

## **Center for Lifetime Study**

**Semester: Spring 2025**

**Course: African American Literature**

**Instructor: Dr. Jacqueline Goffe-McNish**

**Time: Thursday 11:00**

**Room: Zoom**

**Phone #: 845-471-7220**

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**Book: Paule Marshall. Praisesong for the Widow**

**Guidelines**      1. Please turn off your phone

                         2. Please focus your discussions on the text being discussed.

## **Schedule**

**April 2 Introduction of Class Members**

**Introduction to African American Literature**

**Close reading of pages 1 and 2**

**Submersion and silhouetting**

**April 9 Cultural Analysis and Setting**

**Symbolic Geography**

**Halsey Street, The Dream, The Parfait Experience**

**April 16 Character Analysis**

**Masking ,Veiling, and Double Consciousness**

**Tatem, Gullah, Kumina, Role of numbers**

**April 23 The African Diaspora, Middle passage Experience**

**The taxi ride, The fateful Tuesday, Jay to Jerome**

**Symbolic Geography White Plains**

**April 30 Postcoloniality**

**The too much speech, The long Walk**

**May 7 Magical Realism Epiphany**

**The bar and Role of Rum, The Excursion**

**Gethsemane**

**May 14 Creolization Tragic Mulatto**

**The Boat Ride, The Threads, The Bath**

**The bottom of the boat**

**May 21 Role of Africa**

**The Beg Pardon, The Big Drum, The Creole Dance**

**Final Epiphany: Avatara**

**Approaches to Analyzing the Text:**

**1. Magical Realism**

**2. Presentation of Africa**

**3. Symbolic Geography**

**4. Presentation of Culture**

- 5. Masking, Veiling, and Double Consciousness**
- 6. Sisyphean Experience**
- 7. Search for El Dorado**
- 8. Epiphany**
- 9. Connection between Nature and Human Condition**
- 10. Role of Women**
- 11. Role of the Supernatural**
- 12. Biblical Allusion**
- 13. Presentation of Journeys**
- 14. Submersion**
- 15. Post-Colonization**
- 16. Proverbs and Stories as Language**
- 17. Role of Rum**
- 18. Creolization**
- 19. Sisyphean Experience**
- 20. African Diaspora**
- 21. Reverse Middle Passage**
- 22. The Role of the Unconscious**
- 23. Music as Voice**

**Issues in Praisesong for the Widow**

1. Water Imagery
2. Coconut water
3. The Beg Pardon
4. The Parfait Experience
5. Jay to Jerome
6. Avey to Avatara
7. Ibo Landing
8. The Bath
9. The Place where two currents meet
10. The Threads
11. Hammocking
12. The rum shop
13. The 'too much' speech
14. White Plains as the 'city'.
15. House gods
16. Gethsemane
17. Gullah
18. Threads
19. Silhouetting
20. Mirroring
21. Hair

22. Ring shout
23. The Excursion
24. The Big Drum
25. Crossing her Feet
26. Fateful Tuesday
27. Libation
28. Emanuel C
29. The Sermon
30. Three nights

#### **Essays for Praisesong For the Widow by Paule Marshall**

1. Discuss the ways in which the return to traditions changes the life of Mrs. Johnson.
2. What is a praisesong? What is the role of this symbol in the novel?
3. Discuss the presentation of Africa in this novel.
4. In this novel men are portrayed as oppressors or as disposable. Discuss.
5. Discuss the presentation of magical realism in this novel.
6. Discuss the ways in which the presence of the spirit of Jerome Johnson facilitates changes in Avey's life?
7. Discuss the life journey undertaken by Avey Johnson as she searches for herself.
8. Discuss the novel as an example of creolization in the westernized World.

**9. Compare and contrast the epiphanic experiences of Avey and Jay in the novel.**

**10. Discuss the contributions that Tatem and Carriacou make to our understanding of the African Diaspora.**