

# Motherhood in everyday use and i stand here ironing

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



In the story “ Everyday Use” by Alice Walker and “ I Stand Here Ironing” by Tillie Olsen, there are many things that are addressed because of how both of these mother’s feel guilt over how her children ultimately turned out. Both mother’s criticized themselves for their daughters issues. “ I Stand Here Ironing” is about the Mousy daughters, while “ Everyday Use” is about her two daughter Maggie and Dee. Both of these stories address multiple problems of a mother’s guilt over how her child will turn out in the future. Neither of these mothers say they feel guilty but there is evidence, like in “ Everyday Use” when Dee is trying to take the quilts and the churn. In “ I Stand Here Ironing” the mother explains why she feels guilty about her daughter Emily. She explains the things she did and didn’t do as a mother. Both of these stories are very similar and have many similarities and differences on how these mothers have parrented their daughters.

These two stories share very similar themes about motherhood. In “ I Stand Here Ironing” the mother feels guilty about leaving her children in inadequate care to go to work to support her family. In both stories there are difficulties between siblings. In “ Everyday Use” when Dee arrives she comes looking different and Maggie and Mama isn’t used to it. After the fight over the quilt Dee gets ready to leave and says to Maggie ‘ You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It’s really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live you’d never know it.’ (Walker 10382). Another similarity we see in both stories is both mothers comparing their daughters to each other. Again in “ Everyday Use” Mama tells us that because Maggie was burned in a fire, “ Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure.” (Walker 10257). We also learned of Dee’s style, and

how the other girl's love to stare because of how fashionable she is. The mother in "I Stand Here Ironing" speaks of Emily as "dark and thin and foreign looking in a world where the prestige went to bloneness and curly hair and dimples, she was slow, where glibness was prized." (Olsen 9977). Like Maggie, Emily had a physical disability also. She has asthma. Although both stories have similarities it continues throughout both stories the theme of the sibling differences and sibling rivalries.

In "I Stand Here Ironing" Olsen illustrated the meaning of the iron, which can be compared to Walkers quilt in "Everyday Use." In "I Stand Here Ironing," The meaning of the creases means the hardships that the mother has had to face, and the iron means the back, and forth to make ends meet for your children. The mother explains that, "I stand here ironing, and what you ask me moves tormented back and forth with the iron." (Olsen 9850). Her emotions from being a single mother are being poured onto that iron. Similarly, In "Everyday Use" the quilt symbolizes a way to mend conflict. Also heritage. The quilts go back from generation to generation and that is why Dee wants them. Theme of these stories seem to be motherhood and making sure your children have everything they need and making sure they are well respected and that they respect their elders as well.

In both short stories, the two parents were struggling to make ends meet. They were faced with the conflict of trying to be the best mothers they would and be what society expected of them. Being a mother was hard, especially when you have children with disabilities to care for. Both mothers of these mothers are poor, but at the same time learn more about motherhood than

ever before. In both stories both of their daughters are opposites, one follows along with the trend of society while the other doesn't. In "I stand here ironing" the mother says "she was a child seldom smiled at. Her father left me before she was a year old. I worked six years when there was work, or I sent her home to his relatives." (Olsen 1979) The mother here is alone and only wants the best for her daughter and in times like this you do what you have to do for the good of your child. At the end of both stories both mothers realize that there is more to motherhood than they thought they knew. But despite all of this both mothers want what is best for their child and at the end realize that there is more to motherhood than they initially believed and that no matter how old your child is, they are never too old to receive support.

In conclusion I think both of these mothers realize their daughters are okay the way they are. In the story "I Stand Here Ironing" the mother let her life go on without trying to make any attempt at trying to change it. She hopes that one day maybe her daughters won't be like her and take control of their lives. In both stories both mother's have ultimately come to accept their daughters limitations. Despite the hardships that each mother faced, each story ends with hope and the realization that unconditional love is more valuable. While these women sometimes lose control they still never lost their dignity. In both stories 'Everyday Use' and 'I Stand Here Ironing' there are two mothers who after reading would endure anything. They have overcome trauma, abandonment, and both had struggles with their children but both women have seemed to keep a solid relationship with their family.

Although both mother faced different struggles, they handled them with confidence. Emily and Dee's mother, both, loved and provided for their children right until the last sentence. These women went through something that not many have gone through in life. They are strong women, with a gentle heart.