

Everyday use by alice walker

Literature



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BUSTER**

“ Everyday Use” by Alice Walker is a short story told by a common African-American woman who lives in the Deep South. The story humorously portrays the lives of two sisters, Dee and Maggie, who are entailed with opposite characters and ideas towards cultural heritage and family values. Maggie is shown as a rural girl with traditional values, whereas Dee is a modern girl with progressive views and ideas towards the position of woman in society, cultural traditions and family relations. Dee prefers to be called Wangero as she is well-educated and successful young lady, though she scorn her African roots.

Actually, in her short story, Alice Walker stresses the people have different opinion towards the role of cultural identity. Maggie and Dee “ Everyday Use” contradicts idea that if children are brought up in one family and in the same social environment, they will likely to have similar characters and similar family values. Nevertheless, the story shows that our life isn’t as easy as it may seem. I think that the only similar thing between two sisters is the fact that they have common mother and are brought up at the same home. The similarities stop here.

Dee and Maggie are absolutely different in appearance and, moreover, their ideas about cultural heritage differ dramatically as well. For example, Dee is depicted as more attractive lady compared with Maggie. Maggie is awkward and skinny girl and Maggie’s mother says that “ good looks passed her by”. Moreover, Maggie isn’t confident and her self-esteem is lowered: her chin is on her chest and her eyes are looking always on the ground. Dee is Maggie’s opposite. She is pretty and attractive young lady with nice hair and alluring figure.

Dee thinks that she should be very proud of such appearance. Dee's clothing is modern and fashionable and " even her feet are always neat-looking". Besides different appearance sisters are entailed with different characters and personalities. For example, in the beginning of the story Maggie is shown to be rather nervous that her sister is going to visit them. In other words, Maggie feels inferior and sister's visit makes her feel uncomfortable and she prefers to go away to the safety of her house - she always " attempts to make a dash for the house".

I think that Dee intimidates Maggie as she is strong-willed and firm of purpose, whereas Dee's personality is weak. Dee is bold, courageous and self-assured, whereas Maggie is timid, modest and immature personality. From the very childhood Dee always expressed her real essence, whereas Maggie was always afraid of wrong ideas and actions. She was afraid of people's reproaches and rumors. For example mother notes that " she would always look anyone in the eye; hesitation was no part of her nature".

Further, Dee is rather selfish as she decides to get butter churn, though her family is still using it. In such a way, Dee shows neglect and ignorance towards her mother and sister. It seems to me, that she thinks only about her interests. For example, Dee mentions that she is able to " display part of it in her alcove, and do something artistic with the rest of it". Things are more important for her than feelings and emotions of other people. Maggie and Dee have different ideas and views on cultural heritage and family roots.

As it is mentioned above, Dee tries to deny her African roots, whereas Maggie feels proud of her cultural identity. Dee thinks that she would succeed in her personal life and career only if she denies her African roots. In

contrast to Dee, Maggie is shown to have traditional values and she thinks it is necessary to preserve family traditions, beliefs and values. For example, Maggie is proud of family quilts as they are very useful. Moreover, Maggie's grandmother teaches her to quilt. Maggie is proud that her mother saves the quilts and will present her after she is married.

I am sure that exactly quilts are the symbols of traditions and cultural heritage. Dee isn't interested in it at all, whereas Maggie views quilts as reminder of her aunt and grandmother. Maggie says: " I can ' member them without quilts". Nevertheless, Dee also values quilts and thinks they are priceless and they should be displayed, but in her heart she hates her cultural heritage. She decides to collect her own heritage instead. When Dee goes to college, she returns home with new ethnic clothes and, moreover, she decided to change her name to Wangero.

I think that she changes her name in order to break up with her African roots and " the people who oppresses her". Before she goes off to college, she says that quilts aren't good as they " are old-fashioned and out of style". Nevertheless, than she changes her minds and wants these quilts to be displayed at her home. Actually, Dee wants to prove that she can appreciate these quilts more than Maggie can, but Maggie needs than for spiritual reasons, whereas Dee's reasons are surely materialistic - quilts are priceless and they symbolize material success and prosperity.

Conclusion Despite the fact that Dee and Maggie are siblings, they are provided with different physical traits, family values and perspectives for future life. Maggie is shown as unattractive and modest young lady, whereas Dee is self-confident, brave and beautiful woman. Dee strives for interesting

and extraordinary life, whereas her sister thinks that her simple life is all she needs. Maggie feels uncomfortable and nervous when Dee goes with the visit. I think that Dee is bold, but too selfish and narcissistic.

Maggie values her cultural heritage, African roots and family traditions, whereas Dee refers to them only when she needs something to display. Actually, Dee is materialistic thinking only about her self-enrichment. Maggie is humble and she is inferior compared with her bold sister. Despite the fact she lacks courage, she is shown as a descent person who carries family traditions and realizes the true meanings of the cultural heritage. I think that in the story that author wants to show that bringing up at the same environment doesn't mean that children will have similar individualities.