

FAST FACTS

Author's Works and Themes: Alice Walker

"Author's Works and Themes: Alice Walker." Gale, 2019, www.gale.com.

Writings by Alice Walker

- *Once: Poems* (poetry) 1968
- *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (novel) 1970
- *Five Poems* (poetry) 1972
- *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* (novel) 1973
- *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems* (poetry) 1973
- *Langston Hughes: American Poet* (juvenilia) 1974; revised edition, 2002
- *Meridian* (novel) 1976
- *Goodnight, Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning* (poetry) 1979
- *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (short stories) 1981
- *The Color Purple* (novel) 1982
- *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (nonfiction) 1983
- *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful* (poetry) 1984
- *Living by the Word: Selected Writings, 1973-1987* (nonfiction) 1988
- *The Temple of My Familiar* (novel) 1989
- *Finding the Green Stone* (juvenilia) 1991
- *Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems, 1965-1990 Complete* (poetry) 1991
- *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (novel) 1992
- *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* [with Pratibha Parmar] (nonfiction) 1993
- *Everyday Use* (novel) 1994
- *Alice Walker Banned* (nonfiction) 1996
- *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult* (memoir) 1996
- *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism* (nonfiction) 1997
- *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (novel) 1998
- *Dreads: Sacred Rites of the Natural Hair Revolution* [with Francesco Mastalia and Alfonse Pagano] (nonfiction) 1999
- *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart* (novel) 2000
- *Sent to Earth: A Message from the Grandmother Spirit: After the Attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon* (nonfiction) 2001
- *A Poem Traveled Down My Arm: Poem and Drawings* (poetry) 2002
- *Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth: New Poems* (poetry) 2003
- *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* (novel) 2004

- *Letters of Love and Hope: The Story of the Cuban Five* (nonfiction) 2005
- *There Is a Flower at the Tip of My Nose Smelling Me* (juvenilia) 2006
- *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness: Meditations* (essays) 2006
- *Why War Is Never a Good Idea* (juvenilia) 2007
- *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing* (poetry) 2010
- *Overcoming Speechlessness: A Poet Encounters the Horror in Rwanda, Eastern Congo, and Palestine/Israel* (nonfiction) 2010

Major Themes

The Color Purple dramatically underscores the oppression black women have experienced throughout history in the rural South in America. Following the Civil War, most black Americans remained disenfranchised and were typically viewed as less than human by many members of white society. Women were also regarded as less important than men--both black and white--making black women doubly disadvantaged. Black women of the era were often treated as slaves or as property, even by male members of their own families. In *The Color Purple*, Celie is passed on from Pa to Mr. ----- without any regard for her own desires. She constantly struggles to forge her own self-identity and to not accept the subservient role that society has ascribed to her. In the course of the novel, Sophia becomes Celie's first role model of a black woman who does not allow the men surrounding her to limit her lifestyle. Additionally, the novel examines themes of sisterhood and methods of sharing among women in their quest for political, sexual, and racial equality. Celie is able to overcome her many hardships because of the love and solidarity she receives from women like Nettie, Sophia, and Shug Avery. By seeing herself as a member of a community, Celie develops a sense of identity and realizes new opportunities in her life. When Shug stops Celie from killing Mr. -----, Celie is inspired to find a new outlet for her passion and creativity. This leads to the creation of Celie's business, which offers her more personal and financial freedom. Spiritual fulfillment is also a recurring theme in *The Color Purple*. The novel opens with Celie writing to God, an anonymous all-knowing male creator figure. Celie keeps asking for a sign from God to reveal his presence and lift her many burdens, but no signs ever appear. As the story progresses, Celie stops writing to God and begins writing to her sister Nettie. Through her relationship with Nettie and with the other black women in her life, Celie is able to see tangible signs of hope and spirituality. Walker portrays the typical archetype of the male Christian God as aloof and absent in *The Color Purple*, while Celie's community of friends and family is portrayed as caring and emotionally nourishing.

Paper Topics

- Examine the impact that racism and misogyny have on the women in *The Color Purple*.
- Explore the concept of sisterhood as it is described in *The Color Purple*. How do the female characters support each other and contribute to building a community?