

# *Everyday Use* by Alice Walker

## Lesson aims

- After this lesson learners will be able to: **summarize** significant ideas in a text, **cooperate** on tasks and **understand** the meaning of heritage in our lives, **present** their ideas in English

## Main outcome

- to evoke interest and pleasure from the language and reading
- to introduce the problems connected the **heritage** of African Americans

## Lesson focus

- speaking, reading, writing

## Materials

- extract of the short story “Everyday Use”, prepared questions for discussions, pictures of quilts made by African Americans, pieces of paper for quilts

## LESSON PLAN

### Introduction (1 min.)

- **Aim of the lesson and today’s topic (1 min.)**

### Warm-up (10 min.)

- **Heritage** - brainstorming ideas about heritage and open discussion
  - o What is it? Do we have some traditions in the Czech Republic? Describe our culture? Is there something in your home that you pass down (is from the grandma of your grandma)? Do you use it and why?
  - o Is heritage important?
  - o How is it with the heritage of slaves’ descendants? What about African Americans? What is their heritage?

### Silent reading (8 min.)

- teacher tells them what happened before their excerpt
- one and a half page of the short story, students read it silently without any other directions
- teacher will go through the words children may not know

### RCWT method “Literární kroužek” - group work (15 min.)

- children form groups of 4 people and they divide roles among themselves
  - o **Characterizer of characters** - role in which a child characterizes the characters from the text, their relationships, roles, ideas, ...
  - o **Seeker of citations** - looks for important or interesting quotes from the text, reads them aloud to the group and says why he choose them
  - o **Connector** - looks for connection between the text and our world

- **Reporter** - reports the work of the group to the whole class, quotes the most important key words or ideas that arose during the group work, takes notes during the conversation
- they read the text once again alone and then according to their role they say everything that seems important to them
- others can fill some information if it wasn't mentioned
- after that reporters summarize their group work

**After-reading discussion (7 min.)** + support from the excerpt

- teacher put pictures of quilts made by African Americans on the white board
- How do the characters view heritage? Why does Maggie want the quilts? Why does Wangero want the quilts?
- What do you think should quilts be in museums or should they be used in everyday life?

**Post-reading survey - making quilts (4 min.)**

- each student writes down, on a small piece of paper in the form of a square, words that come up to his mind connected to the text, heritage in general, their culture, culture of the African Americans, ... - anything they consider important, everybody can choose their own topic
- every piece of paper will be glued together to form their own quilts made of words
- **possible variation** - draw pictures connected to the text heritage, their culture, ...

**Evaluation (1 min.)**

- Did you like the short story? Did you find the meaning important? Would you like to read the whole story?
- Do you know why heritage is important?

*This lesson is appropriate for intermediate learners and it can be done in just 45 minutes, however, I would recommend to divide the lesson in two. It would be beneficial to give learners more time to read the text and then they could choose another activity from the list below.*

**Extra activities**

- Make a movie from the story - in groups the children can choose the setting, casting, they can create dialogs, ...
- Rewrite the ending
- Rewrite the short story from a different point of view

## SHORT STORY:

After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk and went through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames and quilted them. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell's paisley shirts. And one very small faded blue piece that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War.

"Mama," Wangero said sweet as a bird. "Can I have these old quilts?"

I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door slammed.

"Why don't you take one or two of the others?" I asked. "These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died."

"No," said Wangero. "I don't want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine."

"That'll make them last better," I said.

"That's not the point," said Wangero. "These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!" She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.

"Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her," I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn't reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

"Imagine!" she breathed again.

"The truth is," I said, "I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas."

She gasped like a bee had stung her.

"Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."

"I think she would," I said. "God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em. I hope she will!" I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told they were old-fashioned, out of style.

"But they're priceless!" she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. "Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags. Less than that!"

"She can always make some more," I said. "Maggie knows how to quilt."

Dee (Wangero) looked at me with hatred. "You just will not understand. The point is these quilts, these quilts!"

"Well," I said. "What would you do with them?"

"Hang them," she said. As if that was the only thing you could do with quilts.

Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.

"She can have them, Mama," she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her. "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts."

I looked at her hard. It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn't mad at her.

When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. I did something I never done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open.

"Take one or two of the others," I said to Dee.

AFRICANAMERICAN QUILTS





ORIGINAL VERSION of the excerpt:

55 After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Star pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell's paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the piece of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War.

56 "Mama," Wangero said sweet as a bird. "Can I have these old quilts?"

57 I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door slammed.

58 "Why don't you take one or two of the others?" I asked. "These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died."

59 "No," said Wangero. "I don't want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine."

60 "That's make them last better," I said.

61 "That's not the point," said Wangero. "These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!" She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.

62 "Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her," I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn't reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

63 "Imagine!" she breathed again, clutching them closely to her bosom.

64 "The truth is," I said, "I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas."

65 She gasped like a bee had stung her.

66 "Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."

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68 "But they're *priceless!*" she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. "Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags. Less than that!"

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The point is these quilts, *these* quilts!"

71        "Well," I said, stumped. "What would *you* do with them?"

72        "Hang them," she said. As if that was the only thing you *could* do with quilts.

73        Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.

74        "She can have them, Mama," she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her. "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts."

75        I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and it gave her face a kind of dopey, hangdog look. It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn't mad at her. This was Maggie's portion. This was the way she knew God to work.

76        When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. Just like when I'm in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open.

77        "Take one or two of the others," I said to Dee.