

Introduction that art is
a living and



Introduction

“ Everyday use” by Alice Walker is a fictional story analyzed years over, in academic and professional circles from an initial collection of In live and trouble (Donnelly 124). The story is narrated from a first person point of view (by a single mother, Mrs. Johnson) and dwells on the perception of two sisters regarding cultural artifacts (Wangero).

Maggie has a shy personality but Dee is a representation of a pretentious native African identity. Throughout the story, Walker develops a deep criticism of postmodern ideals through symbolism, with the story’s meaning going deeper than the surface analysis, because even the title “ Everyday Use” is a representation of whether cultural heritage should be preserved and used on an everyday basis or not. The quilt is especially mentioned as a representation of culture and heritage, especially when Dee wants to hang the quilts: she has essentially removed the artifacts from their everyday contextual meaning and creates some form of symbolic representation of the quilts.

This study therefore identifies there points; in that, Walker seeks to convey the principle that art is a living and breathing part of its origin, a significant cultural possession, and a critique of the postmodern treatment of cultural art.

Analysis

The story asserts that art should be valued in the context of its cultural and heritage origin. The quilt is strategically used in the story as a representation of cultural art and its existence has a rich cultural significance. The quilt is

later depicted as inseparable from its culture because the historical trace of the quilt essentially represents the history of the Johnson family. Walker specifically says “ In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell’s Paisley shirts and one teeny faded blue piece, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra’s uniform that he wore in the Civil War” (563).

This shows that not only do the quilts represent the heirloom of the family, but they are a core factor in the family’s identity. The gist of this symbolism is that, not only is the quilt a representation of the Johnson culture but also an inseparable element from the culture itself. How Mrs. Johnson treats the quilts shows that cultural artifacts should be treated as a significant cultural possession. Dee on the other hand views the quilts as financially and aesthetically valuable. When Dee realizes her mother intended to give them to Maggie; she exclaims that they were priceless.

Dee further adds that Maggie has the capability of wearing them everyday, something that she did not think was right for the quilts; implying that she viewed the quilts as an object instead of an item that should be used on a daily basis. Some sense of individualism is also noted from Maggie’s perception of the quilt, RO because in her opinion, the quilts bore some form of personal and emotional significance, which became clear when she said, “ I can member Grandma Dee without the quilts” (Walker 564). Maggie therefore implies that she perceives the quilt from its deep family connection. Moreover, she understood the fact that the quilts ought to “ stay alive”, generations on end, through continuous renewal. Walker even points out that “ Maggie knows how to quilt” (Walker 564), implying that she had

the cultural significance of the quilts at heart. The representation of the two sisters' attitudes and perceptions of the quilts is a critique of the postmodern treatment of ancient artifacts and the way cultural art is treated in today's society. Essentially, Dee's perception of art for its monetary value represents the postmodern view of art while Maggie's perception of the quilt for its personal significance is a representation of the contemporary view of art.

The author however does not leave us in a huge dilemma of which perception is right because Mrs. Johnson snatches the quilts from Dee and gives them to Maggie thereby depicting the contemporary view of art as the right perception.

Conclusion

Walker's literary piece is a good example of an educational piece that reflects the current perception of art, especially thriving in today's commercially, oriented world. Basically art in its right form should be kept alive through generations on end in everyday use.

This literally, "can be perceived", through the short story, but should be perceived in a symbolic manner as a facet of conventional art (Factstaff 3). Walker therefore shows that the true significance and meaning of art that can only be traced back to the culture or the root it came from. This is contrary to postmodern use of ancient artifacts as an object to be observed, by future generations, as Dee tries to express. Walker therefore shows that cultural artifacts should be used as a significant cultural possession, and be kept alive through generations. Moreover, she didn't write the piece with the intention of being microscopically analyzed, or to be quantified monetarily;

her literary piece, despite being written in past decades, was meant to be explored, investigated, questioned and even debated by today's commercially driven society where culture is slowly fading away and postmodern values are quickly catching up (Factstaff 4). In summary, the author says that cultural artifacts with a special reference to the quilt should be put into everyday use.

Works Cited

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