

# Everyday use analytical

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Characterization is used to address how ignorant a person can be to his or her heritage in the short story “ Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker.

The author shows the way of living, of a family to display the reader the way heritage is forgotten and, or ignored. In this short story the author uses a mother, and two daughters, Dee and Maggie, to demonstrate how different the thoughts are between a family and how they honor their heritage.

Maggie is used in the story to show the reader how heritage is still followed and respected in a family. The narrator, Mama, describes Maggie’s appearance as not a so good looking girl. She is a burned child from an incident the family had: “[T]hat fire that burned the other house to the ground” (Mama). Mama also describes how scarred Maggie’s arms and legs are. The narrator said, “[H]omely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs...” (Mama).

Maggie is described as a bad looking girl. On the other hand, Maggie’s personality is described to the reader as a really nice girl. She is also shown to be really caring, for example, when her sister wanted the quilts Maggie said, “ She can have them, Mama” (Magie). This shows the reader that Maggie puts people before herself. Although Maggie has such a great heart, her social life doesn’t seem to fit with her. She is shown to be a loner. The narrator illustrates the reader that Maggie is attached to her mother.

Mama stated, “[T]he two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed” (Mama). This informs the reader how much time both Maggie and Mama spent together. Mama’s appearance in the short story is shown to the reader as a big boned woman. The narrator states, “[I]

am a large, big boned woman with rough, man working hands” (Mama).

Because of this quote the reader can then comprehend that the narrator is a thick woman. The author also shows the reader that Mama is a strong woman: “ 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” (Mama). Mama is also shown to be a single woman.

She plays both the father and the mother’s role to her two daughters. The narrator stated, “ I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing” (Mama). This informs the reader that there is no man in the house to do this; therefore, the narrator has to do it. Also, Mama is uneducated. Mama said, “ After second grade the school was closed down” (Mama). The narrator stated this in order to let the reader know that the last grade completed by her was second grade and to show how low of an education she has. It also informs the reader how heritage is followed, since only one of her daughters is going to school.

In the short story, Mama’s relationship with her daughters is shown to be different from one daughter to the other. Mama mostly always favored Dee, and has good hopes for her future: “[W]e raised money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta to school” (Mama). This informed the reader that Mama would put Dee on top, and then Maggie on bottom. Although Mama preferred Dee, she would spend most of her time with Maggie and got along better with her. The narrator always talked about how Dee would make her mother and her sister Maggie’s self esteem go down: “ She washes us in a river of make believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge...” (Mama). The

reader can understand how superior Dee was to her sister and mother and how she would put them down. Dee on the other hand is described in the short story as a strong and selfish girl.

The narrator uses Dee's personality to show the reader how ignorant she is to her heritage. She is a mean and ungrateful woman: " Not ' Dee,' Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo! " (Dee). The reader can acknowledge that Dee changed her name and lost respect towards her real name. Dee is also shown in the short story to as a stuck up and hypocrite woman. Dee stated, " I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints" (Dee). This is an example of how hypocrite Dee was because she didn't use to like the bench.

Dee's appearance is also shown in the story as a pretty girl. She had nice and noticeable legs: " But even the first glimpse of leg out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat looking" (Mama). Dee was also light skinned and had good hair. She was also really attractive. The narrator stated, " Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure" (Mama). Dee is shown in the story to be a really smart woman.

She is shown in the short story as a really well educated girl: " She used to read to us without pity; forcing words, lies, other folks habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting trapped and ignorant underneath her voice" (Mama). This is an example that provides to reader to know the way Dee put her education in work. The short story " Everyday Use," by Alice Walker used characterization to illustrate the reader how a person can be so ignorant to his or her heritage. Heritage is something that shouldn't be forgotten. In the short story, it is well shown to the reader that heritage plays a big role in a

family. This lets the reader know that heritage should always remain in a family and not to be changed drastically.