

# Example of women, by alice walker essay

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



Many times the writings of poets are testimony to experiences in their lives. Alice Walker was born in an era when discrimination was rampant; she uses her poem, “ Women,” to express her gratitude to the women who fought and worked hard for their children’s education and place in society.

Alice Walker was one of the activists who fought against discrimination during the sixties. She was born February 4, 1944, in Eatonton, Georgia and experienced her people’s struggles first-hand. She is the last child of eight children; her father was a sharecropper who only earned three hundred dollars per year; and her mother worked eleven hours each day for a menial pay of seventeen dollars per week. At age four her mother enrolled in grade one. At a young age she was accidentally shot in one eye with a BB gun by her brother; as scar tissue grew over her eye she became self-conscious as people would openly stare at her. She became a recluse and found solace in reading and writing poetry. Despite all these odds, Alice was valedictorian of her class; she received full scholarship to Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia and later transfer to Sarah Lawrence College near New York.

With seven siblings and little money Alice witnessed her mother’s tenacity to give her the education she could not have and she knew that there were many women like her mother who besieged their children’s advancement; the title is well chosen. There is an implied comparison between men and women of her mother’s “ generation.” In the first six lines of her the poem she says that underneath all that manly exterior they are still women.

Nonetheless, they had to exhort themselves in a manly fashion to be taken seriously. She also applies a stereotypic view of black women of the time; these lines paints tall, strapping, loud women who are sure of their steps,

maybe they even wore boots. Then she speaks about their hands, the hands that gentle rocks a baby can batter down doors if the occasion arises; and the hands know how to knock from door to door seeking work. In lines seven to eleven, these same callous hands that beat on doors like men can do the work of a maid and starch and iron shirts. Alice saw her mother in all these roles and she knew her mother was not alone.

The implications of lines twelve through eighteen can be ambiguous. Leading armies could mean that these women stood behind their husbands and take care of them and the children. “ Headragged generals,” there was a time when black women always kept their hair covered, hat for special occasions and scarves for everyday activities and around the house. The other meaning is obvious, she speaks of “ mined fields, booby- traps, ditches,” war-time jargon, undoubtedly, she is taking about the women who manage the household when their sons and husbands are gone to war.

Alice continues the rest of the poem with women as generals. They fought for their education; they introduce them to books, “ desks” could mean a place where they can do their homework, a desk in school, or their own desk in an office, they gave them desks so that they would not encounter the hardships that they endured. She says that these women prepare a place in society for their children; being illiterate themselves they could not read the books they introduced to them but they knew that within those pages are their children paths out of illiteracy and poverty. These women knew what education would mean for their children and to obtain it, they as the care givers must fight for them.

Alice Walker who fought against racial discrimination is one of American’s

best women writers; her work is legendary; and the obvious reason her work is so accepted is the fact that most of her work is the life she experienced.