

Example of essay on everyday use by alice walker

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



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Everyday Use by Alice Walker is an interesting and intriguing story which demonstrates the power of the African American psyche and the women which make up the whole equation in this sense. The story focuses on a black woman who is bringing up her children in the rural South and here she faces considerable difficulties and problems especially in the bringing up of her two daughters who are by nature shy and reticent, not exactly the right approach to take in the South where racism still remains pretty rife.

The protagonist

Naturally enough the story focuses on the prowess of the main character who is the narrator and perhaps here Walker also imbues some of her own characteristics into the story. The narrator is described as being a woman with strong hands and extremely powerful and guileful. Perhaps she also personifies the ideal woman as described by Southern black culture which always puts forward this type of strength as a way of fighting against the odds which in the South are quite considerable as one can imagine.

Notwithstanding all this there are other characters in the story which also imbue it with a certain rural charm and one of them is the daughter Maggie whose relationship with her mother is rather stormy to say the least.

Other aspects of the main character include the way she approaches her past where she recalls a horrifying incident where her house burnt down and where she also suffered considerable injuries including burns to the upper part of her body including her arms and hands. This is particularly true in the way the incident is described with a certain wistfulness that almost describes what goes on when some sort of racial riot takes place. In fact we are left guessing if the incident was actually a genuine one or whether it was really something to do with racial abuse and violence.

The arrogance of Dee

Dee who is the shy daughter also encounters problems with her mother who is occasionally rather headstrong and will not brook any cause for complaint. Her strength intrinsically lies in the way she manages her family which obviously brings about certain foibles and disagreements but she is also a person of great moral strength and will not flinch from her principles. She personifies the typical strong black matronly woman who has to pass through various problems and challenges as she faces life but this seems to be something which she takes in her stride. However there are also other factors in play which include the supreme challenges which are faced when bringing up children in the rural South which obviously is not exactly the best place to do so. Her relationship with the land is also important as it shows us what can be done if the principles of thrift and hard work are applied accordingly to life.

Maggie

However the story also revolves around the clashes between the daughters Dee and Maggie especially over the possession of some heirloom quilts which are an important part of family history. This also means that the mother begins recalling the past when their house burnt down and demonstrates a certain longing for what might have been. The fire also left Maggie with bad scars and these are perhaps a leitmotif which shows that fire is something which can scar but not destroy. In fact, fire is a constant presence in the black person's life especially with regard to the lynching plague which dominated the South in the early to mid part of the 20th century when blacks were regularly burnt at the stake in an arbitrary expression of justice.

Dee

Yet the relationship between the two daughters especially Dee is also instructive as these have studied away from the rural South where ignorance and poverty remains the order of the day. There is a certain poignancy about the fact that the mother is willing to sacrifice her life so that her daughters have a much better future although this is not always the case. Still the daughters remain petulant and fight between themselves thus bringing up the question of the family past. Interestingly as well, the story is only focused principally on women with the male section of everything kept in the background accordingly.

Hakim-a-Barber:

This is an interesting character which flits in and out of the story at regular intervals and his relationship with everyone is rather dissimilar at stages.

The quilt:

The quilt is a leitmotif which sort of holds the family together although in many ways it is also the glue between the two sisters.

Finally one may observe that the rural South remains a fount of interesting stories which revolve around superstition and misfortune. More often than not it is a sad tale that the black woman has to tell as she protects her children from the forces of evil and this is superbly characterised by this short story. The author definitely touches a raw nerve with her writing and brings about memories of the past in an uncanny manner. The relationship between mother and daughter which can also be termed to be a bond is also extremely important and perhaps can be the basis of everything on which the story is based upon.

Works Cited:

Walker A: Everyday Use, Notes and Study Guide, Retrieved from: <http://www.enotes.com/everyday-use> , 2011, Web