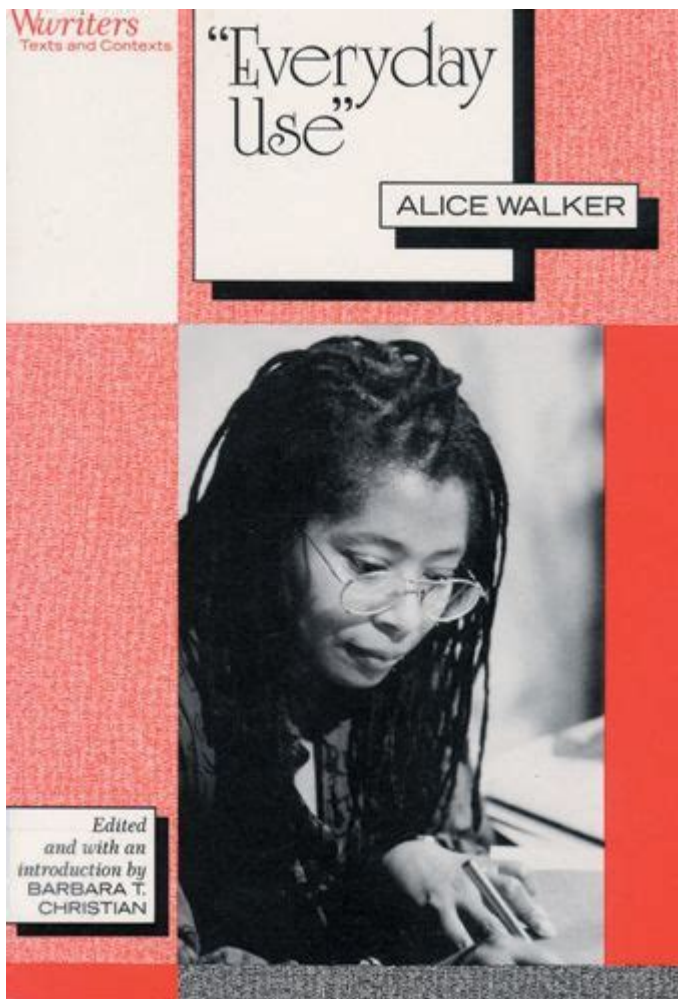


Alice Walker Everyday Use



Alice Walker's "Everyday Use": A Deep Dive into Heritage, Identity, and Family

Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," a poignant short story, transcends its seemingly simple narrative of a mother and her two daughters. This exploration delves into the complexities of the story, analyzing its themes of heritage, identity, and the fractured relationships within a Black family. We'll dissect the characters, examine the symbolism, and uncover the lasting impact of Walker's powerful prose. This comprehensive guide provides in-depth analysis, making it a valuable resource for students, literature enthusiasts, and anyone seeking a deeper understanding of "Everyday Use."

Understanding the Central Conflict: Heritage vs. Assimilation

The core conflict in "Everyday Use" centers on the contrasting views of heritage held by Mama and

her daughters, Maggie and Dee (Wangero). Dee, having embraced a more outwardly visible and arguably performative Black identity, seeks to reclaim her heritage through the acquisition of physical artifacts – the quilts and other family heirlooms. This represents a form of assimilation, using her heritage as a fashionable statement rather than a living tradition. Maggie, in contrast, embodies a more quiet, ingrained understanding of her heritage. She values the quilts for their practical use and the history woven into their very fabric, representing a continuation of family legacy. This difference highlights the complexities of Black identity in a society that often appropriates and commodifies cultural elements.

Character Analysis: Mama, Maggie, and Dee (Wangero)

Mama: The narrator and central figure, Mama represents a grounded, practical approach to heritage. She is the embodiment of resilience and quiet strength, forged through years of hardship and unwavering dedication to her family. Her decision regarding the quilts reveals her deep understanding of the true meaning of heritage: its continuity and practical application within the family unit.

Maggie: Shy and insecure, Maggie represents a generation grappling with the complexities of self-identity within a changing world. She embodies a quieter, more traditional understanding of heritage, recognizing its value not in its aesthetic appeal but in its tangible connection to family history and practicality.

Dee (Wangero): Dee's transformation into Wangero symbolizes a rejection of her rural upbringing and embrace of a more overtly political and fashionable Black identity. While her desire to reclaim her heritage is understandable, her approach reveals a superficial understanding, prioritizing aesthetics and symbolic value over the lived experience and continued tradition represented by the quilts.

Symbolism: The Quilts and Their Significance

The quilts are not merely fabric; they are powerful symbols representing the interwoven history and legacy of the family. Each stitch tells a story, representing generations of women who crafted them, imbuing them with love, labor, and family history. For Maggie, they represent the ongoing legacy of her family, a tangible link to the past and a continuation of tradition. For Dee, they are mere artifacts, objects to be displayed and admired rather than utilized and cherished. This disparity highlights the central conflict of the story – the difference between a performative and an authentic connection to one's heritage.

Setting and its Impact on the Narrative

The rural setting of the story plays a crucial role in establishing the context of the characters' lives and their perspectives on heritage. The simplicity and quiet dignity of the rural environment

contrast with Dee's more urban, outwardly expressed aspirations. This contrast underscores the clash between tradition and modernity, and the different ways in which heritage is understood and valued. The setting itself becomes a character, influencing the characters' actions and shaping their understanding of their identity and place within the world.

The Lasting Legacy of "Everyday Use"

Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" remains relevant decades after its publication due to its exploration of enduring themes. The story challenges readers to contemplate the complexities of heritage, identity, and the dynamics of family relationships. It provokes conversations about cultural appropriation, authenticity, and the different ways individuals connect with their past. The enduring power of the story lies in its ability to resonate with readers across diverse backgrounds and experiences, fostering introspection and a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of identity.

Conclusion

Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" is far more than a simple tale of a family dispute; it's a powerful meditation on the multifaceted nature of heritage, identity, and the complex relationships within families. The story's enduring relevance lies in its ability to prompt critical reflection on the meaning of tradition and the ways in which we choose to connect with our past. Through the contrasting personalities of Mama, Maggie, and Dee, Walker crafts a narrative that is both deeply personal and universally resonant.

FAQs

1. What is the significance of the title "Everyday Use"? The title itself is ironic, highlighting the difference in how the quilts are valued by Maggie and Dee. Maggie represents the everyday use and continuous tradition, while Dee wants to display them, rendering them unusable in their traditional context.
2. How does the story portray the complexities of Black identity? The story showcases the diverse ways Black individuals navigate their identity, showcasing both the internalized struggles and the external pressures of a society grappling with its own racial history.
3. What is the symbolism of the butter churn and the benches? These objects, alongside the quilts, represent the accumulated history and heritage of the family, further highlighting the contrast between Maggie's appreciation of their practical value and Dee's desire to possess them as mere artifacts.

4. What is the significance of Dee's name change? Changing her name to Wangero is a conscious effort to embrace a more outwardly African identity, a move that, while seemingly empowering, reveals a potentially superficial understanding of her heritage.
5. What is the ultimate message of the story? The story emphasizes the importance of understanding and valuing heritage authentically, appreciating its lived experience and continuity within a family rather than simply appropriating its symbolic elements.

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similar fate, and while Nettie escapes to a new life as a missionary in Africa, Celie is left behind without her best friend and confidante, married off to an older suitor, and sentenced to a life alone with a harsh and brutal husband. In an attempt to transcend a life that often seems too much to bear, Celie begins writing letters directly to God. The letters, spanning 20 years, record a journey of self-discovery and empowerment guided by the light of a few strong women. She meets Shug Avery, her husband's mistress and a jazz singer with a zest for life, and her stepson's wife, Sofia, who challenges her to fight for independence. And though the many letters from Celie's sister are hidden by her husband, Nettie's unwavering support will prove to be the most breathtaking of all. *The Color Purple* has sold more than five million copies, inspired an Academy Award-nominated film starring Oprah Winfrey and directed by Steven Spielberg, and been adapted into a Tony-winning Broadway musical. Lauded as a literary masterpiece, this is the groundbreaking novel that placed Walker "in the company of Faulkner" (*The Nation*), and remains a wrenching—yet intensely uplifting—experience for new generations of readers. This ebook features a new introduction written by the author on the 25th anniversary of publication, and an illustrated biography of Alice Walker including rare photos from the author's personal collection. *The Color Purple* is the 1st book in the *Color Purple Collection*, which also includes *The Temple of My Familiar* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.

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alice walker everyday use: *Alice Walker* Gerri Bates, 2005-10-30 Alice Walker, born in Eatonton, Georgia in 1944, overcame a disadvantaged sharecropping background, blindness in one eye, and the tense times of the Civil Rights Movement to become one of the world's most respected African American writers. While attending both Spelman and Sarah Lawrence Colleges, Walker began to draw on both her personal tragedies and those of her community to write poetry, essays, short stories, and novels that would tell the virtually untold stories of oppressed African and African American women, providing readers with hope and inspiring activism. Perhaps best known for her novel *The Color Purple* (1982), which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1983 and became a controversial film three years later, Walker has introduced and developed womanist theory, criticism and practice, and

continues to champion the causes of women of color by encouraging their strength and liberation in her life and her writings. Literary works analyzed in this volume: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *Meridian*, *The Color Purple*, *The Temple of My Familiar*, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, *By the Light of My Father's Smile*, *The Way Forward Is With a Broken Heart*, *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*.

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revised and updated, this edition of the classic anthology includes several new stories and an expanded introduction that revisits this ancient relationship with fresh vision and insight. Book jacket.

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to American life and the Hull-House community, her friendship with Jane Addams, her marriage, her support of civil rights, woman suffrage, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and her experiences as a writer for the WPA.

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Literature Studies, grade: 2,0, University of Passau, language: English, abstract: This term paper provides the concept of a teaching unit concerning the short story *Everyday Use* by Alice Walker. Apart from the different analyses there should also be given an overview of recommendations and possibilities that could be used for creating a teaching unit. *Everyday Use* was published in 1973 and is basically about a black mother and her two daughters. Whereas one daughter, Dee, had the possibility to go to school and visit college, Maggie, the younger daughter, still lives with her mother and did not enjoy higher education. One day, Dee, who is accompanied by her boyfriend, visits her mother and her sister at her old home. As the story continues it becomes clear that obvious differences have developed between the opinions of Dee and her mother alternatively her sister.

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of Dessie Woods who was sent to jail for murdering her would-be rapist and highlights the role of racism and prejudice in the law's treatment of black women. Finally we travel with her on her journey to China, to Bali, and a visit to Nine Miles - the birthplace of the legendary Bob Marley.

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