

# Everyday Use Study Guide Answers



**Everyday Use Study Guide Answers** are essential tools for students who are analyzing Alice Walker’s short story “Everyday Use.” This story, rich in themes of identity, heritage, and the clash between traditional and modern values, provides a fertile ground for discussion and analysis. In this article, we will explore key elements of the story, significant themes, character analysis, and relevant symbols that will help students prepare for discussions, papers, and exams.

## Overview of "Everyday Use"

“Everyday Use” tells the story of a mother and her two daughters, Dee and Maggie, who have contrasting views on heritage and identity. The narrative unfolds in rural Georgia, where the mother reflects on her life and the complex relationships she has with her daughters. The story is narrated from the perspective of the mother, who is proud of her roots and understands the value of everyday items, unlike her daughter Dee, who seeks heritage as a means of social status.

## Characters

Understanding the characters is crucial for analyzing the dynamics of the story. Here are the primary characters:

- **Mama (Mrs. Johnson):** The narrator and mother of Dee and Maggie. She is a hardworking woman who values her heritage and the practical use of family heirlooms.
- **Dee (Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo):** The elder daughter, who is educated and has adopted a new name that reflects her African heritage. She represents a modern, consumer-driven view of culture.
- **Maggie:** The younger daughter, who is shy and scarred from a house fire. She embodies a more traditional view of heritage, valuing the family's history and stories.

## Character Analysis

1. Mama: Mama's character is central to understanding the story's themes. She is proud of her heritage and has a practical approach to life. Her description of herself as a "large, big-boned woman" emphasizes her strength and resilience. Mama's love for Maggie and her protective nature underline her commitment to family and tradition.
2. Dee: Dee's character is complex. Her desire to reconnect with her African heritage leads her to adopt a new name and a new identity. However, her approach is superficial; she sees heritage as a trend rather than an integral part of her identity. Dee's conflict with Mama and Maggie highlights the different ways individuals relate to their cultural heritage.
3. Maggie: Maggie's character serves as a foil to Dee. While Dee is assertive and ambitious, Maggie is passive and content with her life. Maggie's scars represent her struggles, both physical and emotional. Her eventual decision to claim her family heritage through the quilts signifies her growth and understanding of what heritage truly means.

## Themes

Several themes are woven throughout "Everyday Use," each contributing to the overall message of the story.

### Heritage and Identity

The theme of heritage is central to the narrative. The contrasting views of Dee and Maggie illustrate how heritage can be perceived differently. While Dee sees heritage as a way to assert her identity and make a statement, Maggie understands it as a living part of her life. The story encourages readers to reflect on the meaning of heritage and its significance in shaping identity.

### Materialism vs. Practicality

Dee's desire for the family quilts, which she views as art pieces, contrasts sharply with Mama and Maggie's perspective. For them, the quilts are functional items imbued with family history. This theme raises questions about the value of objects: are they mere commodities, or do they hold deeper significance tied to memories and traditions?

### Gender Roles and Feminism

The story also touches on gender roles and the feminist perspective. Mama's character embodies the strength of women in traditional roles, while Dee's character represents a more modern, assertive

femininity. The tension between the two daughters reflects broader societal changes regarding women's identities and roles.

## Symbols

Symbols play a crucial role in deepening the reader's understanding of the story's themes.

## The Quilts

The quilts symbolize the family's heritage and the connection between generations. For Mama and Maggie, they are practical items that tell the family's story, while for Dee, they are artistic artifacts. The final decision regarding the quilts signifies a pivotal moment in the story, as Mama chooses to give them to Maggie, recognizing her deeper understanding of their value.

## The House

The house represents the family's history and struggles. Following a fire that destroyed their previous home, the new house symbolizes resilience and the ability to rebuild. It serves as a backdrop for the family's interactions and highlights the importance of place in defining one's identity.

## Names

Names in "Everyday Use" carry significant weight. Dee's choice to change her name to Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo reflects her desire to reconnect with her African roots but also underscores her detachment from her past. In contrast, Mama and Maggie embrace their names, which carry familial and cultural significance.

## Important Quotes

Analyzing key quotes can enhance understanding and provide insights into the characters and themes.

1. "I can't imagine what you're going to do with them." - This quote from Mama highlights the differing perspectives on heritage and the practical versus materialistic approaches to family heirlooms.
2. "It's really the only thing I can do with it." - Maggie's comment on the quilts reveals her understanding of their true value beyond aesthetics.
3. "I want the quilts, Mama." - Dee's insistence reflects her superficial understanding of heritage,

contrasting with Maggie's deeper connection to the family's history.

## Discussion Questions

Engaging with discussion questions can foster deeper analysis and understanding of the story. Here are some prompts to consider:

1. How do the characters' views on heritage reflect their personal identities?
2. What role does the setting play in shaping the narrative and the characters' relationships?
3. In what ways does Walker critique the concept of cultural appropriation through Dee's character?
4. How does the resolution of the story reflect the themes of heritage and identity?

## Conclusion

In conclusion, "Everyday Use" serves as a poignant exploration of heritage, identity, and the complexities of familial relationships. By examining the characters, themes, and symbols within the story, students can gain valuable insights that enhance their understanding and appreciation of Alice Walker's work. Utilizing **everyday use study guide answers** will not only aid in comprehension but also encourage critical thinking and discussion surrounding the rich layers of meaning embedded in the narrative. As students engage with the text, they will find that the lessons it imparts about heritage and identity are both timeless and relevant in today's world.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the central theme of 'Everyday Use' by Alice Walker?

The central theme of 'Everyday Use' revolves around the concept of heritage and the differing perspectives on cultural identity and the value of tradition.

### Who are the main characters in 'Everyday Use'?

The main characters are Mama, Dee (Wangero), and Maggie. Each character represents different attitudes toward heritage and identity.

### How does Alice Walker portray the relationship between the

## characters?

Walker portrays a complex relationship marked by tension, misunderstandings, and differing values, particularly between Mama and Dee, which highlights generational and ideological divides.

## What is the significance of the quilts in 'Everyday Use'?

The quilts symbolize family heritage and the practical use of cultural artifacts versus their aesthetic appreciation, representing deeper connections to ancestry and personal history.

## How does Dee's perspective on heritage differ from Mama's and Maggie's?

Dee views heritage as something to be showcased and appreciated from a distance, while Mama and Maggie see it as a living, practical part of their daily lives.

## What role does the setting play in 'Everyday Use'?

The setting, a rural African American home, emphasizes themes of simplicity, tradition, and the contrast between rural and urban lifestyles, which reflect the characters' differing values.

## How does the story's narrative style affect its message?

The first-person narrative from Mama's perspective provides a grounded and emotional insight into her thoughts and feelings, enriching the story's themes of identity and belonging.

## What does the title 'Everyday Use' imply about the characters' relationships with their heritage?

The title suggests a distinction between practical use of heritage in daily life (Mama and Maggie) versus a more superficial, aesthetic appreciation of it (Dee), highlighting the story's exploration of cultural identity.

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