "Mama, wese thirsty. Kin we go git us a cool drink of water?"

She says, "Yeah chillun. Run on over to Mrs. Water and hurry right back soon."

When them chillun went to squinch they thirst Mrs. Water grabbed 'em all and drowned 'em.

When her chillun didn't come home, de wind woman got worried. So she went on down to de water and ast for her babies.

"Good evenin' Mis' Water, you see my chillun today?"

De water woman tole her, "No-oo-oo."

Mrs. Wind knew her chillun had come down to Mrs. Water's house, so she passed over de ocean callin' her chillun, and every time she call de white feathers would come up on top of de water. And dat's how come we got white caps on waves. It's de feathers comin' up when de wind woman calls her lost babies.

When you see a storm on de water, it's de wind and de water fightin' over dem chillun. ♪

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1 **Useter** means "used to."

2 **Ah** is dialect for *I*.

3 **Passle** means *parcel*. Here, it refers to a group of children.

**Style** What are some examples of dialect in these sentences?

**BQ** **BIG Question**

How did the people who first told this folktale most likely feel about nature?

## After You Read

### Respond and Think Critically

1. What human qualities does the author give to wind and water? Give details to support your answer. [Identify]
2. Why does Mrs. Water drown Mrs. Wind's children? [Recall]
3. According to the folktale, what causes whitecaps on water? Explain. [Summarize]
4. Recall the information you read about in Build Background. Why does the author use an African American dialect to tell this folktale? Explain. [Evaluate]
5. **Literary Element** Style Describe Zora Neale Hurston's style in this folktale. What are some examples of striking word choice and imagery in the folktale? How does Hurston's style contribute to the mood of the tale? Explain. [Analyze]
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** How does this folktale demonstrate appreciation for the force of nature? Explain. [Conclude]

### Academic Vocabulary

In writing "Why the Waves Have Whitecaps," Zora Neale Hurston used dialect. She avoided **altering** the language of the original folktale. Use context clues to figure out the meaning of the word *altering* in the sentence above. Check your guess in a dictionary.

### Writing

**Write a Summary** Writing a summary involves retelling the main idea and the most important details of a story in your own words. Recall the characters and key plot events of Hurston's "Why the Waves Have Whitecaps." Then write a brief summary of the folktale. Your summary should also explain what you think is the message or meaning of the folktale.

### TIP

#### Analyzing

Here are some tips to help you analyze. Remember that when you analyze, you look at separate parts of a selection to understand the whole selection.

- Reread the folktale. Notice whether the author uses common, simple words or formal, detailed descriptions.
- Identify how the action takes place—through the narrator's description, through dialogue, or a combination of the two.
- Consider whether the use of dialect gives the folktale a formal or informal feel.

#### **FOLDABLES** Study Organizer

Keep track of your ideas about the **BIG Question** in your unit Foldable.

LOG  
ON



Literature Online

#### Selection Resources

For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and enter QuickPass code GL29763u3.