

APPENDIX

A. Life And Work of Alice Walker

Alice Walker (1944-) is one of the most prominent figures in the development of black women's literature in the United States. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the American Book Award in 1983 for her novel *The Color Purple*, Walker came to popular attention with the film version of the novel in 1985. Recognizing her shown debt to Zora Neale Hurston, folklorist and novelist of the early part of the twentieth century, she played a major role in rescuing Harston's work from obscurity and expanding its audience. The powerful Pulitzer Prize winning novel is in the tradition of Zola's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) deals with many issues as also cited in the novels of Toni Morrison and other outstanding African American women writers.

Walker's collection for essays, interviews, and book reviews in *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose* reveal persons, events, an experiences that Walker speaks out eloquently and passionately against racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and despoliation of the environment. She openly supports the movement toward human liberation: the right and need for all individuals to express themselves freely as she did in her epistolary novel, letters to God, *The Color Purple*.

Her works also express the struggle of African American women to define themselves in a society that is often hostile to them as the events that happen to Sofia

to which some critics find fault with Walker's commitment to feminism, lesbianism, and her portrayal of African American men. The success that she makes from her work leads her to the value of understanding the world, to the process of self-discovery and self-development. Her search for understanding the significance of life helps other contemporary black women writers struggle to claim their life, asset their value, and articulate their meaning. It also contributes to an understanding of the nature of artistry of black women writers.

Among Walker's other works are the collection of poetry *Revolutionary Petunies and other Poems* (1973), a collection of short stories about black women entitled *In Love and Troubles: Stories of Black Women* (1973), and the novels *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *Meredian* (1976), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *Possessing the Secret Joy* (1992), and cowork with Pratibha Parmar *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* (1993).

1. Synopsis of The Color Purple

The Color Purple is a series of seventy short letters; the first fifty-one are from Celie to God. Celie's step-father, Alphonso, rapes her repeatedly when she is so young that she does not even realize what is happening to her. She does not know that she is pregnant until her first baby is born. Alphonso steals it, as well as a second baby, and threatens her not to tell anybody but God what he has been doing to her; he says that if she tells, it will kill her mother. Celie pours out her confusion and pain in

her letters to God. Her mother dies anyway, and Alphonso immediately marries again. Celie, who dropped out of school when she becomes pregnant, is virtually alone and has neither the strength nor the will to fight for herself.

Alphonso “gives” Celie to Albert, who had asked to marry Celie’s younger sister Nettie. Alper, whom Celie refers to as “Mr. ___“ through most of the narration, abuses celie even though she has sex with him, cares for his three children, cleans his house, and sexual advances. When Nettie refuses to have sex with Albert, he sends her away and hides all her letters to Celie. Meanwhile, Albert recuperates his long time relationship with blues singer Shug Avery. Everyone in the community knows of their relationship, which Albert does nothing to hide.

When Shug is suffering from “*that nasty man’s disease*”, Albert brings her home for Celie to nurse her for a health recovery. Celie, who has always been fascinated by Shug’s photograph and her scandalous reputation, tenderly cares and bathes her. She feeds her, combs her hair, and learns to love her. At first, Shug hates Celie. She ridicules her weakness and her inability to stand straight against Albert. However, she then feels close to Celie. She learns to respect her, sings for her, composes a song for her, helps her to find the letters from Nettie that Albert has hidden, and teaches her to respect herself and to assert her own independence. When Celie realizes that Albert has kept her letters independent, she sings her talent as a seamstress to make and sell pants.

Harpo, Albert’s eldest son, and his strong determined wife, Sofia, also encourage Celie and in various ways help her to learn to assert herself. She is also

greatly empowered by finding Nettie's letters and learning both Nettie and Celie's stolen children are alive and well cared by husband-wife reverends in Africa. She also learns that Alphonso is not her real father and their children are not product of incest as she believes.

By the fifty-sixth letter, Celie is writing to Nettie instead too God, since she has developed courage and undergone no threats anymore. Meanwhile, Shug teaches her the anatomy of her sexual organs, sexual drives, and to appreciate her own body and to enjoy sexual pleasure instead of condemning them as nasty. Shug is good listener to Celie's past childhood story of the violence and sexual abuse from her step-father and her husband. Celie also listens to the story of Shug's past experience, including her past relationship with Albert who is now husband to Celie. Much to Albert surprise, Shug starts cooling and sleeping with Celie instead of with him. By the sixtieth letter, Celie is living with Shug in Memphis, and becomes a successful businesswoman in selling pants. For the first time, Celie's self-respect grows and gives her confident enough to sign her own name in her letters.

When Alphonso dies, Celie inherits the farm, and to her surprise and pleasure, the farm is able to provide a home for herself and Shug. Celie prepares a home for Nettie and her long lost children from their return from Africa. In the last letter, Celie commences with "Dear God, Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God"- here she describes a happy reunion with her beloved sister Nettie and the stolen children after thirty years long waiting.

Twenty-two of the letters in *The Color Purple* are replies from Nettie to Celie telling of her life with the missionaries Samuel and Corrine, who have bought and taken in Celie's children as their own. Nettie finds both missionaries to be very kind, loving, and well educated. In the letters, Nettie finds both missionaries to be very kind, loving, and well educated. In the letters, Nettie shares her adventures in New York, London, and Africa. In Africa, among the Olinkan people, Nettie finds that women are reluctant to what she has experienced back there in Georgia. Nettie's spiritual growth, self-respect, and self-confidence develop in many ways parallel to Celie's. After Corrine's death, Nettie and Samuel discover that they love each other and marry so that they can work together more effectively to serve the needs of the African people. Samuel stops preaching and begins to minister the sick and takes care for the education and sanitary of the children.

Olivia and Adam, Celi's stolen children, have matured into beautiful, thoughtful adults; both of them love Tashi, a young Olinka woman who moves to Georgia as Adam's wife after having undergone Olinka's traditional female initiation ceremonies. Adam demonstrates his love and support of Tashi by having the same traditional ceremonies for adult mature men – scarring the face just before their wedding.

Harpo and Sofia are part of the family celebration at the end of the story. Sofia leaves Harpo because he tries to dominate her; however, she is imprisoned for refusing to obey work for the mayor's wife. While Sofia serves her sentence in jail, Harpo has a new woman, Mary Agnes, who is addressed as Squeak, takes care of

Sofia's children. Later Sofia and Harpo, both more mature, are happily reunited. The reunion of Celie's family gives the color purple to the story.