

Activity Idea

Alice Walker

Recommended for Adults

Author Alice Walker had been an acclaimed poet, short story writer, and novelist since the late 1960s, long before her Pulitzer Prize-winning 1982 book *The Color Purple* and its 1985 film adaptation stirred emotions for its brutal portrayal of domestic violence. Prior to and since that novel captured attention and created controversy for its negative portrayal of the main African American male character, Walker has not skirted complex and painful topics. Her earliest volume of poetry was written in the immediate aftermath of an abortion, and her second novel, *Meridian*, was a tale spun about the heart of the civil rights movement. After *The Color Purple*, she confronted the practice of female genital mutilation in the 1992 novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, and in 1998 she expanded on the subject of female sexual repression in *By the Light of My Father's Smile*. Her works have mainly centered on experiences of female African Americans from the rural South and show a distinctly feminist approach, but they have a wide appeal across racial, cultural, and gender lines. Her 2013 books *The World Will Follow Joy: Turning Madness into Flowers* and *The Cushion in the Road: Meditation and Wandering as the Whole World Awakens to Being in Harm's Way* reflected her concerns for the course of humanity. Walker is specifically known for her feminist philosophy, although she prefers to call herself a "womanist," a term she coined to more fully express her appreciation of her own gender. In addition to her literary work, Walker has been an instructor and prolific lecturer and is a prominent intellectual who holds concern for an array of social causes. (Source: Gale in Context, Biography).

Resources:

Books:

Collected Essays, Prose, and Short Stories on Hoopla <https://tinyurl.com/3ckm9m92>

The Color Purple on Hoopla <https://tinyurl.com/4ebcpszd>

In Search of Our Mother's Gardens on Hoopla <https://tinyurl.com/w3synztr>

Films:

A Place of Rage: African American Women Who Revolutionized Society on Kanopy

<https://tinyurl.com/bdhwpjrc>

In Black and White: Six Profiles of African American Authors on Kanopy <https://tinyurl.com/mr2pceff>

Online Classes (a library card is required to access these resources):

Poetry 101 on Universal Class <https://tinyurl.com/5x8k4s39>

Creative Writing on Universal Class <https://tinyurl.com/mr587n23>



Research:

Biography of Alice Walker on Gale <https://tinyurl.com/4m7c72ny>

“Poetry as preface to fiction: Alice Walker’s recurrent apprenticeship” on Gale
<https://tinyurl.com/5fczsfm>

Activity:

1. Read Alice Walker’s short story “The Flowers” (included in the short story collection *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women*) on Hoopla (<https://tinyurl.com/3ckm9m92>). In the story, Myop enjoys walking in the property surrounding her home when she stumbles upon something tragic and surprising.

Write a short story no more than 2 pages in length where the main character engages in a daily task or activity which ends with a surprising discovery that changes the character’s world view. Use descriptive and concrete imagery to create a vivid scene.

2. Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* is an epistolary novel, meaning a novel written in letters, but it can also read more like a diary entry. Choose person you can confide in. Write a letter daily for one week to that person and see what story you begin to form based on what you include in the letters.