

# The educational and race issue on everyday use

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Final Semester Take Home Test : Everyday Use Auliya Atika F. Auliya Atika F.  
Mr. Gindho Rizano M. Hum Prose II May 24, 2012 Final Task Examination The Educational and Race Issue in Everyday Use Everyday Use is a part of the short story collection *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Woman* (1973) by Alice Walker (Wikipedia). Alice Walker is an African - American blooded who often made issues about African - American itself mostly in her works . Everyday Use is one of her outstanding work which got many appreciation from literary's devotees.

This story itself is telling about an unlucky family who consist of Mama and her two daughters, where is a quarrel between Mama and her oldest daughter and also how her youngest daughter who have a very self low-esteem perceive any conflicts at their home. For this chance, I want to discuss the related topic which prominent enough to this stories, there are two things I want to discuss, the first is the educational issues between the characters, especially about the contrary among Mama and Maggie with Dee.

And the second is race issues which contain in some parts of this story. The characters of Mama and Maggie in this story described is not get a good education facilities because of some unexperctable problem: " I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was closed down" (page 3). Although she and her youngest sister just couldn't reach the proper education, her oldest sister, Dee could enjoy school until college now and she even studied in a prestigious boarding Final Semester Take Home Test : Everyday Use Auliya Atika F. school at other city.

Dee at her sixteen age already have her own unique style, from head to toe, so bright and colorful, and ever her hairstyle which Mama can't tolerance it anymore from the bottom of her heart: " A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes .... I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out" (page 4). Mama actually hopes by sending Dee to the highest level of education, she could get into the moment to share any knowledge as large as Dee got from school: "...we raised themoney, the church and me, to send her to Augusta to school. " (page 2).

And the best point of expentacy of Mama sending her to school is in order to Dee more appreciate her in any things. Mama hopes Dee could appreciate Mama's large and manly body, Mama's dark skin, and how Mama acted like a strong man and she loves it a lots. It is a very simple hope from a mother to a daughter actually, but Dee definitely couldn't make it at all. Dee just come back home after a long time since the last time she came with her more arrogant style towards her own family. She even greet Mama with the strange greetings language " Wa-su-zo Tean-o," , which actually an African language.

She comes to home with a strange boy who she introduced to Mama as her boyfriend. Her lofty style towards Mama, and how she threats Mama and Maggie bad, as she's much better on any points than both of them are the result of what we get from studied on years. She's just alienated herself and make her own arrogant cogitation about her life. Ironically Maggie who just never left home and having a traumatic problems because of she almost burned of fire at her home in the past. Her body just shuffled when she walks

and her chin always bend down. She's kind of a very nervous girl and just taking anything given to her.

She's very unconfident with her lack of education and very suffered of her serious shyness towards society out there. Eventhough Mama always says to her that someday she will marry John Thomas and sooner after then will gain her self confident and could be a stronger woman. We can see the ironic contradiction between those two siblings and how education and the lack of it could give them dangerous impacts to their each other life. Final Semester Take Home Test : Everyday Use Auliya Atika F. The race issue also coloring this story in some aspects.

Alice Walker itself actually is African-American and like to mold the topic about race on her works. The stories in the collection book where this short stories published is taking the setting place around Walker's home where contains of cultural mixing between the modern New York City and the East Africa Nation Uganda (Sparknotes). And also the characters in this story possibly reflected the author's family. Walker is the youngest child of eight children in her family. Shes growing up during 1960's-1970's, and during that time she must to do a lot of work in her young age.

Woman in this era still expected to do the house works stuff, such cooked, cleaned the house, etc. But it is actually is quite different with this story, because Mama ever tell about how she is doing some works which man used to do it, and in the actual African-American tradition, it is not suitable for woman who doing the man's work: I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. . . . I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls

during the day. I can kill a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather.

I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eat pork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. (page 1). We can observe the race elements in this story firstly through Mama's character. How she described her own appearance and her life background and also how people think of her: " Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? (page 2). Another point which indicate the race element in this story is how Mama is comparing the skin color between she and her daughters: " Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. " (page 2). The African traditional culture in this stories also could be seen in the last part which Mama is arguing with Dee concerning the quilts, as their family heritage. Dee is really wanting the quilts, but Mama keep insistent to grant the grandmother's command to give them to Maggie, it is a culture or that she keeps Final Semester Take Home Test : Everyday Use Auliya Atika F. n and don't want to break it: " I...snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap..." (page 9). The quilts itself used to wear and as a piece of uniforms that Dee's grandfather wore during the civil war, it could be a symbolizes about Black-American suffering experiences. We could also observe the race issue through Dee's character. The change of Dee's name into an African name " Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo" actually because she wants to protest being named

after the people who have oppressed her: " I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me" (Page 4)..

By changing her name, she seemed doesn't want to be associated with her family's culture and she feels freedom after her name have changed. And although her new name is African name, but she doesn't related it at all into her family. After being a more educational and smart woman who studied until the high level, Dee even felt ashamed with her family reality life: " She wrote me once that no matter where we " choose" to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends. " (page 3). She is even unaware to comprehend herself to learn making quilts, a traditional heritage from her family.

She just looked the quilts through the material value, not from heritage value. Heritage or generation, it is not a symbolize of her family traditions, she just wear it without any meaning at all. Dee's view on the value of family culture and tradition value seemed very contrast with Mama and her sister, Maggie. Mama and Maggie think that traditions are something eternal and no longer defined as an " Everyday Use", it is always planted in their heart and mind as an admiration to their ancestors who have built these traditions since a very long time ago.

As in the beginning of the story, Mama as a narrator proudly introduced herself as a strong African-American woman. Obviously we can conclude that the both issues I discuss this time is very related to each other in this story. The first is the educational issue that happened among the main characters, Mama and Maggie with Dee. Mama and Maggie who forced to give up their school since the beginner grade is very contrary with Dee who could

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continue her study until the high level, college. But the high education that Dee could Final Semester Take Home Test : Everyday Use

Auliya Atika F. reach apparently couldn't shape her become into a polite woman and a good children. She's become arrogant with her high intellectual level, she unaware with her family cultural and traditions and even more underestimate her mother. And although Mama and Maggie are low in educational, but they have a highly appreciation to their own culture and tradition. So, the second issue which is about race could joint to the previous issue, the educational issue. Alice Walker is very famous to drop the race issue in her mostly works.

In this story the race issues could we find out through the characteristics of especially Mama and Dee. Dee who have been in the year of college, but her appreciation to their family tradition is become weaker and make her be arrogant and underestimating her own family. Her intellect maybe has been killed her respect. So the education couldn't determine someone become also better in her mindset and behavior. Works Cited Walker, Alice. Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Woman: Everyday Use. 1973 Klarer, Mario. An Introduction to Literary Studies (Second Edition). (London: Routledge, 2004) 103-115. [www.wikipedia.org/Everyday\\_Use](http://www.wikipedia.org/Everyday_Use)