

Critical Analysis Of “Everyday Use”

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The book “Everyday Use” provides a situation in which a mother and daughter conflict exists. This type of conflict is not common in most books, and the manner in which it is presented is quite good for reviews. The social unit in this situation is a family where the eldest daughter feels that she is above every person in the house as a result of her education. She believes that the mother can never be right since the mother does not possess the knowledge that she has learned in school. The story depicts two people from different generations as they try to understand each other. The author can tell the conflicts that generation gaps create. (“Everyday”; Christian) When one goes through the book, it is evident that she has used different perspectives to come up with the story. The story is written in the first person, and this makes the reader feel like they are being addressed by the story. One’s attention is captured by the fact that they are getting an address directly from the author of the story. No one perspective has been used throughout the paper. The author has ensured that most of the perspectives used in writing stories have been incorporated into this short story.

Deconstructivism

In the story, there are various instances when the author tries to come up with characters that go against the rules of society. Dee, the eldest daughter in the family, believes that respect should be two-way traffic. She believes that it is right for her to respect the mother only if she also respects her back. There are many cases when the conflict between Dee and her mother is evident. She is also the one to determine the person who can have access to the quilt in the family. The family has secrets that have to be kept within them. Dee believes that her high standards can be used to deconstruct the fact that presents are always the head of the family. There is a lot of conflict within the story that is caused by Dee. The manner in which she dresses also proves the element of deconstructivism.

She arrives home with her boyfriend, and the manner in which she dresses is not pleasing the mother. The mother cannot say anything because she feels inferior. The inferiority is a result of the manner in which Dee has been treating her. The nature of the society they live in is such that children are expected to follow instructions from their parents. This is a society that believes that older people should be respected and that what they say is always final. Dee feels that since she has gone to school, she has the authority to deconstruct all these and live her life the way she wants. The generation gap that exists between Dee and the mother makes it hard for them to agree on some issues. They might both feel that they hold the final say, but the fact is that the characters are living in different times.

Feminism

Another way that the author drives her message is through feminism. Most of the characters are women, which shows the feminist nature of the author. The men in the story have been devoiced. They are seen as passive characters that do not have any say in the story. The women control the nature of the story. Even on the part of the conflicts that are found throughout the story, one can see that it is the women who are fighting for a say in society. Women are seen as fighting in society. In patriarchy, men are always expected to have the final say. The case of Dee always making her mother feel inferior can be solved by the presence of a male figure as the father. Feminism might be against the culture of the people. Dee represents the new crop of women who do not want to recognize the old laws. The mother, on the other hand, represents the women who still stick to the old culture where the woman is supposed to take orders from the man. The conflict between the women is brought about by their beliefs. The modern-day woman believes that she should be left to make her own decisions. This is evident in the manner in which Dee is undermining people in society. She is not undermining only male people but also females.

Historical Criticism

There are instances when the historical culture has been undermined by the new culture. In fact, the author using Dee and the mother to represent mother and daughter conflict is symbolic. The mother represents the old people who still believe that men have total control over women, while Dee represents the modern-day woman who wants to make her own decisions. The manner in which one talks can show the type of generation they come from. The new generation does not have any information about the history of their people and culture. This is evident in Dee, who does not have any information about the history of her people. She only has the modern-day knowledge that people get from books. Dee campaigns for the removal of the old way of life from the society. She believes that making use of the old laws makes them backward. The time gap is also evident in this part of the story. In fact, Dee feels that by living with the mother, there is a high chance that she will not be able to learn the things that she is supposed to learn in life. She mocks Maggie, her smaller sister, for not being able to live the current lifestyle that women live.

Oppression

There are also many people within the story who have been oppressed by other characters. From the start of the play, when she tells her mother that she has changed her name from Dee to Wangero Lewanika Wanjero, it shows the extent to which both of them have been oppressed. She says that she cannot have a name from those people who oppressed them. Dee is also fond of undermining other people throughout the story. First, she has made her family members inferior compared to her. She feels that she is bringing out a new definition of society for those who are still stuck in old age. At

school, she has also made her friends feel like she is a god. The mother describes the relationship between Dee and her friend as a relationship in which they worship her. She is the one who gives instructions to other people around her. She even says that Maggie cannot handle the quilts. She goes on to state that it is evident that Maggie cannot put the quilts to use. This means that women have secrets they discuss and should always put to use. Dee believes that Maggie should first learn how to handle the quilts before she is allowed to get into the company of other women. This shows the element of oppression. Dee is oppressing Maggie by questioning her ability to appreciate quilts. Dee's problem lies in the fact that she is not ready to listen to any person. She believes that because she has decided to embrace the African culture, she is better than the rest. Oppression is a theme that is evident throughout the book, and it is Dee who is responsible for the growth of the idea.

Criticism

There are many cases when a character is being criticized either for doing good or bad. Dee is criticized for the bad behavior that she has developed since she does not stay with the other family members. She does not know their history well, yet she is always trying to come up with ways to rebuke anything that comes from society. She believes that all the elements of the society they live in are a result of the oppressors. Though she is criticizing people for the kind of lifestyle they have, it is evident that she also has problems that do not let her fit into society well. She does not know how to make quilts, unlike her younger sister. It is for this reason that the mother takes the quilts from her and gives them to Maggie. She does not know the history of the quilts and cannot be trusted by the mother to have them. (World Authors 1995-2000)

To conclude, the story provides an in-depth look at the problems that are associated with the generation gap. The youth and old people cannot get to agree because their beliefs are different. They are always in conflict as they fail to agree on the manner in which things should be done. Alice Walker presents the real-life situation as it is. By reading the story, one can see the reasons why many youths are not on good terms with the elderly people in society. (Walker; Whitsitt; Molly Lundquist)

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