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### Perspective Differences

In the story “Everyday Use”, Alice Walker uses the character Dee to show the importance of taking pride in one’s heritage. Alice does this by making Dee an unsympathetic character. Dee lost pride in her heritage and is shown to have unlikable character flaws. These character flaws are traits that successful people use and need. Unfortunately, Dee has corrupted these traits. Alice Walker creates an unsympathetic character in Dee to illustrate the importance of taking pride in one’s African-American heritage; though readers can acknowledge the author’s purpose, Dee’s character flaws actually reveal the common and necessary qualities of someone who wants to achieve success in life.

Walker wants to make a specific point in “Everyday Use” about the importance of pride in one’s heritage. Walker does with the characters Mama, Maggie, and Dee. The story is narrated by Mama, and her thoughts are shared. Mama and Maggie are characters that have a strong connection to their heritage. Dee was the only one in the family to be truly educated. She was sent off to Augusta, Georgia for this education. This separation from her family has made her lose the feeling of pride in her heritage. Mama and Maggie have never their house, and they have had no reason to forget their heritage. This creates tension in the story when Dee returns home with a new name and a desire for the possessions of Mama and Maggie. Dee returns home to take away some things for display at her home. Some of the items that Dee wishes to take away

are still used everyday by Mama and Maggie. She wished to take away the top of the butter churn and its dasher. Dee also wanted two quilts that Mama had. These quilts have been in the family for some time and are a reminder of the family's heritage. The only meaning that these items have for Dee is a reminder of where she has come from. For Maggie, the quilts mean a whole lot more to her. They are memories of her family, and she still uses them. The conflict is resolved when Mama prevents Dee from taking the quilts with her. This story shows the impact someone's heritage can have on them. Alice Walker uses this story to show the importance of one's heritage and to have pride in it.

Mama's thoughts about Dee reveal that Dee's self-improvement is something mama finds difficult to understand. Dee was put in a situation where she could not win. After Dee learned to read, she read to Mama and Maggie. Dee had to read things to Mama and Maggie that they didn't fully understand. This put Dee into a difficult situation because she couldn't explain the text without coming off as rude. Therefore, Dee chose to read to them without mercy: "She used to read to us without pity..." (Line 63-64). This is where Mama doesn't understand Dee's improvement. Mama was never educated past the second grade, therefore, she doesn't understand the dilemma that Dee is going through. It also seems that Mama doesn't want Dee to improve. Mama has been in a hole her whole life, and she believes that Dee will forget about her and Maggie if she improves. Since Mama has never wanted to leave her surroundings she couldn't understand why Dee would want to leave.

Dee's character flaws actually reveal the common and necessary qualities of someone who wants to achieve success in life. Dee is a confident person, however, the type of confidence she shows could be dangerous for the time period she is in. Mama's thoughts reveal this: "Dee,

though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature”(Lines 41-42). For this time period, confidence may not be the best trait for Dee to have. In this time period, African-Americans are beaten, and possibly killed, if they show defiance towards white people. Therefore, Dee’s confidence and lack of hesitation might get her into trouble if she is not careful. Dee also comes off as cruel when she starts to become educated and reads to Mama and Maggie. Dee was put in a bad situation when she was educated. When Dee read to Mama and Maggie, she could not explain the text to them. If she explained, Dee would come off as insulting towards Mama. Therefore, Dee has no choice but to read unforgivingly towards Mama and Maggie. Dee is also a person who is very ambitious. Dee seems to want everything that is nice and this is shown in Mama’s thoughts: “Dee wanted nice things”(Line 69). However, this manifests itself as selfishness later in the story. It is seen when Dee wishes to take the quilts and other items from Mama and Maggie, even though they still use them. These traits that Dee has, confidence, being educational, and ambition are good traits for someone who wishes to be successful. Unfortunately, Dee is misusing this traits. She is confident to the point of dangerous defiance. She has been educated to the point of cruelty. Lastly, she is ambitious to the point of selfishness. These traits are needed by people who want to be successful, but those people should be careful as to make sure they do not twist those traits into unredeemable qualities.

After reading the story, we truly see that Walker wishes for people to have pride in their heritage. We see this in the contrast presented through Mama and Dee. This story is a reminder of what can happen if one loses pride in their heritage. However, even though readers can see Walker’s point in the story, they can see the important traits that Dee has that are needed to be successful.

