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APPENDICES

A. Background of Alice Walker

Alice Walker was born to sharecropper parents and went on to become a well-known novelist, essayist, and poet. Her 1982 novel *The Color Purple*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983 and was adapted for the big screen by Steven Spielberg, is her best-known work. Walker is also well-known for her activism. Alice Malsenior Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia, on February 9, 1944. She grew up poor as the youngest daughter of sharecroppers, with her mother working as a maid to support the family's eight children. Walker was shot in the right eye with a BB pellet while playing with two of her brothers when she was eight years old. Her damaged eye developed whitish scar tissue, and she became self-conscious of the visible mark. Walker withdrew from the world around her after the incident. In an interview published in *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*, she told John O'Brien, "For a long time, I thought I was very ugly and disfigured" (1993). "This made me shy and timid, and I often reacted angrily to unintended insults and slights." Reading and writing poetry provided her with solace.

Walker was able to attend Spelman College in Atlanta thanks to a scholarship. She transferred to Sarah Lawrence College in New York after that.



Walker went to Africa as part of a study-abroad program while at Sarah Lawrence. She earned her bachelor's degree in 1965, the same year she published her first short story. Walker worked as a social worker, teacher, and lecturer after college. She became involved in the civil rights movement, fighting for African- American equality. With the publication of her third novel, *The Color Purple*, in 1982, Walker's career as a writer took off. The novel, set in the early 1900s, explores the female African American experience through Celie's life and struggles. Celie is subjected to horrific abuse by her father and, later, by her husband. Walker won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction in 1983 for his compelling work. *The Color Purple*, directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey, and Danny Glover, was released in 1985, and it was based on Walker's story. The film was a critical success, receiving 11 Academy Award nominations, just like the novel. In her 1996 work *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult*, Walker explored her own feelings about the film. *The Color Purple* was made into a Broadway musical in 2005. Walker incorporated characters and their relationships from *The Color Purple* into two of her other novels: *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989) and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), which received widespread acclaim but also sparked debate due to its examination of female genital mutilation.

Source: <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/alice-walker-b-1944/>

B. Synopsis of *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker



The novel opens with a line of dialogue spoken by Alfonso, Celie's father:

"You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy." After this spoken line, Celie begins her letters, written to God. « I am I have always been a good girl.» Celie has been raped by her father while her mother was visiting the doctor in town, and Alfonso has told her that she can speak of these matters to none except God. After having so many children and now being ill, Celie's mother will not sleep with her husband, so Celie is forced to take her mother's place. When Celie has a child, her mother screams at her, asking who the father is. Celie can only answer that it is «God's.» Then the child goes missing, and Celie tells her mother that God took it, though she knows that Alfonso did. Celie is pregnant again when her mother dies. Her second child, a boy, also is taken and sold by Alfonso. Alfonso then looks interested in Celie's younger sister, Nettie, but Celie promises that she will protect her Nettie.

Alfonso gets remarried to a girl as young as Celie. Nettie meets a man in church who comes around every Sunday and who already has three children of his own. _____ from church because Alfonso still has his eye on her. Her stepmother produces a photograph of Shug for Celie, who thinks that Shug is the most beautiful woman ever.

Netie and Alfonso's new wife both come to realize what he is doing to Celie. Nettie is terrified and goes outside to vomit. Celie and the new wife cry indoors while Nettie tends to them. _____ comes again to ask for Nettie's hand, but Alfonso still refuses to let her go, saying that he can have Celie instead.



Even though she is ugly, Alfonso says, she will make the better wife. Eventually he agrees to marry Celie on the condition that he can have the cow he was promised as well. Nettie now understands that the only way she is going to escape is by working hard at her schoolwork. She teaches Celie while she can since Celie was taken out of school by her father when she first got pregnant.

Newly married, however, Celie will have to start domestic work at Mr. On her wedding day, Celie is chased by Mr. He has been disturbed after his mother died in his arms. He pelts his father's new wife with rocks, and Celie bleeds. Celie's new husband actually has four children. Celie spends hours detangling the girls' matted hair, and they cry and curse her.

That night as the marriage is consummated, Celie thinks of Nettie, hoping that she is safe. She then imagines Shug Avery, knowing that Shug has had sex with Mr. She talks to the girl's new mother in the store. Olivia's new mother is waiting for her husband, The Reverend Mr. _____, to pick them up, but he is not showing up, so Celie offers them a lift. The two women talk, and Celie asks how old the child is and what the lady and her husband call her.

They say that his previous wife, Annie Julia, was a bad housekeeper but Celie is doing a really good job. They gossip that he used to leave Annie Julia for days and run off with Shug, so he is lucky to be with Celie now. Celie also appears to them to be good with children, as well as being a good cook. One day, Sofia's strong sisters come to pick her up. Sofia leaves with her children and her sisters. Harpo considers getting Queen Honeybee Shug to sing, and she agrees. They use one of Shug's old

rite (Harpo's of plantation) on it.



Everyone thought that Shug had died, and all are pleased to see her performing again. Shug calls it Miss Celie's song. In an attempt to keep Shug with her, Celie tells her that Mr. _____ beats her when Shug is not there. This persuades Shug to stay until she is sure that he will no longer beat her. Shug and Mr. _____ When they discuss it, Shug tells Celie that she loves sleeping with him. Lying awake at night, listening to Shug and Mr. _____ One night when Shug is singing at Harpo's, Sofia arrives. Sofia actually has six children now. Harpo and Sofia begin to dance, but Harpo's new yellow-skinned girlfriend, Squeak, becomes unhappy.

She confronts them and Sofia quickly backs off, for she is not trying to steal Harpo back, but Harpo insists that they continue dancing. Squeak slaps Sofia, and Sofia punches her to the ground. Sofia and her boyfriend Buster leave. Celie soon learns that Sofia is in jail.

The story is that the Major and his wife, Millie, were passing Sofia, Buster, and the children when Millie stopped to play with the little ones. She thought they were very cute and clean and asked Sofia if she would like to work as her maid. Sofia replied, Hell no. The Major slapped Sofia's face, and Sofia fought him back until the police came, beat her up, and jailed her.

Sofia works in a prison laundry and is allowed to see her family twice a month for half an hour. _____, Squeak, Buster, Odessa, and Sofia's other sisters all wonder how Sofia will survive. While the others are suggesting what to do, Celie fantasizes about angels coming down and carrying Sofia home. They dress Squeak up and tell her to tell the warden that she is living with Sofia's husband



and that Sofia's husband says that Sofia is not being punished enough. She starts by singing Shug's songs and then makes songs up herself.

Shug and Mr. When they discuss it, Shug tells Celie that she loves sleeping with him. Celie tells her that she does not get any pleasure from him and never has from anyone. Shug cannot believe that Celie is thus, in her mind, a virgin. Shug teaches Celie to examine herself and tells her about which part of her body gives her pleasure .

Lying awake at night, listening to Shug and Mr. _____ together, Celie cries herself to sleep, feeling her button. One night when Shug is singing at Harpo's, Sofia arrives. Sofia actually has six children now. Harpo and Sofia begin to dance, but Harpo's new yellow-skinned girlfriend, Squeak, becomes unhappy.

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Sofia works in a prison laundry and is allowed to see her family twice a month for half an hour. When asked how she copes with doing what she is told, she says

inks of Celie and does what she must. Sofia works there for



twelve years, during which time she says that all she thinks about is murder. Celie, Shug, Mr. _____, Squeak, Buster, Odessa, and Sofia's other sisters all wonder how Sofia will survive.

While the others are suggesting what to do, Celie fantasizes about angels coming down and carrying Sofia home. They dress Squeak up and tell her to tell the warden that she is living with Sofia's husband and that Sofia's husband says that Sofia is not being punished enough. She starts by singing Shug's songs and then makes songs up herself. The children Sofia looks after are playing ball.

When the little boy drops the ball, he asks Sofia to pick it up for him. When the little boy, Billy, starts crying, his mother comes out to comfort her, but the little girl defends Sofia and says that it was Billy's fault. Sofia tells Celie stories about the white people she works for. One time when Sofia was giving Miss Millie driving lessons, Miss Millie decided to drive Sofia home to her family.

When they got there, Miss Millie's car broke down, so Sofia only ended up spending fifteen minutes with her children because she had to go to get the car fixed. Shug arrives back home for Christmas with a new man, her husband Grady. Shug puts her arm around her, and they both cry. Celie tells Shug that no one has ever loved her, but Shug replies that she loves Celie.

When the men return, Shug goes back to her own room. Celie receives a letter from Nettie. Nettie writes that she is not dead and that Albert has been keeping her letters from Celie. She also tells Celie that Olivia and her son are well. Celie is so infuriated that all she can think about is murdering Mr. Shug puts



her to bed, telling the others that Celie has a fever. That night Shug stays with Celie. Celie finds out that Albert has been storing the letters in his trunk. Together Shug and Celie start reading Nettie's letters in order.

Nettie's first letter tells Celie that she has to get away from Albert, for when Nettie left she was followed by him and he tried to rape her, but she fought him off. Because of what she did, he told her that she would never hear from Celie again and that Celie would never hear from her.

On the way she wrote almost every day, but when they docked she tore the letters up and dropped them into the water because she knew that Albert would keep them from her. The reason she is in Africa is that another missionary could not go. Nettie feels quite lonely, so lonely that she cannot even talk to God about it. When she does not write to Celie, she feels as bad as if she is failing to pray.

Nettie has gone to build a school in the middle of Africa. Sam and Corrine are happy. Their only sorrow is not having natural children, but now they have Olivia and Adam, Celie's children. Nettie adds that Celie's children are being brought up in love.

Nettie also says that she does not feel like a maid in the family. The parents teach her, and she teaches the children. Before she left, Nettie had read a lot of books about Africa. They first arrived in England and then, two months later, in Africa. Nettie tells her that it was awful that the Africans sold her own ancestors and wonders why blacks in America still love Africa. She asks Shug to make sure that Albert allows Shug to sleep with Celie from now on. Shug



suggests that they make Celie some pants because they would be easier to plow in. From then on they sew and read Nettie's letters every day.

In the following letters, we learn more from Nettie. An African named Joseph meets Nettie, Corinne, and the family at the ship and helps them unload their things from the ship onto a little boat. Then there is a four-day march to Olinka through the bush. When Nettie gets there, one of the first things she notices is the straw on the roof of the huts. The women in the village ask who Adam's and Olivia's parents are, saying that they look just like Nettie. Her daughter, Tashi, is not allowed to go to school, but she plays with Olivia. Olivia secretly teaches Tashi what she has learned. Olivia has not adapted very well to Africa.

They say Tashi is becoming like her aunt, who had to be sold because she refused the man chosen for her and would not bow to the chief. Nettie tells them that the world is changing and is no longer a world for just boys and men. We next learn that Nettie has been there five years. Road builders from a different tribe are approaching the Olinka village as they build their road.

As the road reaches the Olinka village, the tribe think it is for them, but the road continues to be built through the village, destroying crops and homes. Now the Olinka village essentially belongs to a rubber manufacturer in England and the Olinka people have to pay rent to use their own water. Nettie has to nurse Corrine, who has fallen ill with African fever. Corrine accuses Nettie of being the children's birth mother, with Samuel as father.



Corrine makes Samuel and Nettie swear on the Bible that they had never met before the day that Corrine and Samuel met Nettie together. Samuel admits that he thought the children were Nettie's as well. When Nettie arrived looking for work from them, he thought she really had come in search of the children. Samuel then tells Nettie how he got the children.

When she had the last two children, she was too sick to keep them, and these two were Olivia and Adam. After reading this news from Nettie, everything becomes very confused for Celie. Shug tells her she must come back to Tennessee with her. Celie now records her first letter to Nettie.

Celie wanted to confront the man they had called Pa, so she went to visit him. Celie and Shug drive up. Shug tells him who it is, and he invites them inside. Celie confronts him about not being their real father, and he simply says that now she knows.

Celie asks where her real father is buried, and he answers that her father is buried next to her mother. In a letter to Celie from Nettie, Nettie relates having told Corrine the truth about Olivia and Adam. When Corinne remembers meeting Celie in the cloth shop all those years ago, she starts to cry. After Corrine's death, Olivia starts to menstruate. They bury Corrine in the Olinka way. But the ritual for Olinka women is too bloody and painful for Nettie to allow Olivia to contemplate it. Samuel gives Nettie all of Corrine's clothes. In her letter to Nettie, Celie notes that she has stopped writing to God.

She tells Shug she has stopped because God has never done anything for her.

er she is a sinner. Shug asks Celie what God looks like, and Celie



replies that he is white with a white beard. Shug laughs, telling her that the white god with the white beard is the god in the white folks' white Bible. Shug instead believes that God is inside everyone, and only those who search for God inside find God. Her children now call Odessa (Mama) and Squeak (Little Mama). Shug declares that she is leaving with Grady and taking Celie with her. Celie accuses Mr. _____ of stealing Nettie's letters and says all the things to Harpo and Mr. _____ She is the girl Sofia used to look after. Sofia speaks to her.

Sofia finds that she has been called back to sort out the problems in the house. Celie moves to Memphis with Shug. Shug is away on tour a lot, and Celie makes pants. Finally, she makes the perfect pair of pants for Shug. Then Squeak wants a pair, and then Celie makes a pair for Odessa's husband Jack. Once Odessa asks for a pair, Celie starts selling pants for money. Celie is happy. Sofia gets her way and is one of the pallbearers.

At the funeral, no one acts like it is unusual, which makes Celie happy. After the funeral, they all go back to Harpo's. _____ lived like a pig once Celie left, and Harpo helped him back up again. Sofia once found them asleep together, Harpo holding his father in his arms.

On the voyage to England, they met the white missionary woman about whom they had heard years before. Wanting to get away from all the milk-fed upper-class men her parents hoped she would marry, the white lady had decided to become a missionary when she was young so that she could travel the world, and to this end she pretended to be holy. She sent them to England so that they



would be educated, and she looked after their children as her own grandchildren. The children try to find Tashi but cannot.

Tashi is hiding, ashamed of her scars and the initiation ceremony she endured. When Adam finds her with her scars, he turns around and leaves. Celie writes to Nettie that Pa is dead. The house now rightly belongs to her and Nettie. Celie has gone to look at the property and the dry goods store that goes with it. Celie is heartbroken because Shug is in love with somebody else. This young man, Germaine, is nineteen and plays in her band. Shug says the fling will only last six months, and after that she will try to rebuild their life together.

Shug leaves with Germaine. Celie now asserts that the only thing keeping her alive is watching Henrietta fight for her life. _____ while he is visiting Henrietta. _____ puts a letter directly in Celie's hand. It is a letter from the United States Department of Defense. It says that the ship Nettie and her «family» were traveling in was sunk by German mines. That day, all the letters Celie wrote to her come back unopened. Another letter comes from Nettie.

She recalls that it is nearly thirty years since she last heard from Celie. Nettie explains that God is different to her now. There is no mention of when she might return, which makes Celie sad. She asks Sofia about him, but Sofia says that she has her own problems «and when Reynolds grows up, he's going to be one of them».

Nettie's letter to Celie explains that after two and a half months, Adam and Tashi returned. Adam and Tashi have made up. Adam accepts her scars and has gotten some himself to show his support. The letter says that they will be home in



a few weeks. Shug goes to the State Department to find out about Nettie and her family. Harpo is happy to stay and look after Henrietta while Eleanor Jane cooks special yam food to help her in her illness. One day Shug returns. Celie's last diary entry is written to God.

She thanks him for bringing Nettie home to her. She imagines that Nettie really has come home and that everyone is hugging each other. There is so much detail that we are persuaded that Nettie really did come home. Celie's generation now is all old, and while the younger folks think the old folks do not know what is going on, they really do, and they feel as young as ever.

Source: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/c/the-color-purple/book-summary>

