

Alice Walker, “Everyday Use,” p. 354—Discussion Questions

- 1.** List the characteristics of the three main characters in “Everyday Use” as they are revealed by the narrator. How do the differences between these two characters add to the conflict in the story. What IS the conflict?
- 2.** What is the point of view in “Everyday Use”? How does the style of writing reflect the character of the person who tells the story? That is, look at the language of the speaker. What are characteristics of that language and how do those characteristics reflect the personality of the speaker?
- 3.** What do the quilts symbolize? What other evidence in the story lead us to see the quilts as symbols of a bigger issue? How does the climactic ending turn the tables on Dee’s use of terms like “backward” and “heritage”? What is ironic about Dee’s use of these words?
- 4.** How does the title hint at the central theme of the story? What other evidence in the story hints at the central theme? What is that central theme? What in the story helps especially to bring the theme to life for you and keep it from becoming an abstract idea?
- 5.** What are the differences between Maggie and Dee? List those differences specifically, with references to the story. What do these differences suggest about conflict in this African-American family? Do you think these differences point to wider issues within the African-American community, particularly when this story was written? What might those issues be?