

# Alice walker

[History](#), [African American](#)



Prize novelist Alice Walker is best known for her stories about the life of African American women, their struggle with society for survival, racial, sexual and inexpensive equality and spiritual unity. She writes through her personal experiences. Most critics consider her works as feminist, but Walker describes herself as a “womanliest”, showing appreciation of women and their abilities no matter what the color of their skin is. On February 9, 1944, in the small farming community of Eatonton, GA, Willie Lee and Minnie Grant gave birth to their eighth and final child, a girl, they named Alice. Little did her parents know that their youngest daughter would become one of the most prolific, controversial and respected African-American novelists of the later-half of the 20th Century. But the potential in Willie Lee and Minnie Grant's baby may not have been recognized early on by others living in their farming community. Alice would have to overcome a number of difficulties in her lifetime that would profoundly influence the way she pictured herself and the world around her and would later help shape her views as a writer. Alice Walker began her childhood in a crowded household with five of her older brothers. The house she lived in was a small and cramped hut with temperature extremes that sometimes made life uncomfortable. During the Georgia summers filled with bright sunshine, it was very hot. During winters when the frosts would come, it was equally cold. And when it rained, the roof leaked. Alice's father was a sharecropper who earned only \$300 a year. Her mother was a domestic who sometimes earned extra money as a seamstress. As a young child, Alice loved to explore the world around her. She said that one of her favorite pastimes in the world was “people watching.” Even at a young age, she loved to closely observe a person's

facial expressions. She enjoyed watching others' actions in relation to their neighbors in her community. At the age of four, Alice began school. Because of her precociousness, Alice was advanced to the first grade. During this time, she was relatively outgoing and self-confident. Alice had a very good body image of herself and believed herself to be pretty, even at a young age. In her youth, she loved to get up in front of crowds of people, especially at church and recite speeches. Alice also described herself as a tomboy who enjoyed keeping up with two of her brothers who were two and four years older than she was. On Saturday afternoons, she, her mother, and her two older brothers went to the movies to spend time at the matinee watching Westerns. At the age of eight, her rambunctious play as a tomboy suddenly came to an end however. While playing a game of "Cowboys and Indians," Alice was accidentally hit in her right eye by a BB pellet shot by one of her brothers. When her two older brothers saw that she was injured, they climbed up onto the tin garage covering where Alice had been lying on and helped her down in order to get help from their parents. Because they were afraid of getting a whipping from their parents, Alice's brothers persuaded her to lie say that she had been struck in the eye with a protruding piece of wire. Alice's right eye quickly began to fill with blood. As she was lying down on her parents' porch, the last thing she remembers seeing of her eye was the trunk of a tree growing next to her house. Because they did not realize what had truly taken place, Alice's parents did not take her to be seen by a doctor immediately. Instead they tried treating her injury at home. In the days following the accident however, Alice's injured eye became infected and she developed a fever. Her father placed lily leaves around her head to

try to help bring the fever down. Her mother tried to keep Alice nourished with soup to help her recover. But Alice was too sick to eat and she didn't get better. In the end, they decide to take Alice to a local doctor in town. When they arrived, the doctor admonished them and asked them why they waited so long to see him. As he treated Alice's infected eye, Alice's sight in her right eye probably wouldn't return. He also explained to them that since eyes are sympathetic, it was possible that Alice could lose sight in both her eyes. Luckily this doesn't happen, but Alice remained fearful for a long time that this would eventually happen. Slowly over time, the injury in her right eye calcified and healed. It developed into what Alice described as a " hideous white scar." In her novels she discusses questions of gender, races, violence, troubled relationships as well as isolation, environment, love, hate and suffering. She talks about problems of African American women, who do not know the value of their selves because they have never been given a chance to improve what they are good at. Walker criticizes men for being ignorant of women's feelings and for taking away the power women once possessed back in the time when people were created by God. She tries to provide a comprehensive picture of society and its development from prehistoric times until today. Walker describes mainly the differences of women's way of life in the past in comparison to what their conditions are nowadays. Walker is a very influential author among the black community but has also a lot of fans in the white society. Her narration is easy to follow and thanks to her ability to express her thoughts such well, one feels. In comparison to Zora Neale Hurston, she was a novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist. Zora plays an important role for the Harlem Renaissance. Zora Neale Hurston is considered

one of the titans of twentieth-century African American literature. Despite that she would later fall into disgrace because of her firm views of civil rights, her lyrical writing which praise southern black culture has influenced generations of black American literary figures. Hurston's work also had an impact on later black American authors such as Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. Zora Neale Hurston always said it was her mother who inspired her to become a success, by frequently telling her to " jump at de sun." Hurston's mother meant by saying that, her daughter should try for the impossible because by trying, " we might not land on the sun, but at least we... get off the ground." Hurston was a spirited child, outspoken and frequently into mischief. Again, according to her own account, she was also a tale-teller from a very young age. Until recently most scholars believed that Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1901 in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida. But scholars have always claimed to be unsure of this date, since Hurston sometimes claimed to have been born as early as 1898, and sometimes as late as 1903. In fact she was born in 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama, the fifth child of Lucy Ann Potts and John Hurston. The family moved to Eatonville when Zora was three years of age. As a child, Hurston was an passionate reader, and enjoyed living in the land of her imagination. In her autobiography she talks of playing with a corn husk, and a bar of soap, and an old doorknob. To her, however, these became " Miss Corn Shuck," " Mr. Sweet Smell," and " Reverend Door Knob." She would turn her imagination into stories. Hurston's mother died when she was nine, and her death was a traumatic event in young Hurston's life. The years following were also very difficult, in part because Hurston's father quickly remarried

and Zora no longer had a place in the family. She was sent to live with relatives, and then sent away to school. In time she became a clothing girl with a Gilbert and Sullivan theatrical company and toured the South, learning enough about the world to realize she wanted more education. When the troupe visited Baltimore, she decided to stay there and go to Morgan Academy, the high school division of what is now Morgan State University. The early life of Zora Neale Hurston has been covered in mystery. While the majority of biographical accounts list the year of her birth as 1901, just as many list 1903, and in a 1993 biography film they list her birth day as 1891. Hurston's parents were Lucy Ann Potts, a schoolteacher, and John Hurston, a carpenter and Baptist preacher. Her father was a three-term mayor. In 1904, her mother died and her father sent her to a private school in Jacksonville. At the age of twenty-six she enrolls at the high school division of Morgan College. Although it is believed that she was twenty-six years old at the time of enrollment, she listed her age as sixteen and 1901 as her birthday. Hurston graduated from Morgan Academy, the high school division of Morgan College, in 1918. Later that year, she began her undergraduate studies at Howard University. While at Howard, Hurston became one of the earliest initiates of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and co-founded The Hilltop, the University's student newspaper. Hurston left Howard in 1924, unable to support herself. " Writing saved me from the sin and inconvenience of violence" -Alice Walker (Lewis n. pag) Walker is considered to an African American novelist, short story writers poet, essayist, and activist. Most of her literature are mostly from her personal experiences and are self-esteem to numbers of African American all over the world. Walker defines herself as a "

womanist" what means " The prophetic voice concerned about the well-being of the entire African American community, male and female, adults and children". Womanist religion attempts to help black women see, and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste". The works of Alice Walker had a great influence on the African Americans community. Most of Walker's fiction work is filled by her Southern background. Her most famous work, the award-winning and best-selling novel *The Color Purple*, chronicles the life of a poor and abused southern black woman who eventually triumphs over oppression through affirming female relationships. Walker has described herself as a " womanist" ã³ her term for a black feminist ã³ which she defines in the introduction to her book of essays, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, as one who " appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility ... women's strength" and is " committed to [the] survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." A theme throughout Walker's work is the preservation of black culture, and her women characters forge important links to maintain continuity in both personal relationships and communities. According to Barbara T. Christian in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Walker is concerned with " heritage," which to Walker " is not so much the grand sweep of history

or artifacts created as it is the relations of people to each other, young to old, parent to child, man to woman." Walker admires the struggle of black women throughout history to maintain an essential spirituality and creativity in their lives, and their achievements serve as an inspiration to others. In *Our Mother's Gardens*, Walker wrote: " We must fearlessly pull out of ourselves and look at and identify with our lives the living creativity some of our great-grandmothers were not allowed to know. I stress 'some' of them because it is well known that the majority of our great-grandmothers knew,