

Graphic Organizers for Active Reading

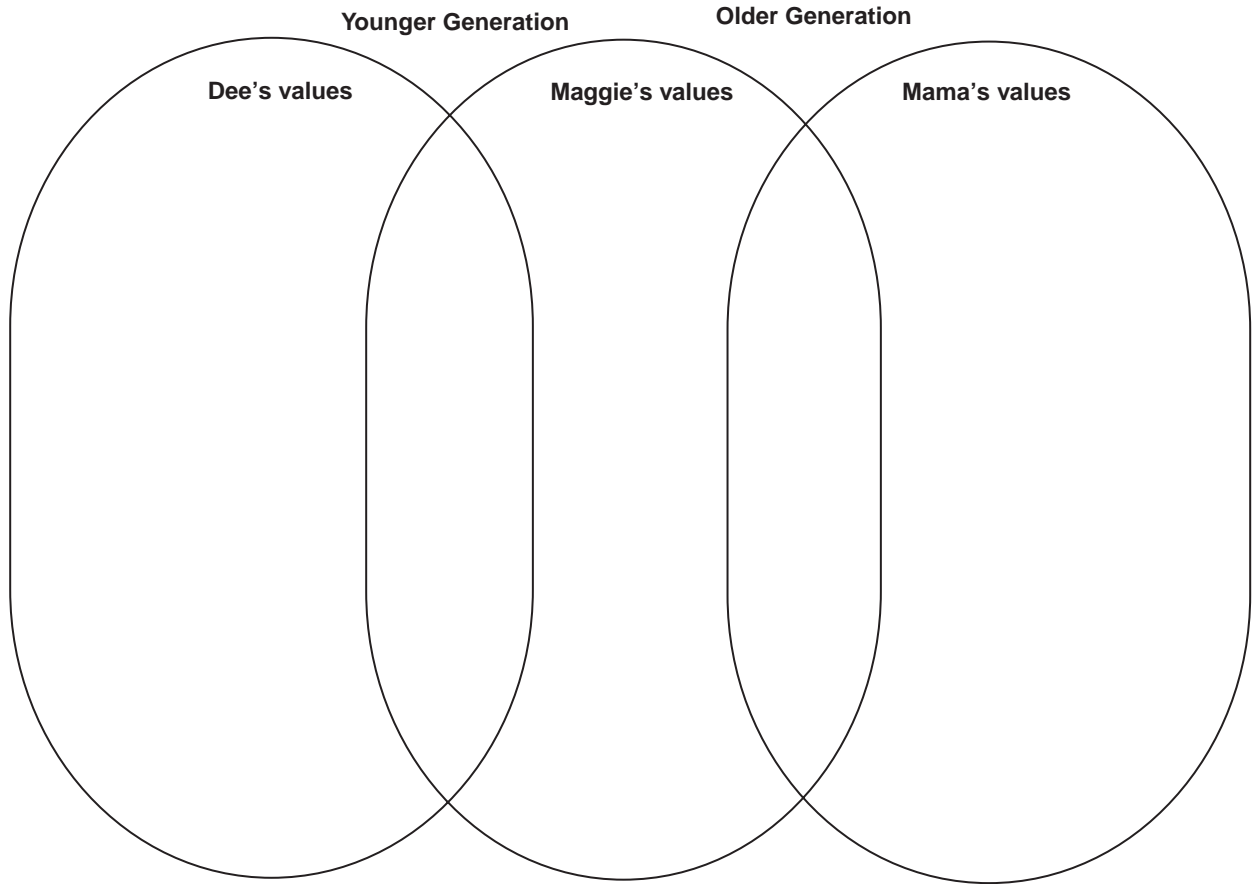
Everyday Use

Alice Walker

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Generation Clashes

“Everyday Use” depicts a generation gap between Dee and her mother, yet Maggie, Dee’s sister, seems content with her mother’s way of life. As you record Maggie’s and Dee’s different and similar values in your **Reader’s Log**, organize your thoughts with the following extended Venn diagram. In the spaces provided, write what you consider to be the unique values held by Dee, Maggie, and Mama. In the spaces where the circles overlap, write the values that you think the characters share.



1. How does the completed diagram help you to understand what each character needs and wants?

2. Did completing the diagram change your view of one of the characters? Explain why or why not.

Words to Own

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Question and Answer

Each of the following questions has an italicized Word to Own. Answer the question and then explain your answer on the lines provided.

EXAMPLE: Asalamalakim is described as *stocky*. Does that mean he is a good businessman? No

Explanation: It means that he is heavily built, sturdy, and short.

1. Does Dee *sidle* up to people as Maggie does? _____

Explanation: _____

2. Suppose that Dee behaves in a sneaky manner and that Maggie behaves in an open, honest manner. Which one would be *furtive*? _____

Explanation: _____

3. Can you picture yourself *cowering* before the narrator? _____

Explanation: _____

4. The narrator believes in the practical application of heritage. Would that be considered one of her personal *doctrines*? _____

Explanation: _____

5. When Dee finished *rifling* through the trunk, would the trunk's contents likely be straightened up or messed up? _____

Explanation: _____

Now work with a partner to create three questions that use your Words to Own. Write these questions on the lines below. On another sheet of paper, answer these three questions in complete sentences. Then exchange your questions (not your answers) with another group to test their vocabulary strength.

Circle the letter next to the word or group of words that belongs in each space.

The story “Everyday Use” 1 place in the rural South during the 1960s. Values and ways of life were changing 2 at that time. In the story an African American mother is living an old-fashioned farm life with one of 3 daughters. Another daughter visits; she has new values, a new boyfriend, and her own plans for her part in preserving her 4 heritage.

- 1 A had been taking
B takes
C take
D was taking

- 3 A she’s
B her
C her’s
D hers

- 2 F quick
G quickest
H most quickest
J quickly

- 4 F famlies’
G families
H familys’
J family’s

Language Link

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Diction—Finding the Right Word

If Mama says, “It ain’t nothin’ but trouble ahead,” does she mean the same thing as someone who says, “I believe that our lives henceforth will become more difficult”? How do you imagine the two speakers differ?

Diction is a writer’s or speaker’s choice of words. Good writers know when to use formal diction and when informal diction is more appropriate. They also have a good ear for the diction of others, for the unique ways people phrase things. They can draw upon this knowledge when portraying fictional characters.

Here are some diction guidelines:

1. Adapt your diction to your audience and purpose. **Informal diction** is appropriate for dialogue, personal letters, and some narratives. It is often colorful or entertaining. **Formal diction** is appropriate for most school writing, including speeches, business letters, and expository and persuasive writing. In formal writing, words are written out rather than contracted (*cannot* instead of *can’t*, *that is* instead of *that’s*). The Glossary of Usage in the back of your textbook can help you further distinguish between formal and informal usage.

INFORMAL: Maggie looked kind of nervous when Dee drove up.

FORMAL: Maggie looked **rather** [or **somewhat**] nervous when Dee drove up.

INFORMAL: That old quilt isn’t worth a lick.

FORMAL: That old quilt **is not** worth **anything**.

Some commonly used informal expressions are *flunk*, *wise up*, *fall for*, *make off with*, *shape up*, *get going*, *a lot*, and *kind of*. Can you think of others?

2. Avoid clichés and vague expressions.

POOR: Dee thought the churn top was really cool.

BETTER: Dee admired the hand-carved churn top.

Exercise A Identifying Formal and Informal Diction

In the blank provided, label each sentence with either an **I** for informal diction or an **F** for formal diction. The sentences are about characters in “Everyday Use.”

- _____ 1. Dee tried to get ahold of her grandmother’s quilts.
- _____ 2. I couldn’t tell you if Dee had gone and married Hakim-a-barber.
- _____ 3. Who would have thought a Johnson could be quick-witted?
- _____ 4. Dee’s mother could kill a hog as easily as a man could.
- _____ 5. To her graduation, Dee wore a green suit that she had made from an old one.
- _____ 6. The reason Maggie’s lower lip bulged is because it was filled with a lot of snuff.
- _____ 7. Hakim-a-barber accepted some of the doctrines of Mama’s Muslim neighbors.

_____ 8. I have no doubt but that Dee thought she was better than Maggie.

_____ 9. Mama probably acted like Maggie when she was Maggie’s age.

_____ 10. I’m sure Dee was real smart when she was in school.

Exercise B Writing Sentences with Formal Diction

The following sentences, which are based on events in “Everyday Use,” contain examples of overused words, slang, clichés, and informal diction. Rewrite these sentences on the lines provided, changing the italicized word(s) to diction that would be more appropriate for an essay or a book report.

1. I *can’t* tell whether that is Mama’s quilt.

2. Mama and Maggie *hung out* in the front yard until Dee arrived.

3. Dee’s hair was *black as coal*.

4. Why do you *reckon* Mama gave the quilts to Maggie?

5. Hakim-a-barber *goes*, “It is not my style.”

Exercise C Revising a Paragraph

Revise the following paragraph about sibling rivalry in “Everyday Use.” In places, the writer of this paragraph has used informal diction and imprecise language. In your revision, use diction that would be more appropriate for a school paper. The first sentence has been revised for you.

One important topic in Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” is ^{rivalry between} ~~the deal of~~ sisters ~~not getting along~~.

Dee thinks she’s hot stuff and is used to bossing her sister, Maggie, around. Walker emphasizes the conflict between Maggie and Dee in a bunch of ways: by showing Maggie’s nervousness before Dee gets there, by repeating Maggie’s response, “Uhhnnh,” and by describing the sounds of doors slamming and stuff falling. The rivalry comes to a head when Dee rags on Maggie to her mother. Mama, who is more like Maggie than she is like Dee, defends Maggie. The rivalry between Maggie and Dee is really like a rivalry between Dee and her mother.

**One-Stop Planner CD-ROM and
print ancillaries
include Answer Key here.**

Answers are not available Online.