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[Date]

Compare and Contrast

**Introduction**

This essay is written to compare and contrast the two short stories written by different authors each in different periods. The first essay is the famous short story "Everyday Use" in 1973 by a renowned American novelist named Alice Walker (Walker, 1994). The second short story titled “A Good Man is hard to Find” was written in 1955 by Flannery O'Connor's who was also a reputable American writer (O'connor, 1955). Everyday use is the short story revolving around the mother and daughter relation belonging to African American ethnicity. Everyday use story is related to the identity crisis that an individual faces and is often ashamed to adopt the culture publicly. Mama is presented as the main character in the story who was waiting for her eldest daughter Dee to arrive after many years. She is expecting a very warm and heart touching welcome from her daughter after struggling very hard to send her for high studies. But when Dee arrives, she instead shocks the mother and her younger sister by her estrange attitude and rapid transformation. The meeting does not go well as it was expected from the mother leaving both the mother and her younger more traditional daughter in utter humiliation.On the other hand, A Good Man is hard to find revolves around a grandmother and her family's vacation trip to Florida. The story revolves around the grandmother’s perspectives on society, wealth and class and her hypocrisy on traditional norms during the whole journey. Due to the persuasion of the grandmother's wish to see the old mansion, her son Bailey had to change the route. Unfortunately, an accident occurs and they end up having an encounter with an escaped murderer named Misfit who attacks them with his gang and eventually kills the whole family. This essay aims to highlight the similar issues both of the short stories are telling and to find the points at which both contradict with each other. *Both the accounts give a clear message of hypocrisy and how people practice it despite belonging to different races, different periods and living separate lives.*

**Discussion**

There are some evident differences in both the short stories addressing different social conflicts and approach towards one’s life. Both the stories are written in different periods in which one focuses on the cultural conflicts and identity crisis while other highlights the delusional view about the society. But there are some similarities as well. The common point of both the stories is that they are both written by female writers and the central characters of their stories are also females.

In Everyday use, the Mama, who is the mother of Dee is in the first person narration whereas in A good man is hard to find, the grandmother is the one who is narrating the whole story. Dee of everyday use is both related and unconnected with the grandmother of A good man is hard to find. Dee and grandmother are both raised in different kinds of the environment but are grown to be women who are supposed to respect their traditional values and norms. They both also dismiss those who belong to another race as in one scenario Dee clearly states that she rejects the oppression her ancestors had to go through while living with white people. Similarly, the grandmother also displays the same kind of attitude towards a poor black child she sees during her journey. She adopts a patient behavior towards the child not because he is poor, but he is black also.

Dee even changes her name to oppose racial oppression which according to her she is still a victim of. She does not refer to persecution in the past but in the present indicating that she still feels controlled by another race. She did that to avoid the hurt and feel more prejudice than what it is required. This aspect of her personality also reveals that she is self-centered and selfish and only thinks about herself. This trait is similar in grandmother's character of the other story "A good man is hard to find." She is also seen to be selfish and promoting personal interests in many situations as she takes good care of herself even though she is in an age where it does not matter to maintain a class and physical appearance. Throughout the story, she has not shown even a little concern for her family. She is more interested in visiting that old house than to keep an eye on other family members. She does not listen to her son and convinces him to take her to her old house which is on their way. She also secretly brings along her cat of which her son Bailey does not approve of. Even when the Misfit attacks the whole family, she is only thinking about her survival and does not care what they are doing with her family. The family eventually suffers due to the grandmother's rigid and assertive personality.

Another similarity in both the stories is that both the troublesome characters, i.e. Dee and the grandmother look back on to their past and recall their past. However, the difference lies here as well when the grandmother looks at her past with nostalgia and remembers how a respectful life she has lived with a wealthy man. But here in Everyday use, Dee looks back at her past with disgust. Dee completely ignores the fact that despite poor financial circumstances, her mother still managed to facilitate her in her education. Like in the start when Mama is waiting for Dee's arrival, she also recalls the time when their house caught fire and Dee was instead happy on the burn and rejoiced. She hopes that Dee must be now changed, but it reveals that Dee is now more prejudicial than she was in the past.

In the two stories, both the women are seen to be acting the way that is contradicting with their real personality. They are trying to be someone which they are not. Grandmother tries to behave as a wise woman who knows what she is doing and is a good judge of someone’s character. On the other hand, Dee shows that she is much attached to her family’s ethnicity and wants to adopt the heritage for the rest of her life. The real face of both the characters is revealed in the end when the other characters get to see the contradicting statement they pass. Initially, grandmother, calls Misfit to be a person of good character but ultimately admits that he is one of her children revealed that both are equally sinful. While in the case of Dee, when she asks for the traditional quilts, her grandmother made, an after receiving a rejection on this matter, she openly admits that the lifestyle her family has is not worthy of living.

**Conclusion**

Both stories do have essential lessons to offer for people of all ages. No matter how much society changes, one thing will keep on prevailing, i.e. hypocrisy and prejudice. Both the characters were equally biased and destructive that does not appreciate the humanity in any case. They both were unappreciative as they didn't help or supported in making the lives of their family members more comfortable. They might have played a responsible part as many chances were given to them, but they opted for serving their interests.

**Annotated Bibliography**

O'Connor, Flannery. *A Good Man is Hard to Find: And Other Stories*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1955.

Flannery O'Connor was a very prominent American writer in the early 1900s, and she has written many short stories and commentaries and reviews. To her credit, “A Good Man is Hard to Find" is one of her famous short stories that address the critical issues of hypocrisy which are blended well with the society. The story is about a grandmother who is self-centered and faces psychological conditions making the lives of her family in trouble. She promotes traditional values but also rejects them when they start taking over her wellbeing. This is a beautiful piece of work written carefully and analytically by keeping smaller details into consideration. After reading the book, readers can evaluate their lives very well by finding numerous similarities they have with the story told by O'Connor.

Walker, Alice. *Everyday use*. Rutgers University Press, 1994.

Alice Walker is the exceptional writer of the contemporary world of literature who has managed to gain popularity on her work "The color purple." She has also written this great piece of literature titled "Everyday Use." Everyday use is the short story delivering the critical messages on ethnic and identity conflicts and the bond of a mother with her daughter. It raises the concern on the ethnic prejudice, racial oppression, self-denial of cultural norms and values. The story revolves around the visit of alienated foreign daughter paid to her mother after a gap of many years. The estranged treatment and greeting of her daughter make the mother realize that heritage is something that is not put on display on everyday use but is experienced and memorized. It's a delightful piece of literature that should be read primarily by the young generation to reflect the issues that are dealing with their everyday lives. The story makes the reader realize that it is the experience that brings the person closer to his heritage and not physical appearance.

# Works Cited

O'Connor, Flannery. *A Good Man is Hard to Find: And Other Stories*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1955.

Walker, Alice. *Everyday use*. Rutgers University Press, 1994.