

## YOUR WEEKLY READER

### Rescuing Reading Project

Thomas Nelson Community College  
March 1, 2007

### Spring Break Next Week—Your Weekly Reader Observes Vacat!

## The Big Read Convenes Panel on Zora Neale Hurston

Several dozen TNCC students listened attentively to an expert faculty panel discuss Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the film version starring Halle Berry on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 27 in the Wythe Hall Library Gallery.

Organized by **Prof. Jacqueline Blackwell** (English Department), the panel included her colleagues **Prof. Lisa Ray** (discussing the film adaptation of the novel), **Prof. Heath Scott** (discussing representations of gender and sexuality), and **Prof. Hollis Pruitt** (discussing the book's social context).

They were joined by visiting scholar, **Dr. Valerie Sweeney Prince**, professor of literature at Hampton University, who discussed other aspects of the book's literary dimensions.

Many of Prof. Ray's students, who are reading the book for her courses, attended as a pre-writing activity to develop their ideas in a later writing assignment.

After panel presenters had discussed their central insights, the floor was opened to questions, which maintained a lively colloquy for the rest of the time.



## NAEP Reading Report Card

In our last issue of *Your Weekly Reader*, we directed gentle readers to the Web site of the [US Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics](#), and reported on longitudinal data on 4<sup>th</sup>-grade and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade reading levels.

Now the results of the [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) for 12<sup>th</sup>-grade readers in 2005](#) have been released. Some headlines:

**-Overall performance** in reading declines in comparison to 1992.

**-Gaps** between White and minority students unchanged.

**-Female students** outperform male students by a wider margin in 2005 than in 1992.

**-Higher average reading scores** in the Midwest (but **lower in the South**).

**-Average reading scores** decline across all parental education levels.

**-Percentage of students at or above Proficient** (i.e. "average"):

- 43% of White students; 16% of Black students; 20% of Hispanic students; 36% of Asian/Pacific Islander students; 26% of American Indian/Alaska Native students
- 17% of students who reported neither parent finished high school; 47% of students who reported at least one parent graduated from college
- 15% of students who reported that they expected to work fulltime after graduating from high school; 48% of students who reported that they expected to attend a 4-year college after graduating from high school.

## What They're Reading

**Roger Lemasters (Drafting and Design Department)** is preparing to join his son on safari in Zimbabwe later this year, so he's been reading books about Africa: "I especially enjoyed *Horn of the Hunter* [by Robert Ruark] and Ruark's graphic, tongue-in-cheek writing style. This book is a non-fiction description of a photo and hunting safari he made to Africa in the 1950s. One fiction writer actually had the audacity to remark that because Ruark was a fisherman and a hunter . . . this so-called 'non-fiction' book might just be slightly embellished. (What was he thinking?) . . . Anyone who lacks perspective on man's interest in obtaining meat from places other than Food Lion may have a problem reading Ruark. Believe me, his descriptions of the beautiful green valleys, the sounds of nature, the animals and the beauty of the African landscape coupled with his candid wit and sense of humor about life made this reading time well spent. From what I've read, he was criticized for being a bit of a Hemingway imitator but, honestly--my opinion, (as they say in Gloucester) his writing style stands on its own and makes you want to pick up a pencil and try your hand at writing."

## Book Circles on the Horizon

Students (as well as faculty, staff, and members of the community) are invited to participate in this semester's book circles, featuring Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in the **Wythe Hall Library Gallery, on Friday, April 13, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**