

# Analysis of the character progression in the novel everyday use

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In the short story, “ Everyday Use”, two of the three main characters undergo drastic transformations as the story progresses. The mother is a middle aged, down to earth, hardworking woman who only seems to need the basics in life to be happy. She is more than willing to go without if others need or want something more. Dee, the older daughter is an extremely selfish individual who seems to always put herself above others. She is use to taking whatever she wants without asking or even considering that others might not want to share. The younger sister, Maggie, always seems to get the short end of the stick. She is shy in nature and embarrassed for others to see the burns she received in a house fire years ago. Over the course of the short story, the mother and Dee will display signs of personality changes that will alter the family dynamics.

The mother at the beginning of the story finds joy in the simple things she finds in life. For example, she is happy to look out over her dirt swept yard and see a good day’s work. “ She is proud of the fact that she can do work like a man. “ I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man”(Walker 1). She is also a larger women in stature with extra weight that she is not ashamed of and makes no effort to hide. “ My fat keeps me hot in zero weather”(1). The mother recognizes that her daughters are total opposites when it comes to looks and personalities. She accepts that Dee and Maggie each have strengths and weaknesses that sometimes assist them in life and other times cause them hardships that are difficult to endure. Mama appreciates their families heritage. She cared enough to name her oldest child after the family name that had been carried on since before the Civil War. You could tell she was heavily disappointed by Dee’s choice to change

her name. However, she tried not to express her emotions, as she did not want her oldest daughter to notice.

Most mothers would be very angry and ashamed that their child changed their legal name that they were given. She was not like most mothers, as she accepted it and told Dee she would call her by her new name, even though she did not like the name. Mama had always been pushed around and walked all over by Dee. She would let her do whatever she wanted and get whatever she wanted and did not realize that Maggie was always pushed to the side because she was not aggressive like Dee. She cared so much about what Dee thought of her, that she treated the two unfairly as far as who got what because Dee would always ask and demand. At the end of the story however, Mama's personality towards Dee changed tremendously. Mama promised to give Maggie very sentimental quilts that had been made by Big Dee, Dee and Maggie's aunt, and their dead grandmother.

Of course, Dee wanted the same quilts that Mama had promised to give to Maggie. She did not want to take the ones stitched by a machine. She wanted the sentimental ones just because of the money value. She wanted to hang them up for decoration and not use them at all. You would expect Mama to give into Dee and let her have them. That was not the case this time, as she was making excuses not to let Dee have them. Dee would not buy in and Mama was forced to tell the truth, that she had promised to give them to Maggie after she marries John Thomas. Dee did not like this idea and still insisted that she keep them. Maggie told Mama that Dee could have the quilts, but this caused Mama to snap. She ran over to Dee took the quilts

back and gave them to Maggie without second guessing herself. "... I did something I had never done before...snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap" (6). She finally realized that Dee did not want what was best for everybody, she just wanted whatever was best for her. She did not cherish the items for sentimental value, she just cherished the items for money value.