**Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"**

Discussion Questions

**Focal Point: Narrator’s Feeling and Point-of-View** Question 1: Explain the mother (the narrator) in this story. What kind of person is she? How does she seem to feel about Dee? How does she feel about Maggie?

**Focal Point: Foreshadowing of Dee** Question 2: What elements prepare the reader for Dee before she arrives on the scene? What do we find out about Dee before she arrives?

**Focal Point: Dee’s Position/Role in the Family** Question 3: How did Dee relate to her family before she left home? What role did she assume for herself? Does her role change after she leaves home and returns again?

**Focal Point: Opinions of Dee** Question 4: How do you feel about Dee? Do you sympathize with her desire to “improve” herself and her family? Or do you disagree with Dee’s motives for coming home?

**Focal Point: Binary Opposition in Sisterhood** Question 5: Discuss the relationship between Maggie and Dee.

**Focal Point: Documentation as Remembrance** Question 6: What is suggested by Dee’s prolonged picture-taking with her Polaroid? What about her kissing her mother on the forehead? What do you make of these actions? Do they display sincerity?

**Focal Point: Interpreting Heritage**

Question 7: Why has Dee assumed African dress, hairstyle, and name? What is significant about Dee changing her name to Wangero? What is heritage? How does this reflect a shift in the values of heritage?

**Focal Point: Judging the Characteristics and Attitudes of Characters** Question 8: How would you characterize the attitudes of her and her new husband/boyfriend toward their race? Consider: Positive or negative attitudes? Honest/Genuine or simply “politically correct?”

**Focal Point: The New Persona** Question 9: Discuss Dee’s mother’s and sister’s reactions to her new persona, “Wangero.” Do you sympathize with them? Who do you identify more with- Dee and Maggie or Wangero? Why?

**Focal Point: Significance of Dee’s Wishes** Question 10: How would you describe the way that Dee reacts to the food and objects in her mother’s house? What does she want? What does she want to do with these items? Does she get them?

**Focal Point: Significance of the Conclusion** Question 11: Why does Mrs. Johnson decide to stand up to Dee and not allow her to take the quilts at the end of the story?Why do you think Maggie is so content at the end?

**Focal Point: Significance of Associations of Race in the Text** Question 12:  Could this story just as well have been about a mother and her daughters of a different race? Aside from the African or Muslim names, does anything distinguish Dee’s relations with her mother and Maggie as especially African American? Is this a quality of strength or weakness in the story?

**Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat”**

Discussion Questions

**Focal Point: Analyzing Socio-economic Symbols**

Question 1: What information does the first part of the story reveal about the social and economic contexts in which Delia and Sykes live? What do Eatonville and Winter Park represent?

**Focal Point: Studying Initial Characterization**

Question 2: How does Zora Neale Hurston represent Delia and Sykes in the first part of the story?

**Focal Point: Noticing Feminism**

Question 3: What change can you see in Delia’s behavior towards Sykes in the first part of the story? Discuss what this could tell you about Zora Neale Hurston’s attitude towards gender. How would you evaluate the story as a feminist text? Discuss to what extent and in what ways Zora Neale Hurston’s story challenges gender roles.

**Focal Point: Indirect Characterization**

Question 4: In the second part of the story village men on Joe Clarke’s porch talk about Delia. What do you learn more about Delia and Sykes from their talk?

**Focal Point: Examining Allusions**

Question 5: In the third part of the story, there are references to *Gethsemane, the rocks of Calvary* and *Jurden water*. What do they signify in relation to Delia?

**Focal Point: Rattlesnake Symbolism**

Question 6: What does the rattlesnake symbolize in the story?

**Focal Point: Shift in Confidence**

Question 7: Comment on Delia’s confrontation with her husband in the third part of the story. In what way(s) could this be important in the story? How is Delia changing as a character?

**Focal Point: Analyzing Delia’s Contemplation**

Question 8: Towards the end of the story, we see Delia “climbing up in the hay barn” and lying there for an hour or more. What does she do there? Why is this important in the story?

**Focal Point: Sun Imagery**

Question 9: Comment on Zora Neale Hurston’s use of the sun imagery at the end of the story. What does it represent?

**Focal Point: Analyzing Final Representations**

Question 10: Read the last three paragraphs of the story closely and discuss how Zora Neale Hurston represents Delia and Sykes here. Is there any change in their representations?

**Focal Point: Studying Relationship Dynamics & Motives**

Question 11: Discuss the reasons for Sykes’ harsh treatment of Delia.

**Focal Point: Significance of Title**

Question 12: Discuss the significance of the title. How could “Sweat” be applicable to Delia’s and Sykes life?