Your Name

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Title:  ''Everyday use" by Alice Walker

In the story “Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker, she has used the technique of symbolism at various points to add meaning to the story. She has given a detailed description of the most valued and unique things for the characters such as quilts and yard while contrasting each character throughout her story. The quilt represents a specific symbol and is considered more than just a piece of art. It portrays the theme of African American heritage while binding all the three characters that are Mama, Dee, and Maggie. The quilt also signifies the bond between each generation and the impacts it has on the main characters of the story. It also helps in portraying the differences between each character. The writer also discussed another symbol that is Mama’s yard which shows the sensitivity of a mother’s heart. It also signifies a place of freedom and safety.

In the African-American culture, quilts are passed on from one generation to another. It signifies culture and identity. It also represents Mama’s culture and heritage. The quilt over which Mama and Dee are fighting is also a cultural heritage that is to be transferred from one generation to another to keep their culture alive. In every family, quilts play a vital role as they are considered as prestigious heritage. They also distinguish the culture of African American people from other cultures. The quilt contains unique patterns over which Mama and Dee are disputing. Each pattern represents uniqueness as “In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago”. It also contains pieces of Grandpa’s shirt and one 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”. The quilt also signifies the creativeness of Mama’s family. The fabric used to make quilt shows the love and affection of Mama’s family towards their culture. In the story, Dee is seen as a shallow and manipulative character that is fashion conscious while lacking true understanding and value of cultural heritage. Mama describes Dee as a fearless girl who is never hesitated to ask anything she wants. Due to her selfish and demanding attitude, she is very different from Mama and Maggie. In contrast, Maggie is a quiet and fearful child. Throughout the story, Mama and Maggie are seen cherishing their heritage and respecting it. While Dee just wants the quilt to hang on the wall as an artwork. During the argument, Maggie, politely said to Dee that “She can have them, Mama, I can ‘member Grandma Dee without the quilts”. After this Mama became so emotionally connected with Maggie that she snatched the quilt from Dee’s hands and put it on Maggie’s lap. The quilt in the story is used to show the different personalities of each character and how each of them have different personalities.

The writer also describes another symbol which is Mama’s yard. The yard is presented as free space. This place is an escape for Mama’s regrets and shortcomings. The yard appeared in the beginning and ending lines of the story. In this story, the yard is being prepared by Mama for Dee’s arrival. The delicacy of the yard represents mama’s soft and sensitive nature. In the story, mama describes the yard as an extended living room. It signifies freedom whereas the interior of the house is considered a place of discomfort because the whole argument between Mama and Dee about the quilt was inside the house. This is the reason a yard is considered as a blissful escape from reality and discomfort. The yard also represents a symbol of safety for Mama and Maggie as it the only place where they can take control of the environment surrounding them.