
Siblings In Everyday Use By Alice Walker

Siblings have a tendency to be similar in multiple ways, and yet the story "Everyday Use" by Alice Walker, depicts two sisters who could not be more diverse. Walker demonstrates the value of our present life in relation to the traditions of our people, culture, and environment. Using mindful descriptions and attitudes, Walker shows which reasons contribute to the values of one's culture and heritage; she illustrates that these are represented not by the ownership of items or mere artifacts, but by one's conduct and lifestyle.

Throughout the story, Walker personifies the various sides of culture and heritage within the characters, Dee, Maggie, and the mother, Mama. Dee may be seen to represent a materialistic, complex, with a fashionable lifestyle, as for culture and heritage only to be valued simply for its "trendy-ness" and aesthetic charm. Mother and Maggie on the opposite hand represent a simple lifestyle where culture and heritage are valued for its everyday use and personal value.

The character Dee grew up resenting her impoverished upbringing from the very beginning. Readers learn quickly that she despised the home that they lived in during her childhood. When it got destroyed in a fire, her mother, Mama wanted to ask her, "Why don't you do a dance around the ashes?" (Walker 20), expressing Dee's blunt aversion towards the home almost as if Dee was glad to see her home burn down. Further into the story when Dee is more grown she sends a letter to Mama and informs her, she would visit their home, "but will never bring her friends" (Walker 28). Dee does not want her friends to learn about the environment she grew up in, history, and tradition. She is embarrassed more than she is grateful for what she would consider an unsophisticated life. Even though she strives to embrace African culture, she still refuses to accept her heritage.

On the opposite hand, the younger daughter, Maggie, is depicted as a more humble and loyal child who is deeply in sync with her heritage. On a personal note, Maggie's personality does not resemble the strong-willed personality of her older sister but is very proud of her family's history, and the path her life is moving towards. Maggie is used to solid ties with her family and all the history that surrounds her every day whether it be outside or inside, this makes it so it is not a priority to keep the quilts passed along to her. Maggie does not consider objects of personal value to remember her past. Mama knew this wholeheartedly, "it was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt", and that is something no one can take away, she can hold on to that skill for a lifetime. Maggie's character will flow around from the past, which includes all the unfortunate events to future generations.

Finally, towards the end of the story, Dee, upset has to leave home with nothing, this is a newfound feeling because she has always gotten what she wanted. It causes her to mention, "It's really a new day for us. But from the way, you and Mama still live you'd never know it," trying to make both Maggie and Mama feel inferior to her, almost as though they really have zero grasp on their culture and heritage. However, Maggie and Mama do not make much of Dee's rude comment. Maggie finally smiles so as to let readers know that she had found a place deep in her mother's soul. She now knows what victory feels like, and understand that Dee is the one missing the point due to her not having a solid grasp of what matters. Maggie and Mama do not have to prove to anybody how "far" they've come or even cover much their

history like Dee has done so. Pride towards one's heritage is one of the purest forms of beauty, no one can give that away. Dee, unfortunately, is only looking on the surface at something materialistic to fill the void in her that time after time had denied. Walker makes it clear of the ways there is to see one's heritage. For those like Maggie who are proud of who they are, heritage will be something they will carry with pride and not be ashamed. Heritage is a human's undeniable history, and they will carry it forever, it cannot be in a mere tangible object.