

BEFORE YOU READ

Suppose you inherited an heirloom—an object that has been in the family longer than anyone can remember. Would you use the object in the way its original owners did? Would you sell it or display it? In “Everyday Use” a family fight over two old quilts stirs up strong feelings about identity, tradition, and values.

LITERARY FOCUS: DETERMINING CHARACTERS’ TRAITS

Character traits are the special qualities unique to a person. Character traits include a person’s values, likes and dislikes, habits, ways of speaking and walking, and so on. In literature you learn of characters’ traits by paying attention to the details given by the story’s narrator and other characters. Another way to learn of characters’ traits is by “listening” to their **dialogue**, or conversations. The dialogue helps reveal the characters’ personalities and their feelings about one another.

- In “Everyday Use,” look for details that help you determine the character traits of a mother and her two daughters.

READING SKILLS: MAKING INFERENCES ABOUT CHARACTERS

In literature, as in real life, we are not always directly told about the people we meet. Instead, we observe their actions. We observe their appearance. We listen to what they say and to what others say about them. From these details we make **inferences**—careful guesses—about the people we meet in real life and about the characters we meet in stories.

To track evidence and to make inferences about the characters in “Everyday Use,” fill in a chart like this one.

Character’s Name	Story Detail	What Detail Reveals About the Character



Reading Standard 1.3 (Grade 8 Review)

Use word meanings within the appropriate context and show ability to verify those meanings by definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

Reading Standard 3.4

Determine characters’ traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY

The following words appear in “Everyday Use.” Preview these words and their definitions before you begin reading.

sidle (sīd'əl) v.: move sideways, especially in a shy or sneaky manner.

*Try to walk with confidence rather than **sidle** up to people as if they scare you.*

furtive (fur'tiv) adj.: acting as if trying not to be seen. *Furtive* also means “done secretly.”

*Boys followed her around in a **furtive** way, hoping not to be noticed.*

cowering (kou'ər·in) v. used as adj.: drawing back or huddling in fear.

*The photograph showed me by the house, my frightened young daughter **cowering** behind my skirt.*

oppress (ə-pres') v.: persecute; keep down by unjust use of power.

*Workers in dangerous, poorly paid jobs may feel that their bosses **oppress** them.*

doctrines (däk'trinz) n.: principles; teachings; beliefs.

*He agrees with many **doctrines** of that religion but disagrees with a few of the beliefs.*

rifling (rī'flīŋ) v. used as n.: searching thoroughly or in a rough manner.

*“The contents of that trunk are personal,” I said. “Please stop **rifling** through it.”*

CONTEXT CLUES

When you come across an unfamiliar word, look at its **context**—the words and sentences surrounding it. You may find a definition, a restatement, or an example of the unknown word to help you unlock its meaning. In the examples below, the underlined words provide context clues for the boldface words.

DEFINITION: To **appreciate** the quilts, you must understand their value to the family.

RESTATEMENT: Suddenly Dee is **confronted** by her mother, who challenges her.

EXAMPLE: Maggie is ashamed of her **homely** features, including the ugly scars on her legs.

As you read “Everyday Use,” look for other context clues in the form of examples, definitions, or restatements.

Everyday Use

For Your Grandmama

Alice Walker

CHARACTER

In lines 8–13, the narrator, Mama, explains why Maggie will be nervous “until after her sister goes.” Circle the disturbing detail that helps explain Maggie’s lack of confidence. Underline the details that show how Maggie feels about her sister.

INFER

In lines 22–30, Mama tells about a dream in which Dee embraces her on TV. What might Mama really want from Dee?

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: She will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eyeing her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that “no” is a word the world never learned to say to her. You’ve no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has “made it” is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other’s faces. Sometimes the mother and father weep; the child wraps them in her arms and leans across the table to tell how she would not have made it without their help. I have seen these programs.

Sometimes I dream a dream in which Dee and I are suddenly brought together on a TV program of this sort. Out of a dark and soft-seated limousine I am ushered into a bright room filled with many people. There I meet a smiling, gray, sporty man like Johnny Carson who shakes my hand and tells me what a fine girl I have. Then we are on the stage, and Dee

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Notes _____

30 is embracing me with tears in her eyes. She pins on my dress a large orchid, even though she had told me once that she thinks orchids are tacky flowers.

In real life I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eat pork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a sledgehammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.

CHARACTER

In lines 31–44, circle Mama’s description of her appearance. Put a star next to details describing what the mother does. Then, underline the details showing how Dee would like her mother to be.

FLUENCY

Read the boxed text aloud two times. Improve your speed and smoothness of delivery in your second read-through.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Re-read lines 45–51. Circle how Mama describes her own behavior with white people. Underline Mama’s description of Dee’s behavior.

CHARACTER

Pause at line 61. Underline Mama’s description of the way Maggie walks. What event caused her to walk that way?

VOCABULARY

sidle (sīd’l) v.: move sideways, especially in a shy or sneaky manner.

CHARACTER

In lines 62–73, Mama remembers seeing her daughters during the fire. Circle what she remembers about Maggie. Underline what she remembers about Dee.

But that is a mistake. I know even before I wake up. Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? It seems to me I have talked to them always with one foot raised in flight, with my head turned in whichever way is farthest from them. Dee, though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature.

“How do I look, Mama?” Maggie says, showing just enough of her thin body enveloped in pink skirt and red blouse for me to know she’s there, almost hidden by the door.

“Come out into the yard,” I say.

Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, **sidle** up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks. She has been like this, chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle, ever since the fire that burned the other house to the ground.

Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. She’s a woman now, though sometimes I forget. How long ago was it that the other house burned? Ten, twelve years? Sometimes I can still hear the flames and feel Maggie’s arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. Her eyes seemed stretched open, blazed open by the flames reflected in them. And Dee. I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of, a look of concentration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick chimney. Why don’t you do a dance around the ashes? I’d wanted to ask her. She had hated the house that much.

I used to think she hated Maggie, too. But that was before we raised the money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta¹ to school. She used to read to us without pity, forcing words, lies, other folks’ habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting

1. **Augusta:** city in Georgia.

trapped and ignorant underneath her voice. She washed us in a river of make-believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious ways she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand.

Dee wanted nice things. A yellow organdy dress to wear to her graduation from high school; black pumps to match a green suit she'd made from an old suit somebody gave me. She was determined to stare down any disaster in her efforts. Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes at a time. Often I fought off the temptation to shake her. At sixteen she had a style of her own: and knew what style was.

I never had an education myself. After second grade the school closed down. Don't ask me why: In 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now. Sometimes Maggie reads to me. She stumbles along good-naturedly but can't see well. She knows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passed her by. She will marry John Thomas (who has mossy teeth in an earnest face), and then I'll be free to sit here and I guess just sing church songs to myself. Although I never was a good singer. Never could carry a tune. I was always better at a man's job. I used to love to milk till I was hooked in the side in '49. Cows are soothing and slow and don't bother you, unless you try to milk them the wrong way.

I have deliberately turned my back on the house. It is three rooms, just like the one that burned, except the roof is tin; they don't make shingle roofs anymore. There are no real windows, just some holes cut in the sides, like the portholes in a ship, but not round and not square, with rawhide holding the shutters up on the outside. This house is in a pasture, too, like the other one. No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down. She wrote me once that no matter where we "choose" to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends.

INFER

Pause at line 82. From Mama's description of Dee's behavior, what can you **infer** about her feelings toward Dee?

CHARACTER

Circle details about Maggie given in lines 92–95.

INFER

In lines 96–97, underline what Mama says she will do after Maggie marries John Thomas. How does Mama feel about Maggie?

CHARACTER

In lines 111–112, circle what Maggie says about Dee.

VOCABULARY

furtive (fur'tiv) *adj.*: acting as if trying not to be seen. *Furtive* also means “done secretly.”

INFER

Pause at line 121. Why did Jimmy T marry somebody other than Dee?

COMPARE & CONTRAST

In lines 129–134, circle Mama’s description of the man’s appearance. Then, underline Mama’s description of Dee’s appearance (lines 135–145). How do Dee and her boyfriend contrast with Mama and Maggie?

Maggie and I thought about this and Maggie asked me, “Mama, when did Dee ever *have* any friends?”

She had a few. **Furtive** boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Impressed with her, they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding² humor that erupted like bubbles in lye. She read to them.

When she was courting Jimmy T, she didn’t have much time to pay to us but turned all her faultfinding power on him.
120 He *flew* to marry a cheap city girl from a family of ignorant, flashy people. She hardly had time to recompose herself.

When she comes, I will meet—but there they are!

Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way, but I stay her with my hand. “Come back here,” I say. And she stops and tries to dig a well in the sand with her toe.

It is hard to see them clearly through the strong sun. But even the first glimpse of leg out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat looking, as if God himself shaped them with a certain style. From the other side of the car comes a
130 short, stocky man. Hair is all over his head a foot long and hanging from his chin like a kinky mule tail. I hear Maggie suck in her breath. “Uhhnnh” is what it sounds like. Like when you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. “Uhhnnh.”

Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too, and hanging down to her shoulders. Bracelets dangling and
140 making noises when she moves her arm up to shake the folds of the dress out of her armpits. The dress is loose and flows, and as she walks closer, I like it. I hear Maggie go “Uhhnnh” again. It is

2. **scalding** (skôld'in) *v.* used as *adj.*: burning hot; here, biting or stinging.

her sister's hair. It stands straight up like the wool on a sheep. It is black as night and around the edges are two long pigtailed that rope about like small lizards disappearing behind her ears.

150 "Wa-su-zo-Tean-o!" she says, coming on in that gliding way the dress makes her move. The short, stocky fellow with the hair to his navel is all grinning, and he follows up with "Asalamalakim,³ my mother and sister!" He moves to hug Maggie but she falls back, right up against the back of my chair. I feel her trembling there, and when I look up I see the perspiration falling off her chin.

160 "Don't get up," says Dee. Since I am stout, it takes something of a push. You can see me trying to move a second or two before I make it. She turns, showing white heels through her sandals, and goes back to the car. Out she peeks next with a Polaroid. She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie **cowering** behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When a cow comes nibbling around in the edge of the yard, she snaps it and me and Maggie *and* the house. Then she puts the Polaroid in the back seat of the car and comes up and kisses me on the forehead.

Meanwhile, Asalamalakim is going through motions with Maggie's hand. Maggie's hand is as limp as a fish, and probably as cold, despite the sweat, and she keeps trying to pull it back. It looks like Asalamalakim wants to shake hands but wants to do it fancy. Or maybe he don't know how people shake hands. Anyhow, he soon gives up on Maggie.

170 "Well," I say. "Dee."

"No, Mama," she says. "Not 'Dee,' Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo!"

"What happened to 'Dee?'" I wanted to know.

"She's dead," Wangero said. "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who **oppress** me."

CHARACTER

In lines 146–149, circle the greetings Dee and her boyfriend use when they arrive. What do their words reveal about them?

VOCABULARY

cowering (kou'ər-īŋ) *v.* used as *adj.*: drawing back or huddling in fear.

oppress (ə-pres') *v.*: persecute; keep down by unjust use of power.

Oppress is from a Latin word meaning "to press or push against." Related words include *suppress* and *repress*.

INFER

In lines 164–169, Mama refers to Dee's friend as *Asalamalakim*, the Muslim greeting he had used. Why does she use this word instead of asking what his name is?

INFER

Re-read lines 170–175. Who are the people who "oppress" Dee?

3. **Asalamalakim**: Asalaam aleikum (ä-sä-läm' ä-lä'koom'), greeting used by Muslims meaning "peace to you."

INFER

A Model A was a Ford car produced in the late 1920s. What do the actions of Dee (Wangero) and her friend reveal about their attitudes toward Mama?

CHARACTER

In lines 193–199, what does the **dialogue** between Mama and Dee (Wangero) suggest about Mama?

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 211. What does Mama say that shows you she is not as old-fashioned as her visitors think?

“You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie,” I said. Dicie is my sister. She named Dee. We called her “Big Dee” after Dee was born.

“But who was *she* named after?” asked Wangero.

180 “I guess after Grandma Dee,” I said.

“And who was she named after?” asked Wangero.

“Her mother,” I said, and saw Wangero was getting tired. “That’s about as far back as I can trace it,” I said. Though, in fact, I probably could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches.

“Well,” said Asalamalakim, “there you are.”

“Uhhnnh,” I heard Maggie say.

“There I was not,” I said, “before ‘Dicie’ cropped up in our family, so why should I try to trace it that far back?”

190 He just stood there grinning, looking down on me like somebody inspecting a Model A car. Every once in a while he and Wangero sent eye signals over my head.

“How do you pronounce this name?” I asked.

“You don’t have to call me by it if you don’t want to,” said Wangero.

“Why shouldn’t I?” I asked. “If that’s what you want us to call you, we’ll call you.”

“I know it might sound awkward at first,” said Wangero.

“I’ll get used to it,” I said. “Ream it out again.”

200 Well, soon we got the name out of the way. Asalamalakim had a name twice as long and three times as hard. After I tripped over it two or three times, he told me to just call him Hakim-a-barber. I wanted to ask him was he a barber, but I didn’t really think he was, so I didn’t ask.

“You must belong to those beef-cattle peoples down the road,” I said. They said “Asalamalakim” when they met you, too, but they didn’t shake hands. Always too busy: feeding the cattle, fixing the fences, putting up salt-lick shelters, throwing down hay. When the white folks poisoned some of the herd, the men

210 stayed up all night with rifles in their hands. I walked a mile and a half just to see the sight.

Hakim-a-barber said, “I accept some of their **doctrines**, but farming and raising cattle is not my style.” (They didn’t tell me, and I didn’t ask, whether Wangero—Dee—had really gone and married him.)

220 We sat down to eat and right away he said he didn’t eat collards, and pork was unclean. Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins and corn bread, the greens, and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn’t afford to buy chairs.

“Oh, Mama!” she cried. Then turned to Hakim-a-barber. “I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints,” she said, running her hands underneath her and along the bench. Then she gave a sigh, and her hand closed over Grandma Dee’s butter dish. “That’s it!” she said. “I knew there was something I wanted to ask you if I could have.” She jumped up from the table and went over in the corner where the churn stood, the milk in it clabber⁴ by now. She looked at the churn
230 and looked at it.

“This churn top is what I need,” she said. “Didn’t Uncle Buddy whittle it out of a tree you all used to have?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Uh huh,” she said happily. “And I want the dasher,⁵ too.”

“Uncle Buddy whittle that, too?” asked the barber.

Dee (Wangero) looked up at me.

“Aunt Dee’s first husband whittled the dash,” said Maggie so low you almost couldn’t hear her. “His name was Henry, but they called him Stash.”

240 “Maggie’s brain is like an elephant’s,” Wangero said, laughing. “I can use the churn top as a centerpiece for the alcove table,” she said, sliding a plate over the churn, “and I’ll think of something artistic to do with the dasher.”

VOCABULARY

doctrines (däk'trinz) *n.*: principles; teachings; beliefs.

IDENTIFY

According to Mama, Dee never liked her home before. How has Dee’s attitude changed (lines 219–230)?

CHARACTER

Re-read lines 237–239. What do Maggie’s words reveal about her?

4. **clabber** (klab'ər) *n.*: thickened or curdled sour milk.

5. **dasher** *n.*: pole that stirs the milk in a churn.

VOCABULARY

rifling (rī'flīŋ) *v.* used as *n.*: searching thoroughly or in a rough manner.

INFER

Re-read lines 265–269. Who has slammed the kitchen door? Why has she done this?

Lined writing area with 18 horizontal blue lines.

When she finished wrapping the dasher, the handle stuck out. I took it for a moment in my hands. You didn't even have to look close to see where hands pushing the dasher up and down to make butter had left a kind of sink in the wood. In fact, there were a lot of small sinks; you could see where thumbs and fingers had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light-yellow wood, from a tree that grew in the yard where Big Dee and Stash had lived.

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 size of a penny matchbox, 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



280 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, clutching them closely to her bosom.

"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."

290 "I reckon 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

CHARACTER

Circle the reason Mama says Dee cannot have the quilts (lines 283–284).

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Re-read lines 283–287. Circle what Dee says Maggie would do with the quilts. Read on to line 302, and underline what Dee would do with them. What does this difference between the sisters' attitudes reveal?

INFER

Re-read lines 306–308. According to this passage of dialogue, what does Maggie treasure most of all?

INFER

What does “This was Maggie’s portion” mean (line 314)?

CHARACTER

In lines 316–323, circle the words that describe Mama’s sudden feelings. Then, underline the actions she takes. What **motivates** Mama to act this way?

quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told me 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!”

300 “Well,” I said, stumped. “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.”

310 I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff, and it gave her face a kind of dopey, hang-dog 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.

320 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.

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

But she turned without a word and went out to Hakim-a-barber.

“You just don’t understand,” she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.

“What don’t I understand?” I wanted to know.

330 “Your heritage,” she said. And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, “You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It’s really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live, you’d never know it.”

She put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and her chin.

Maggie smiled, maybe at the sunglasses. But a real smile, not scared. After we watched the car dust settle, I asked Maggie to bring me a dip of snuff. And then the two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed.



INTERPRET

Dee says that Mama doesn’t understand her “heritage”—their cultural traditions and past. What is surprising and even unfair about this remark?

CHARACTER

How do Dee’s harsh words in lines 330–333 help bring Maggie and Mama closer at the end of the story?

Everyday Use

Character Boxes The chart that follows will help you make inferences about the characters in this story. The inferences will be based in part on what the characters say and do. Fill in the blank spaces with details from the story. (Some have been filled in for you.) Then, write your inferences in the last box of each row.

Mama

What She Says About Herself or to Others	What She Does	My Inferences
"I never had an education myself." (line 90)	"I can work outside all day." (lines 34–35)	

Maggie

What She Says About Herself or to Others	What She Does	My Inferences
	"Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way. . . ." (lines 123–124)	

Dee (Wangero)

What She Says About Herself or to Others	What She Does	My Inferences
"Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" (line 286)		

Test Practice

Everyday Use

Improve your test-taking skills by completing the sample test item. Then, check your answer, and read the explanation in the right-hand column.

Sample Test Item	Explanation of the Correct Answer
<p>Which of the following words or phrases would Mama <i>not</i> use to describe herself?</p> <p>A hardworking B good at killing animals C fat D light-skinned</p>	<p>The correct answer is <i>D</i>.</p> <p>Mama says that she can work outside all day (<i>A</i>); that she can kill a hog (<i>B</i>); and that her fat keeps her warm (<i>C</i>). She also says that Dee would want her to be the color of an “uncooked barley pancake,” or light-skinned.</p>

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of each correct response.

- Mama remembers Dee’s behavior during the fire with—
 - gratitude
 - fear
 - anger
 - fondness
- What can you infer about Mama from these words of hers?

“[Dee] used to read to us without pity, forcing words, lies, other folks’ habits, whole lives upon us two . . .”

 - She is proud of Dee.
 - She appreciates Dee’s efforts.
 - She hates reading.
 - She resents Dee’s attitude.

- What **character trait** of Maggie’s is evident in the passage below?

“She can have them, Mama,’ she said, like somebody used to never winning anything.”

- She is defiant.
 - She accepts defeat easily.
 - She is easily irritated.
 - She is sulky.
- At the end of the story, Maggie no longer seems—
 - happy
 - content
 - fearful
 - critical



Reading Standard 3.4
 Determine characters’ traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy.

Test Practice

Everyday Use

Context Clues

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of the context clue that helps define the boldface word.



Reading Standard 1.3 (Grade 8 Review)

Use word meanings within the appropriate context, and show ability to verify those meanings by definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

- The TV host laughed at my **witty** tongue; then he broke for a commercial.
A TV host C broke
B laughed D commercial
- During the fire, her face had a look of **concentration**, or close attention.
F fire H look
G face J close attention
- When Dee and Jimmy were **courting**, they sometimes double-dated with their friends.
A Dee C double-dated
B Jimmy D friends
- Dee held the quilts **securely** in her arms, her hands tightly gripping the soft edges of the blanket.
F in her arms H soft edges
G tightly gripping J the blanket

Vocabulary in Context

DIRECTIONS: Complete the passage by filling in each blank with the correct word from the box. Not all words will be used.

Word Box

sidle
furtive
covering
oppress
doctrines
rifling

I saw my brother sneaking out of my room, his (1) _____ movements slow and silent. When he saw me the poor kid was flinching, practically (2) _____ under my gaze. "I was just looking at your CDs," he told me. At least he admitted he had been (3) _____ through my music collection. Although I was annoyed, I decided not to (4) _____ him with any "big-brother" lecture.



Before You Go On ...

Check your Standards Mastery at the back of this book.