“Sweat” **-** Zora Neale Hurston

**Exploring the Text Questions:**

1. What qualities in Delia does Hurston emphasize from the beginning of the story?
2. Why is Sykes bothered by the income that Delia brings to their marriage? What gender stereotypes play into his resentment and anger?
3. In paragraph 25, beginning “She lay awake,” Delia recalls her expectations for marriage. In what ways do her expectations reflect stereotypes?
4. What does Hurston mean when she describes Delia as “able to build a spiritual earthworks against her husband” (para. 26)?
5. How do the two scenes where Delia reaches into the hamper serve as contrasting parallels to emphasize changes in her character?
6. Hurston develops Delia as a good Christian woman so that readers can accept her final action. How does she accomplish this?
7. How does the dialect affect your reading and understanding of the story? Does it add authenticity or increase reading difficulty? How does reading the story aloud make a difference?
8. In what ways is this story a retelling of the fall of Adam and Eve? What biblical symbols do you find? Are these simply allusions, or is Hurston suggesting thematic parallels? What is Hurston’s purpose?