# Zora Neale Hurston: Analysis Of Seraph On The Suwanee

In Zora Neale Hurston's novel, Seraph on the Suwanee, the opening contains a vivid description of a town called Sawley. Sawley is located in west Florida and is conveniently placed on the Suwanee River. Hurston thoroughly describes both Sawley and its residents. Hurston effectively uses evocative imagery, several types of repetition, and parallelism in order to illustrate Sawley and to characterize the people who live there in the opening of her novel, Seraph on the Suwanee.

Throughout the passage, Hurston inserts adjectives before each noun in order to bring the town to life. In the first paragraph alone, the author details the "curving course" (line 3) of the river and even explains how it is "running swift and deep through the primitive forests" (lines 5-6). Additionally, she mentions the "scratchy plantings" (lines 11-12). By consistently using epithets, Hurston is able to illuminate a vivid image in the reader's mind which, in essence, helps her describe Sawley. The author follows the same technique when describing the people who live in Sawley. Even though she only directly mentions it once, the kind of people living in Sawley is clearly conveyed. In lines 16 through 20, she finally discusses the residents of Sawley. Hurston claims that the people look like the trees and plants, and even mentions that that is the case for all instances. As Hurston continues to use imagery through heavily connotated words, it helps the audience to literally imagine the town and people of Sawley. The descriptive words and adjectives illustrate Sawley for the reader.

Furthermore, Hurston occasionally uses anaphora with the aim to emphasize important facts regarding Sawley. For example, in the third paragraph, the author uses anaphora by repeating "there was" in lines 24 and 27 at the beginning of two sentences. By including "there was," the reader realizes the past tense in which she discusses the sandy pike. Her use of anaphora in the past tense foreshadows changes that will occur in the future, hence her bitter comment regarding the newly built freeway that interrupted the historic Old Spanish Trail. Additionally, in lines 31, 33, and 40, Hurston continuously uses the word "few" in order to emphasize two major underlying meanings. The repetition of "few" is most likely there to help convey the lack of people in this lightly populated town. It also expresses her feelings towards the forgotten Sawley that she particularly remembers. She wants to make it clear that life in Sawley was good while also mentioning that it was forgotten; only a few people remembered.

Last, Hurston uses parallelism and reoccurring syntax to bring Sawley to life. The author realized that simply describing a town and people with lively words would not achieve as much as partnering it up with useful sentence structure would. In the first paragraph, Hurston combines parallelism and alliteration by explaining the "cultivated fields planted to corn, cane, potatoes, tobacco and small patches of cotton" (lines 8-9). Although the alliteration is subtle, the repeating sounds of "c" at the beginning of the words creates a memorable sentence. The sentence follows a parallel structure as well. However, this is not the first time that Hurston uses this repetitive syntax. As the passage continues, the author discusses the disgusting actions performed by the Spaniards; including "murdering, robbing, and raping…" (lines 38-39). Moreover, she begins to express the fishing opportunities that Sawley offered, "plenty of black basses, and perch and cat-fish" (lines 46, 48). Her use of parallelism provides a sense of rhythm and order for the reader. Subconsciously, the audience processes this town as a

tranquil, calm location with serene people. However, if the passage lacked parallelism, the sentences would be choppy, which would then portray Sawley as a chaotic mess.

To conclude, in an effort to perfectly describe Sawley and the people who live there, Hurston provides the reader with detailed imagery, repetition, and consistent parallelism. The author was effectively able to illuminate the town and provide a perfect visual of the people living in it.