Carl Gustav Jung once said, “The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.” The term relationship is defined as two people that are connected to each other. If the match is good, the couple builds on one another, allowing their relationship to grow and blossom into something truly beautiful. Hurston’s “Gilded Six-Bits” pieces together the qualities that form a successful relationship that modern day relationships can learn from. A successful relationship depends upon playfulness, effort, and forgiveness.

Initially, in order for a relationship to remain blissful, the couple must participate in a flirtatious manner. While there is always a time for solemn acts, there needs to be a balance of playfulness. “For several minutes the two were a furious mass of male and female energy. Shouting, laughing, twisting, turning, and Joe trying, but not too hard, to get away” (Hurston 727-728). In this moment, the rest of the world doesn’t matter because it’s all about Joe and his wife; they develop memories that continue to build up their relationship. It’s behavior such as Joe’s and Missie May’s that generates passionate love, which is an intense, positive absorption in another (Dewall el al. 479). It’s been said that actions speak louder than words; however, that doesn’t mean that words aren’t loud. “Nope sweetenin’ is for us men-folk. Y’all pritty li’l frail eels don’t need nothin’ lak dis. You too sweet already” [sic] (728). Teasing is another witty way to show a person affection. Joe joshed Missie May about how sweet she already was, which was
implied as a compliment. This story demonstrates how participating in a playful way is one of the requirements for a flourishing relationship.

While monumental motions or gifts may take up more space, little gestures are important in a romance as well. The key for using small gestures that many people don’t realize is they add up overtime and can make the relationship that much stronger. “It was this way every Saturday afternoon. The nine dollars hurled into the open door” (727). These gestures can become a tradition in the relationship, which can make the romance more special than any previous relationship. “Unhhunh! Ah got it. It ‘tis so candy kisses. Ah knowed you had somethin’ for me in yo clothes” [sic] (728). Once again, every Saturday, Joe would bring his wife some candy kisses. Now it’s not much, but it’s Joe’s way of expressing his love for Missie May. Perhaps the candy kisses are a symbol for Joe’s kisses. The display of effort goes both ways though; it’s not just a one-way road.

A fresh red and white checked cloth on the table. Big pitcher of buttermilk beaded with pale drops of butter from the churn. Hot fired mullet, crackling bread, ham hocks atop a mound of string beans and new potatoes, and perched on the window-sill a pone of spicy potato pudding (728).

Missie May knows her husband works hard, so she takes care of him. She makes him breakfast and dinner. This is her way of expressing her love for him and verifying that she will do everything in her power to make him feel on top of the world. It’s not so much about size, but more of how and what one is willing to do for the person they love.

In the same fashion, one must express how they feel about their partner. He or she should be straight forward when using their words and not lead their partner to think that they no longer care for them. “…ah’m satisfied wid you jes’ lak you is, baby. God took pattern after a pine tree
and built you noble. Youse a pritty still man, and if Ah knowed any way to make you mo’ pritty
still Ah’d take and do it” (729). Even though Joe is wanting to be more like Mr. Slemmons,
Missie May reminds him that he is great just the way he is, and he is the man she fell in love
with, not Mr. Slemmons. People always seem to forget their worth, which is why it is that much
more important to remind the girlfriend/boyfriend how much they mean in the relationship. “Go
‘head on now, honey and put on yo’ clothe. He talkin’ ‘bout his pritty womens- Ah want ‘im to
see mine” (730). Joe is taking pride in the woman he calls “mine.” He’s articulating how he feels
by wanting to show Missie May off. This allows Missie May to feel pleased with herself,
knowing that Joe is happy with their relationship. With every passing day, there is more room to
question the relationship; yet, with a simple expression, it can keep the relationship stable.

In order to maintain this ideal romance, it takes effort. Relationships are not all sun shine
and rainbows. It is real work, and it is work that a person has to continue. For example, if a
student wants a good grade, he or she wouldn’t just hope for it. The student would have to study
and work hard to get that perfect grade, or, in other words, the student would have to earn it. “If
she had not the substance of marriage, she had the outside show. Joe must leave her. She let him
see she didn’t want his old gold four-bits too” (734). After every cause is an effect, which was
what Missie May was experiencing. She wasn’t use to this treatment from Joe, but it was her
mistake that caused it. She wanted to leave her shame behind, yet she was a wife, and that stood
for something. She was Joe’s wife, and she loved him, so it wasn’t her right to leave Joe. “She
slid the coin into his Sunday pants pocket’ (734). She didn’t want the money that Mr. Slemmons
left behind. She wanted her husband, so she remained at the house and allowed time to heal their
relationship. It’s easy to fall in love, but it takes an effort to stay in love.
Likewise, with every brawl should come forgiveness. Usually, everybody has a sense of pride that they’re not willing to let go of, which clouds their judgement of forgiveness. One would think if he or she actually loved someone, he or she would excuse the loved one, but it’s not that simple. Humans tend to think of forgiveness as a weakness, when, in reality, forgiveness can set one free and allow him or her to find a better way to move on with life. “…Gointer buy my wife some good ole ‘lasses kisses wid it. Gimme fifty cent worth of dum candy kisses” (735). Joe makes the decision to forgive Missie May right in that moment. He knows that the past couple of months have been hard, but now he’s ready to pick up where they left off. “Back in Eatonville, Joe reached his own front door. There was the ring of singing metal on the wood. Fifteen times” (736). What doesn’t kill a relationship makes it that much stronger. Forgiveness is the spare key to any valuable relationship.

In contrast, today’s modern relationships are more about oneself than both partners. People seem to think if a relationship isn’t perfect from the start there is no need to continue on. What they don’t seem to realize is that it takes patience, sacrifice and compromise for a relationship to really grow. This generation is all about taking the easy way out, especially when it comes to romance. When it gets too problematic for a person in the relationship, he or she tends to quit or break up to avoid any further conflict. “…you are gonna do anything to make your needs come true and meet your needs” (Robach line 20). People are more selfish than they used to be; it’s all about them and nobody else. The article, “Why are Modern Relationships Falling Apart So Easily Today” claims this is the practical generation, who run their lives based solemnly on logic. “We wouldn't take a flight to a far-off land just to see someone we love. We'd break up because, long distance” (Bahuguna, para. 10). When in a relationship, one cannot afford to be selfish twenty-four hours a day if they plan for the relationship to last.
Furthermore, romances today are fantasies of the imagination; relationships are phony. This society is busy with work and being the best at everything that they don’t have the patience to be in a relationship. With technology producing at the rate it’s going, it is no surprise that people’s relationships revolve around computers, cell phones, and so on. Physical presence has been replaced by snapchats, texting, video calls, and voice messages. Humans look for gratification in everything they do; they post photos or status updates for approval. It’s impressive or trendy to have a girlfriend/boyfriend. People want to establish that they’re in a relationship without having to play the role. They have a materialistic dream of their partner in their head; however, if they met the person face to face, the meeting would destroy the image of them. One simply plays the part without complicating it with one’s true feeling. “Behavioral models of marriages and romantic relationships have identified maladaptive communication patterns as important predictors of divorce” (Daniel para. 5). In today’s world, technology has helped relationships to become a hoax instead of a romance that they were once supposed to be.

To conclude, Hurston’s “Gilded Six-Bits” reveals the keys for a flourishing relationship that modern day relationships can learn from in order to improve. It simply takes behaving in a playful manner to convey one’s feelings to better the relationship over time. Gestures are another way of demonstrating one’s love through symbols. People intend to forget their worth, so one must express what their partner means to them to help remind them of why they’re in this relationship to begin with. No real relationship is ever easy; it’s takes an effort to maintain a companionate love, which is a deep, long, lasting love where lives are entwined with one other. Forgiveness is one of the biggest pieces of the puzzle when in a relationship. If one truly loves someone, they cannot wish their love away; therefore, the only option is to forgive. Nowadays, so many people are selfish and don’t know what a real, loving relationship is made of. Hopefully
Hurston’s “Gilded Six-Bits” can shed some light on the subject because everyone deserves to have their own “Once Upon a Time” and “Happy Ending.”
Works Cited


