

# Everyday use summary by alice walker

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In the short story *Everyday Use*, by Alice Walker, the short story is narrated by a black woman in the South who is faced with the decision to give away two quilts to one of her two daughters. Dee, her oldest daughter who is visiting from college, perceives the quilts as popular fashion and believes they should undoubtedly be given to her. Maggie, her youngest daughter, who still lives at home and understands the family heritage, has been promised the quilts. Dee is insistent to possess these heirlooms of family heritage, while Maggie is forbearing in allowing Mama to make her own decision as to who should receive the quilts. Dee shows a lack of appreciation, disrespect, and a distancing behavior towards her mother and sister. Mama ultimately decides to give the quilts to Maggie with sufficient reasons to do so.

Mama recognizes Dee's different style of life and the lack of appreciation her character displays. Her mother states, " I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told me they were old-fashioned, out of style." Dee does not appreciate things unless it is for her own self-gratification.

After being away at college, she is demanding to be given the quilts that her grandmother and aunt have made, for she now sees these precious items as fashionable objects. " Dee wanted nice things. At sixteen she had a style of her own and knew what style was." She has a selfish mind of her own. Mama is more simple. She learned about life by working hard. " I was always better at a man's job. I used to love to milk till I was hoofed in the side in 49."

Because Mama is intimately acquainted with labor, she can relate to the arduous work that is involved in putting a quilt together. This unfolds as a

determiner in Mama's decision as she gives the quilts to the one who will overall appreciate them.

Dee is clearly distancing herself from her mother and sister. She goes so far as to change her name from Dee to Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo, saying, " I couldn't bear it any longer being named after the people who oppress me." Yet, she wants the quilts that are made by the very people that she despises. Mama is uneducated but not so ignorant as to realize Dee's unrooted, superficial motivation to have the quilts. " For her, heritage is something to be displayed on the coffee table and on the wall."

Dee blatantly disrespects her mother's authority and free will. Dee is already claiming the quilts to herself, even though Mama has never said " yes" that she could have them. Dee challenges Mama's authority by grasping the quilts and moving back as her mother tries to touch them. By doing this, she also disregards Mama's free will to give the quilts to whomever she would like. Mama observes that if Dee cannot preserve the unity of the family by honoring her mother, then how will she be able to appreciate the quilts in a respectable way.

Dee has nothing but put-downs for Maggie, implying that she is more deserving to receive the quilts. She is using this cunning approach to get what she wants. As Dee is visiting, she comments to Mama regarding the quilts, " Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags." Dee goes to the notable extent to say, " Maggie can't appreciate these quilts." Mama discerns Dee's manipulation to twist the truth, because she is aware that Maggie knows what it takes to produce a quilt.

" It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself." Of course, Maggie can appreciate the quilts much more than Dee can. Naturally, Mama will give the quilts to the one who can appreciate them most because she has been cherishing them. " God knows I've been saving'em for long enough with nobody using 'em."

Maggie is a frail, weak girl, walking with chin on chest, eyes on ground, and feet in shuffle. She surrenders the quilts that have been promised to her, by telling Mama that Dee can have them. " Mama sees in Maggie's angerless fear an image of her own passive acceptance of Dee's aggression, her own suppressed anger." She finally realizes that she is just as intimidated by Dee as Maggie is. This awareness causes her to rise up and demonstrate her opinion toward Dee. She proceeds to hug Maggie, drag her into the room, snatch the quilts out of Dee's hands, and dump them on Maggie's lap.

Mama, Dee, and Maggie have learned a meaningful lesson through Mama's decision. On the one hand Mama has learned to establish her hidden power in an influential way. Dee has experienced hearing the word " no" for practically the first time. " No is a word the world never learned to say to her.

" Maggie is lifted to a new plateau that will hopefully help her through the next conflict of life. At the moment of receiving the quilts, she sits with her mouth open as if she is surprised to win, unlocking a new revelation: she certainly is a winner. Being a winner means that you have to assert yourself sometimes and that is the lesson that Maggie learns from watching her mother's conduct on the day that Dee has come to visit. A real smile comes upon Maggie's face as she is saying goodbye to Dee that day. Dee is

humbled by covering her eyes in shame. " She put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and chin."