Reinventing Black Womanhood in the Writings of Phillis Wheatley and Zora Neale Hurston

ReShawn Johnson; Dr. Andrew Blake and Dr. Myrna Nurse, Faculty Sponsors
Department of English and Foreign Languages, Delaware State University

Phillis Wheatley and Zora Neale Hurston reinvented themselves to serve the greater good. Phillis Wheatley changed from the little girl who survived the voyage from Africa to Boston as she went from a slave to a published poet whose words continue to touch minds and spirits in the 21st century. Zora Neale Hurston transformed herself and society by rebelliously using her talent to study culture and tell stories. Before being reintroduced to the world by Alice Walker, she was almost forgotten altogether, but her work currently enjoys the critical acclaim and popularity it deserves. This study examines the way in which these transformations are reflected in Wheatley’s “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” which portrays race ironically, and Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which defies conventional representations of identity and couplehood in its representation of Teacake and Janie.