

Everyday Use

Short Story by Alice Walker

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML10-48

What makes something VALUABLE?

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text. **RL 4** Determine the meaning of figurative language; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. **RL 5** Analyze an author's choices concerning how to structure a text.

The word *value* means different things to different people. For example, an old vase might have high monetary value or high sentimental value. To some, it might have great historical, cultural, or artistic value. But others might think it's a useless piece of junk. Often people disagree over the value they assign to an object. Or they may agree that it is valuable, but not for the same reason.

QUICKWRITE If you could save only one precious possession of yours from being destroyed or left behind, what would you save? Write a short paragraph identifying the item and telling why it is valuable to you.



● TEXT ANALYSIS: CONFLICT AND CHARACTER

A story’s plot progresses because of a **conflict**, or struggle between opposing forces. In “Everyday Use,” the main conflict centers around two sisters, Dee and Maggie, and their mother, who narrates the story. Although the main conflict between these characters is worked out in the **resolution** of the story, some other conflicts linger unresolved.

As you read, pay attention to the conflicts and whether they are resolved. Also think about the differences in the characters’ values and priorities.

Review: Plot

● READING SKILL: MAKE INFERENCES

Because writers don’t always tell you everything you need to know about a character, you must **make inferences**, or logical guesses, based on story details and your own experiences. For example, you might infer that the mother in this story prefers the outdoors from her comment “A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. . . . It is like an extended living room.” As you read, notice what the characters’ words and actions tell you about their personalities and attitudes. Take notes on a chart like the one shown.

	Story Details	Inferences
Dee	thinks orchids are tacky flowers	is pretentious
Mama		
Maggie		

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Figure out the meaning of each boldfaced word from the context. In your *Reader/Writer Notebook*, write a sentence that shows your understanding of each word.

1. sneaky, **furtive** behavior
2. need time to **recompose** after your outburst
3. accept the club’s **doctrine**
4. remember your **heritage** when you leave home



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Alice Walker

born 1944

A Humble Start

Alice Walker, one of America’s most distinguished authors, comes from humble beginnings. She was the last of eight children born to sharecroppers Willie Lee and Minnie Tallulah Walker. Though money was scarce and life was hard, Walker loved the Georgia countryside where she grew up. Walker’s childhood was shattered by a shooting accident when she was eight. She lost sight in one eye and had a disfiguring scar that left her intensely self-conscious. For years afterward, she felt like an outcast.

Travel, Activism, and Fame

Walker took comfort in reading and in writing poetry. With her mother’s encouragement, she developed her talent for writing and did well in school. She graduated at the head of her high school class and received a college scholarship. During college, she became involved in the civil rights movement and traveled to Africa as an exchange student. After college, she devoted herself to writing and social activism. She has written more than 20 books, including *The Color Purple*, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983.

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

Black Pride

“Everyday Use” takes place during the 1960s, when many African Americans were discovering their heritage. The “black pride” movement, which grew out of civil rights campaigns, called upon African Americans to celebrate their African roots and affirm their cultural identity. Many adopted African clothing, hairstyles, and names; some studied African languages.



Author
Online



Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML10-49

Everyday Use

Alice Walker

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eying her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that “no” is a word the world never learned to say to her. **A**

You’ve no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has “made it” is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other’s faces. Sometimes the mother and father weep, the child wraps them in her arms and leans across the table to tell how she would not have made it without their help. I have seen these programs.

Sometimes I dream a dream in which Dee and I are suddenly brought together on a TV program of this sort. Out of a dark and soft-seated limousine I am ushered into a bright room filled with many people. There I meet a smiling, gray, sporty man like Johnny Carson who shakes my hand and tells me what a fine girl I have. Then we are on the stage and Dee is embracing me with tears in her eyes. She pins on my dress a large orchid, even though she has told me once that she thinks orchids are tacky flowers.

In real life I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eat pork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the

Analyze Visuals ▶

What qualities do you associate with the woman in the painting? How closely does she match the story’s narrator?

A MAKE INFERENCES

Reread lines 7–10. What can you infer about Maggie and her sister from this description? Which details led to your inference?

Home Chores (1945), Jacob Lawrence. Gouache and graphite on paper, 29½” × 21⅛”. Anonymous gift. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. F69-6. Photo by Jamison Miller © 2008 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



eyes with a sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.

But that is a mistake. I know even before I wake up. Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? It seems to me I have talked to them always with one
40 foot raised in flight, with my head turned in whichever way is farthest from them. Dee, though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature. **B**

“How do I look, Mama?” Maggie says, showing just enough of her thin body enveloped in pink skirt and red blouse for me to know she’s there, almost hidden by the door.

B MAKE INFERENCES

What do you infer about Mama from her description of herself? Cite specific details.



Little Sweet (1944), William H. Johnson. Oil on paperboard, 28" × 22". Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. Photo © Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C./Art Resource, New York.

“Come out into the yard,” I say.

Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, sidle up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks. She has been like this,
50 chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle, ever since the fire that burned the other house to the ground.

Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. She’s a woman now, though sometimes I forget. How long ago was it that the other house burned? Ten, twelve years? Sometimes I can still hear the flames and feel Maggie’s arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. Her eyes seemed stretched open, blazed open by the flames reflected in them. And Dee. I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of; a look of concentration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick
60 chimney. Why don’t you do a dance around the ashes? I’d wanted to ask her. She had hated the house that much.

I used to think she hated Maggie, too. But that was before we raised the money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta¹ to school. 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. She washed us in a river of make-believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn’t necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious way she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand.

Dee wanted nice things. A yellow organdy dress to wear to her graduation
70 from high school; black pumps to match a green suit she’d made from an old suit somebody gave me. She was determined to stare down any disaster in her efforts. Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes at a time. Often I fought off the temptation to shake her. At sixteen she had a style of her own: and knew what style was. **C**

I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was closed down. Don’t ask me why: in 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now. Sometimes Maggie reads to me. She stumbles along good-naturedly but can’t see well. She knows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passed her by. She will marry John Thomas (who has mossy teeth
80 in an earnest face) and then I’ll be free to sit here and I guess just sing church songs to myself. Although I never was a good singer. Never could carry a tune. I was always better at a man’s job. I used to love to milk till I was hooked in the side in ’49. Cows are soothing and slow and don’t bother you, unless you try to milk them the wrong way.

I have deliberately turned my back on the house. It is three rooms, just like the one that burned, except the roof is tin; they don’t make shingle roofs any more. There are no real windows, just some holes cut in the sides, like the portholes in a ship, but not round and not square, with rawhide holding the

COMMON CORE RL.4

Language Coach

Informal language

Reread the paragraph that begins with line 52. Walker uses sentence fragments such as “Ten, twelve years?” and “And Dee.” to create an informal tone. What other fragments do you see on this page? [Hint: look for sentences that lack either a subject or a verb.]

C CONFLICT

Reread lines 52–74. What conflicts exist between Dee and her mother and sister?

1. **Augusta:** a city in Georgia.

shutters up on the outside. This house is in a pasture, too, like the other one.
90 No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down. She wrote me once that no matter where we “choose” to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends. Maggie and I thought about this and Maggie asked me, “Mama, when did Dee ever *have* any friends?”

She had a few. **Furtive** boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Impressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye. She read to them.

When she was courting Jimmy T she didn’t have much time to pay to us, but turned all her faultfinding power on him. He *flew* to marry a cheap city girl from
100 a family of ignorant flashy people. She hardly had time to **recompose** herself. **D**

When she comes I will meet—but there they are!

Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way, but I stay her with my hand. “Come back here,” I say. And she stops and tries to dig a well in the sand with her toe.

It is hard to see them clearly through the strong sun. But even the first glimpse of leg out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat-looking, as if God himself had shaped them with a certain style. From the other side of the car comes a short, stocky man. Hair is all over his head a foot long and hanging from his chin like a kinky mule tail. I hear Maggie suck in
110 her breath. “Uhhnnh,” is what it sounds like. Like when you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. “Uhhnnh.”

Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too, and hanging down to her shoulders. Bracelets dangling and making noises when she moves her arm up to shake the folds of the dress out of her armpits. The dress is loose and flows, and as she walks closer, I like it. I hear Maggie go “Uhhnnh” again. It is her sister’s hair. It stands straight up like the wool on a sheep. It is black as night and around the edges are two long
120 pigtails that rope about like small lizards disappearing behind her ears. **E**

“Wa-su-zo-Te-an-o!” she says, coming on in that gliding way the dress makes her move. The short stocky fellow with the hair to his navel is all grinning and he follows up with “Asalamalakim,² my mother and sister!” He moves to hug Maggie but she falls back, right up against the back of my chair. I feel her trembling there and when I look up I see the perspiration falling off her chin.

“Don’t get up,” says Dee. Since I am stout it takes something of a push. You can see me trying to move a second or two before I make it. She turns, showing white heels through her sandals, and goes back to the car. Out she
130 peeks next with a Polaroid. She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie cowering behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When

furtive (fūr’tīv) *adj.*
sneaky, secretive

recompose (rē’kəm-pōz’)
v. to restore to calm, to settle again

D MAKE INFERENCES

What do you learn about Dee from the way others respond to her?

COMMON CORE RL.4

E FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is language that communicates meanings beyond the literal meanings of the words. Reread Mama’s description of Dee’s hair, which begins on line 118. Obviously, Dee’s hair does not literally move like lizards. Here and in other places, Mama evokes images from her life spent on a farm. Her figurative language often reflects the historical and cultural setting of the story. What other examples of figurative language can you find?

2. **Wa-su-zo-Te-an-o!** (wä-sōō’zō-tē’nō) . . . **Asalamalakim!** (ə-säl’ə-mə-lāk’əm): African and Arabic greetings.



◀ Analyze Visuals

Contrast the style and subject of this painting with those of the one on page 52. Does the contrast reflect the differences between the sisters in the story? Explain.

Portrait of a woman with golden headscarf (1900s), Attributed to Lo Babacar. Pikine, Senegal. Glass painting. Inv.:A.94.4.33 Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris. Photo © Arnaudet/ Réunion des Musées Nationaux/ Art Resource, New York.

a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and me and Maggie *and* the house. Then she puts the Polaroid in the back seat of the car, and comes up and kisses me on the forehead. **F**

Meanwhile Asalamalakim is going through motions with Maggie's hand. Maggie's hand is as limp as a fish, and probably as cold, despite the sweat, and she keeps trying to pull it back. It looks like Asalamalakim wants to shake hands but wants to do it fancy. Or maybe he don't know how people shake hands. Anyhow, he soon gives up on Maggie.

140 "Well," I say. "Dee."

"No, Mama," she says. "Not 'Dee,' Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo!"³

"What happened to 'Dee'?" I wanted to know.

"She's dead," Wangero said. "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me."

"You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie," I said. Dicie is my sister. She named Dee. We called her "Big Dee" after Dee was born.

"But who was *she* named after?" asked Wangero.

"I guess after Grandma Dee," I said.

"And who was she named after?" asked Wangero.

F GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 131–134.

Notice how Walker adds descriptive details through the use of **prepositional phrases** such as "around the edge of the yard," "in the back seat of the car," and "on the forehead."

3. **Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo** (wän-gâr'ō lē-wā-nē'kə kě-män'jō).

150 “Her mother,” I said, and saw Wangero was getting tired. “That’s about as far back as I can trace it,” I said. Though, in fact, I probably could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches. **G**

“Well,” said Asalamalakim, “there you are.”

“Uhhnnh,” I heard Maggie say.

“There I was not,” I said, “before ‘Dicie’ cropped up in our family, so why should I try to trace it that far back?”

He just stood there grinning, looking down on me like somebody inspecting a Model A⁴ car. Every once in a while he and Wangero sent eye signals over my head.

160 “How do you pronounce this name?” I asked.

“You don’t have to call me by it if you don’t want to,” said Wangero.

“Why shouldn’t I?” I asked. “If that’s what you want us to call you, we’ll call you.”

“I know it might sound awkward at first,” said Wangero.

“I’ll get used to it,” I said. “Ream it out again.”

Well, soon we got the name out of the way. Asalamalakim had a name twice as long and three times as hard. After I tripped over it two or three times he told me to just call him Hakim-a-barber.⁵ I wanted to ask him was he a barber, but I didn’t really think he was, so I didn’t ask.

170 “You must belong to those beef-cattle peoples down the road,” I said. They said “Asalamalakim” when they met you, too, but they didn’t shake hands. Always too busy: feeding the cattle, fixing the fences, putting up salt-lick shelters, throwing down hay. When the white folks poisoned some of the herd the men stayed up all night with rifles in their hands. I walked a mile and a half just to see the sight.

Hakim-a-barber said, “I accept some of their **doctrines**, but farming and raising cattle is not my style.” (They didn’t tell me, and I didn’t ask, whether Wangero (Dee) had really gone and married him.)

180 We sat down to eat and right away he said he didn’t eat collards and pork was unclean. Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins and corn bread, the greens and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn’t afford to buy chairs.

190 “Oh, Mama!” she cried. Then turned to Hakim-a-barber. “I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints,” she said, running her hands underneath her and along the bench. Then she gave a sigh and her hand closed over Grandma Dee’s butter dish. “That’s it!” she said. “I knew there was something I wanted to ask you if I could have.” She jumped up from the table and went over in the corner where the churn stood, the milk in it clabber⁶ by now. She looked at the churn and looked at it.

G CONFLICT

What is causing tension between Dee and Mama?

doctrine (dɒk'trɪn) *n.* a set of rules, beliefs, or values held by a group

4. **Model A:** an automobile manufactured by Ford from 1927 to 1931.

5. **Hakim-a-barber** (hă-kē'mə-bär'bər).

6. **clabber:** curdled milk.

“This churn top is what I need,” she said. “Didn’t Uncle Buddy whittle it out of a tree you all used to have?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Uh huh,” she said happily. “And I want the dasher,⁷ too.”

“Uncle Buddy whittle that, too?” asked the barber.

Dee (Wangero) looked up at me.

“Aunt Dee’s first husband whittled the dash,” said Maggie so low you almost couldn’t hear her. “His name was Henry, but they called him Stash.”

“Maggie’s brain is like an elephant’s,” Wangero said, laughing. “I can use the
200 churn top as a centerpiece for the alcove table,” she said, sliding a plate over the churn, “and I’ll think of something artistic to do with the dasher.” **H**

When she finished wrapping the dasher the handle stuck out. I took it for a moment in my hands. You didn’t even have to look close to see where hands pushing the dasher up and down to make butter had left a kind of sink in the wood. In fact, there were a lot of small sinks; you could see where thumbs and fingers had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light yellow wood, from a tree that grew in the yard where Big Dee and Stash had lived.

After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan.

210 Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Star pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. 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, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra’s uniform that he wore in the Civil War.

“Mama,” Wangero said sweet as a bird. “Can I have these old quilts?”

I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door
220 slammed. **I**

“Why don’t you take one or two of the others?” I asked. “These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died.”

“No,” said Wangero. “I don’t want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine.”

“That’ll make them last better,” I said.

“That’s not the point,” said Wangero. “These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!” She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.

230 “Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her,” I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn’t reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

“Imagine!” she breathed again, clutching them closely to her bosom.

H MAKE INFERENCES

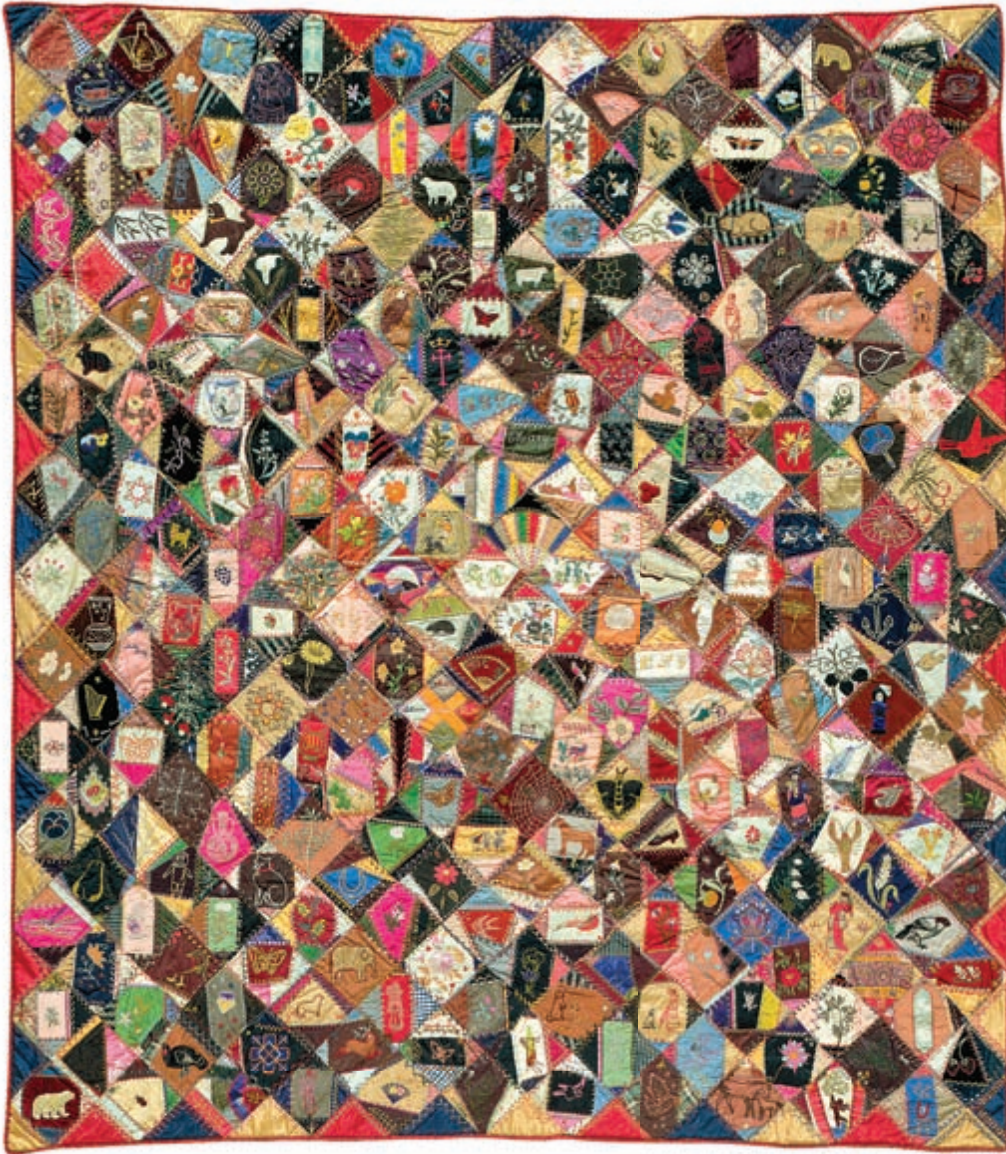
Reread lines 191–201.

What do you learn about Dee and Maggie in these lines?

I MAKE INFERENCES

What might these noises mean?

7. **dasher**: the plunger of a churn, a device formerly used to stir cream or milk to produce butter.



Crazy Quilt (1883-1893), Victoriene Parsons Mitchell. Textile. 195.6 cm x 163.2 cm. © Indianapolis Museum of Art/ Bridgeman Art Library.

“The truth is,” I said, “I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas.”

She gasped like a bee had stung her.

“Maggie can’t appreciate these quilts!” she said. “She’d probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use.”

240 “I reckon she would,” I said. “God knows I been saving ’em for long enough with nobody using ’em. I hope she will!” I didn’t want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told me they were old-fashioned, out of style.

“But they’re *priceless!*” she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. “Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they’d be in rags. Less than that!”

“She can always make some more,” I said. “Maggie knows how to quilt.”

Dee (Wangero) looked at me with hatred. “You just will not understand. The point is *these* quilts, these quilts!”

250 “Well,” I said, stumped. “What would *you* do with them?”

“Hang them,” she said. As if that was the only thing you *could* do with quilts. **J**

Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.

“She can have them, Mama,” she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her. “I can ’member Grandma Dee without the quilts.”

I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and it gave her face a kind of dopey, hangdog look. It was Grandma Dee and
260 Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn’t mad at her. This was Maggie’s portion. This was the way she knew God to work.

When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. Just like when I’m in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero’s hands and dumped them into Maggie’s lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open. **K**

270 “Take one or two of the others,” I said to Dee.


But she turned without a word and went out to Hakim-a-barber.

“You just don’t understand,” she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.

“What don’t I understand?” I wanted to know.

“Your **heritage**,” she said. And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, “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.” **L**

She put on some sunglasses that hide everything above the tip of her nose and her chin.

280 Maggie smiled; maybe at the sunglasses. But a real smile, not scared. After we watched the car dust settle I asked Maggie to bring me a dip of snuff. And then the two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed. 

J CONFLICT

Reread lines 238–252. Why doesn’t Dee want Maggie to have the quilts?

K PLOT

This point is the **climax** of the story. How is the main conflict resolved?

heritage (hĕr’ĭ-tĭj) *n.*
something passed down through generations, such as tradition, values, property

L CONFLICT

How does Dee view her mother and sister?

INTERVIEW Excerpted is a 1992 interview Walker gave to Roland R. Freeman for his book *A Communion of the Spirits: African-American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories*.

Alice Walker } *on Quilting*

Well, my mother was a quilter, and I remember many, many afternoons of my mother and the neighborhood women sitting on the porch around the quilting frame, quilting and talking, you know; getting up to stir something on the stove and coming back and sitting down.

My mother also had a frame inside the house. Sometimes during the winter she would quilt and she often pieced quilts. Piecing . . . I'm really more of a piecer, actually, than I am a quilter, because I can get as far as piecing all of the little squares or sections together, and sometimes putting them together into big blocks, but then I always have to call in help—spreading it out on the frame, or spreading it out on the floor and putting the batting in and doing the actual quilting.

[The first quilt] I worked on [was] the *In Love and Trouble* quilt. And I did that one when I was living in Mississippi. It was during a period when we were wearing African-inspired dresses. So all of the pieces are from dresses that I actually wore.

This yellow and black fabric I bought when I was in Uganda, and I had a beautiful dress made of it that I wore and wore and wore and eventually I couldn't wear it any more; partly I had worn it out and also I was pregnant, so it didn't fit, and I used that and I used the red and white and black,

which was a long, floor-length dress that I had when I was pregnant with my daughter, Rebecca, who is now twenty-three. I took these things apart or I used scraps. I put them together in this quilt, because it just seemed perfect. Mississippi was full of political and social struggle, and regular quilts were all African American with emphasis on being here in the United States. But because of the African consciousness that was being raised and the way that we were all wearing our hair in naturals and

wearing all of these African dresses, I felt the need to blend these two traditions. So it's a quilt of great memory and importance to me. I use it a lot and that's why it's so worn.



Alice Walker among her many quilts

Comprehension

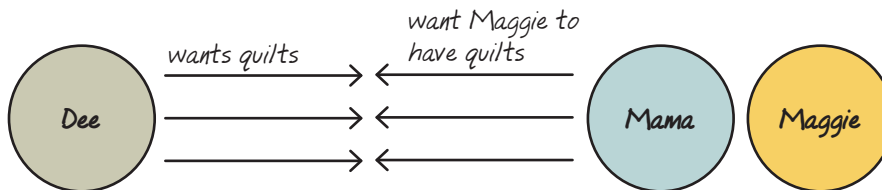
1. **Recall** How has Dee changed when she arrives to see her family?
2. **Recall** Why does Dee want the quilts?
3. **Recall** Who gets the quilts at the end of the story?
4. **Summarize** Why does Dee think Mama and Maggie don't understand their heritage?

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text. **RL 5** Analyze an author's choices concerning how to structure a text.

Text Analysis

5. **Make Inferences** Review the notes you took as you read. What positive and negative traits does each character have?
6. **Compare and Contrast** What makes the quilts valuable to Dee, and what makes them valuable to Maggie? Cite evidence.
7. **Analyze Plot** Reread lines 264–269. Explain why Mama makes the choice she does at the **climax** of the story. How does she feel about her choice?
8. **Analyze Conflict** Use the chart shown to explore the various ways that Dee is in conflict with her family. Which conflicts are resolved and which are not?



9. **Interpret Theme** What do you think Alice Walker is saying in “Everyday Use” about the nature of heritage? Support your answer.
10. **Synthesize** How do Walker’s comments about quilting on page 60 affect your understanding of “Everyday Use”?

Text Criticism

11. **Historical Context** The story takes place in the late 1960s, a time of growing cultural awareness for African Americans. If the story were set in the present, would the conflicts within the family be different? Explain your answer.

What makes something VALUABLE?

Why might people disagree over why an object is valuable?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Write *True* or *False* for each statement.

1. Sneaking around is an example of **furtive** behavior.
2. When you **recompose** after a traffic accident, you become more agitated.
3. To believe in a certain group's **doctrine** is to follow their set rules.
4. If you deny your **heritage**, you refuse to acknowledge your cultural history.

WORD LIST

doctrine
furtive
heritage
recompose

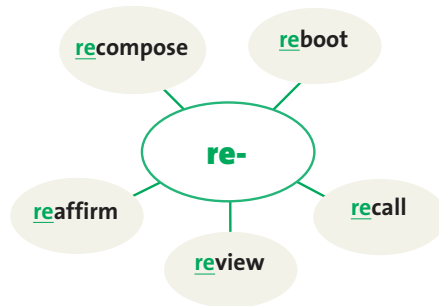
ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• affect • communicate • definite • establish • identify

Analyze how Dee and Maggie **communicate** their thoughts and feelings in this story. Notice both verbal communication (what they say, how they say it) and nonverbal communication (their facial expressions, gestures, and body language). Write one or two paragraphs to share your findings. Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE PREFIX RE-

The vocabulary word *recompose* contains the Latin prefix *re-*, which means “again” or “back.” This prefix is found in a number of English words. To understand the meaning of words with *re-*, use your knowledge of the base word as well as your knowledge of the prefix.



PRACTICE Write the word from the word web that best completes each sentence. Use context clues to help you or, if necessary, consult a dictionary.

1. To celebrate their anniversary, the couple decided to _____ their marriage vows.
2. She tried to _____ herself after her harsh scolding.
3. You need to _____ the computer after installing new software.
4. The toy company issued a _____ on a toy truck with dangerous parts.
5. Be sure to _____ your paper for spelling mistakes before submitting it.

COMMON CORE

L.4c Consult reference materials to determine or clarify a word's meaning or etymology.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK central**
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Language

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Add Descriptive Details

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 55. By incorporating **prepositional phrases** into your writing, as Alice Walker does, you can add important details that show *what, when, where, and how* events are taking place. Here is an example from the story.

After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. (lines 208–212)

See how the revisions in blue add important descriptive details to this first draft. Revise your own writing by using these techniques.

STUDENT MODEL

Mama walks over to Dee and gives her a kiss ^{on the cheek}. Dee frowns ^{at Mama} and wipes off the kiss ^{with a handkerchief}. She crosses the room and sits down heavily ^{on the bench}.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Deepen your understanding of “Everyday Use” by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Extended Constructed Response: Story Sequel

Imagine that Dee visits the family again ten years after the events in “Everyday Use.” Write **one page** showing what she, Mama, and Maggie are now like and how they interact. What conflicts between them are still unresolved?

REVISING TIP

Review your response. How have you used prepositional phrases that show *what, when, where, and how* events take place in your story sequel?

COMMON CORE

L1b Use prepositional phrases to add variety and interest to writing. **W3** Write narratives to develop events using well-structured event sequences.

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