

Voices of Resistance: Stylistic Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple"

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Abstract:

The groundbreaking work "The Color Purple" by Alice Walker successfully gives voice to the downtrodden. The book chronicles African-American women's battles against poverty, racism, and sexism. Readers are given a message of empowerment, resistance, and tenacity by Walker's deft use of language and a variety of literary devices, which truly portray the voices and experiences of her characters. The aim of the study is to do a thorough stylistic analysis of all the different rhetorical strategies employed by Walker in "The Color Purple". In order to identify and classify these tactics, as well as their context and impact on the reader's comprehension and perception of the text, the research uses a qualitative methodology to analyse Alice Walker's book. The study's conclusions suggest that the vivid account of black women's lives in the American South in the early 20th century found in Alice Walker's "The Colour Purple". To highlight the struggles against injustice and emancipation, the novel makes use of rhetorical tropes including allusion, imagery, and rhetorical questions. Walker's utilization of language, accent, and syntax, encompassing African-American Vernacular English and Southern dialects, enhances the richness and authenticity of the narrative. The novel prompts readers to confront injustice and strive for a fairer society.

Keywords: rhetorical devices, African American women, oppressed women, resistance, oppression, injustice

الخلاصة

رواية "اللون البنفسجي" للكاتبة أليس ووكر هي رائعة أدبية مبتكرة تعزز بقوة أصوات الأفراد المظلومين. تصوّر الرواية صراعات النساء الأمريكيات من أصل أفريقي وهم يتغلبن على العنصرية والتمييز الجنسي والفقر. يأتي احتراف ووكر في استخدام اللغة ومختلف التقنيات الأدبية لتسجيل أصوات شخصياتها بصدق، مما يقدم رسالة عن التمكين والمقاومة والمثابرة للقراء. تهدف الدراسة إلى إجراء تحليل أسلوبى شامل للأساليب البلاغية المختلفة المستخدمة من قبل أليس ووكر في روايتها "اللون الأرجواني". تعتمد الدراسة نهجاً كميّاً لفحص رواية أليس ووكر، مع التركيز على الطرق البلاغية والتقنيات للتعرف عليها وتصنيفها، جنباً إلى جنب مع سياقه أو تأثيرها على فهم القارئ وتفسير النص. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن رواية "اللون البنفسجي" لأليس ووكر هي سرد مقنع يغوص في تجارب النساء الأفروأمريكيات في جنوب الولايات المتحدة في بداية القرن العشرين. تستخدم الرواية الأساليب البلاغية مثل الإشارة، والصورة، والأسئلة البلاغية لتسليط الضوء على معارك الظلم والتحرر. يعزز استخدام ووكر للغة، والكنة، والصياغة، بما في ذلك الإنجليزية الأفروأمريكية العامية واللهجات الجنوبية، غنى وأصالة السرد. تحث الرواية القراء على مواجهة الظلم والسعي نحو مجتمع أكثر عدلاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية : أساليب بلاغية، نساء أمريكيات من أصل أفريقي، نساء مظلومات، مقاومة، قمع، ظلم

1. Introduction

Considered a masterpiece, "The Color Purple" explores the suffering of black women in societal contexts. Its strength lies in how the numerous characters, led by protagonist Celie, are vividly portrayed. Walker highlights sexual, racial, and political themes while shedding light on women's struggles for survival. Her sincere intention in writing this novel is to empower black women by providing them with a voice and a path to liberation. Walker guides us through the evolution of her central character, Celie, a poor, uneducated black woman from the South who endured childhood sexual abuse, endured as a submissive wife, and ultimately found her freedom (Singh and Kaur, 2023:175).

Voices of oppressed people resound powerfully in Alice Walker's groundbreaking novel "The Colour Purple," offering a message of empowerment, resistance, and perseverance. The book, which is set in the South of the United States in the early 20th century, highlights the difficulties African-American women have in overcoming racism, sexism, and poverty. Walker's writing employs

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a variety of linguistic techniques to authentically capture the voices and experiences of her characters. This study delves into how "The Color Purple" symbolizes the courage and strength of those who resist oppressive systems through a detailed stylistic analysis of Walker's rhetorical techniques. The study seeks to do a thorough examination of the numerous rhetorical devices used by Alice Walker in her well-known book "The Color Purple." The analysis particularly concentrates on the ways in which these strategies are applied to highlight the novel's central themes of resilience, empowerment, and resistance. This research aims to offer readers a fuller grasp of how Walker's literary devices contribute to the overall effect and meaning of the novel by closely examining the author's writing skills.

2. The aim of the Study:

The aim of this study is to present a thorough investigation and detailed evaluation of the many rhetorical devices employed by Alice Walker in "The Color Purple." The study is especially concerned with looking at how these rhetorical strategies are applied to highlight the story's major themes of resistance, empowerment, and resilience. By examining the minute details of the author's writing processes, this research aims providing readers with insightful understanding of Walker's literary techniques and how they impact the novel's ultimate effect and meaning.

3. Literature Review

Although "The Color Purple" has been extensively studied, most analyses have focused solely on the themes of race, gender, and sexuality presented in the novel. Little attention has been given to the novel's rhetorical elements. However, some earlier studies have begun to explore the rhetorical intricacies of Walker's work, and this investigation builds upon that foundation.

Campbell (2020) shows that Alice Walker challenges the prevailing culture, negotiates power, shapes the identities of her characters, and broadens the spectrum of voices heard in American literature through the use of linguistic variance. From a linguistic perspective, a literary text can greatly benefit from an emphasis on the literary language and rich linguistic variation. Critical approaches like feminist criticism and queer theory are increasingly focusing on intersectionality, expanding the perspectives of literary critics. Stylistics is a development that can enhance the skill set of literary critics. While some of the

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arguments regarding *The Color Purple* are not new, they are rarely discussed from a linguistic viewpoint due to the traditional separation between literary criticism and linguistic studies.

Qudsia (2019) states that, in Walker's novel "The Color Purple", language symbolizes the growth of female characters. The main character initially portrayed as weak, shows linguistic and personal development. This illustrates the link between language and identity. Walker delves into themes of language and identity, relevant not only to Black Americans but also to individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, regardless of gender. Some key aspects of today's literary world and culture that require attention are the language differences based on an individual's background and surroundings, societal norms, the dynamic nature of people, and the struggle for individual rights.

Chkair (2016) states that by employing linguistic strategies specific to her ethnic backgrounds, Walker actively resists the dominant group through her writing. Their intentional language use helps them establish a unique minority identity within their political and historical narratives, giving voice to a previously silenced population. These minority cultures, along with many others, adopt a variety of linguistic strategies in their writing as a means of using language as a weapon against the dominant group. These linguistic techniques allow for the development of an expressive and creative language that honours their individual ethnicities and communicates in an organic way the social and political problems and tribulations faced by minorities. Additionally, she offers the voiceless; a lively voice that communicates a fact that the dominant group should pay attention to. Walker constructs a distinct and cohesive minority identity inside her historical and political narratives by employing this particular language technique.

Raghunath and Selvan (2014) examines Alice Walker's use of language as a symbol in *The Color Purple*. Alice Walker is a skilled writer who skillfully creates distinct character traits for her characters in *The Color Purple* using language choice, diction, and tone, among other things. Language also conveys the atmosphere of regional traits, emotional expressions, and Southern American ideas. Because of the author's inventive use of language, readers will find *The Color Purple*, an epistolary novel, to be both interesting and challenging to read. The author of this novel uses language as a symbol to show how her female characters change from being oppressed to being powerful. Their linguistic usage

also expands as they mature. As a result, language actively contributes to the rhythm and topic of Alice Walker's books.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Stylistics

The field of stylistics originated in the mid-20th century as a response to the perceived ambiguity and impressionistic nature of literary criticism. Although some scholars share certain principles, stylistics is interpreted in various ways: Leech & Short (2007: 11) define stylistics as the study of style, focusing on analyzing how language is used rather than for its own sake. Widdowson (1975: 3-4) asserts that stylistics addresses literary discourse from a language perspective. He continues by saying that stylistics is different from both linguistics and literary criticism, but that both have a common ground position that acts as a bridge between them. Furthermore, stylistics, according to him, is a field of mediation between two disciplines. It seeks to show how stylistics is a combination of literary criticism and linguistics, where literary criticism includes the reader's subjective, intuitive evaluation and linguistics offers ways of describing that elicit a reaction from the reader.

Language is crucial in stylistics, according to Simpson (2004:3), as a means of textual elucidation. The different levels, patterns, and forms that make up linguistic structure are vital clues to the text's intent, which is why stylisticians place such importance on language. The discourse role of the text also serves as a gateway to its interpretation. While not always the case, linguistic elements can sometimes assist readers in grasping the document's meaning. Stylistic analysis methods can illuminate the comprehension of language structure and function.

4.2. Rhetorical strategies

The art of persuading others effectively through language is referred to as rhetoric. To influence someone's viewpoints and goals, rhetoric relies primarily on the power of language to convince (Baker & Ellece, 2011:8). Fahnestock (2005:215) also defines it as the crafting and persuasion of texts, where the "standards for language selections were significantly functional and tailored to the audience." Initially, rhetoric focused on "investigating and analyzing the impacts of language" and how specific linguistic choices can render arguments engaging and compelling (Giovanelli & Mason, 2018: 3). It has its origins in Aristotle's philosophy, which views rhetoric as "an essential element of philosophical discourse"

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Rhetoric is the art of persuasion using innovative techniques, employing various devices to manipulate sentence structure, also known as persuasive devices. Rhetorical devices, or figures of speech, involve using words in special, unusual ways to add clarity, interest, and power to writing. They provide mental frameworks for readers to understand the text's meaning more easily. Using rhetorical techniques can aid to make arguments and successfully communicate meaning and purpose. Whether the technique is a simple repetition or an artful simile, the author's ideas become clear and understandable. Users of rhetorical tactics have a variety of alternatives and means of communicating a message or goal (Hassan, 2024:3).

There are various levels at which rhetorical devices can be utilized, such as words, paragraphs, and sentences. These tools are skillfully designed and elucidated in Harris' (2018) book, where he thoroughly acknowledges and instructs on their effective application. The following is an overview of these devices:

1. Balance 2. Emphasis 3. Transition 4. Clarity 5. Syntax 6. Figurative language 7. Rhetorical Questions

4.3. Background of "The Color Purple"

When "The Color Purple" was first published, America was going through a lot of upheaval. During the writing of the book, several new laws pertaining to former slaves in America were being drafted and passed. Slavery was outlawed by the amendment, which made it official as of 1619. In what should have been a joyful period, black Americans continued to experience significant social inequity in comparison to white Americans even after its abolition. The Civil Rights Movement then became a powerful political and social force that worked to counteract the extreme inequality of that time period. The Color Purple portrays the exploitation and suffering of the African- American community and women in America. The cultural and artistic traditions of her background are central to the narrative. It begins by addressing and then delving into the problems that are ultimately overcome through friendship, sisterhood, and letter writing. The author presents Celie as a black woman facing significant oppression and adversity, as she strives to liberate herself and emerge as an independent black woman. Walker writes on topics that resonate with her personal experiences as a black woman in a patriarchal white culture. The novel's dominant gender structure has been brought into harmony by the notion of patriarchal oppression. The term "de-masculinization" refers to the way black males oppress black women, as there has

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been little focus on the persecution, mistreatment, and oppression of black women throughout slavery (Jubair 2018:938).

Women were often in servitude due to the patriarchal system prevalent in society. The main factor upholding women's subjugation is the involvement of both men and women in this system. Walker discusses her experiences as a black woman in a mostly white culture, shedding light on the suffering women endure and showing how to break free from victimhood. Alice Walker demonstrates the gradual triumph of women over patriarchy, oppression, and gender roles through the stories of African women who faced slavery, domination, sexism, and racism. The character Celie, a resilient and independent woman, embodies the journey towards a more meaningful and liberated life. Walker skillfully uses Celie as a symbol of both personal struggles and the larger societal challenges of repression and inequality. (Adventena & Jayakanth 2022:30).

5. Method

The research delves into the finer points of rhetorical strategies and techniques, such as discourse analysis and close reading, using a qualitative methodology. The researcher will analyse the devices that show women's resistance to injustice in the novel such as **Epistolary structure, Foreshadowing, Irony, Symbolism, Allusion, Rhetorical Questions, Language and Dialect, and Syntax**. The study also looks at the context in which these rhetorical strategies are used and how they affect the character development and topic matter examination. Using this method, the study aims to illuminate the minute details in the text's language and how they affect the reader's comprehension and perception of the piece. To recognise and evaluate Alice Walker's rhetorical techniques, a methodical reading of a few chosen chapters of the novel is required for the analytical process. **See the following diagram**

6. Data analysis and Discussion

The Color Purple examines how social restrictions and prejudice affect black women's ability to express themselves in the rural South. Throughout the book, Alice Walker deftly uses a variety of rhetorical devices to give readers a better understanding of Celie, the protagonist's complex inner world. Walker explores Celie's deepest feelings and ideas in her writing, illuminating the intricacies of her personality and the difficulties she encounters.

6.1. Epistolary structure

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"The Color Purple" is an epistolary novel, where the narrative unfolds through correspondence between fictional characters. This term can also include novels that mix diary entries and newspaper clippings with the letters, or even novels created from documents without letters (Beebee, 1990:3). Novels and prose literature, especially in 19th century America, utilized the epistolary form as a key literary device. This form, known as an epistolary novel, comprises diverse letters or epistles. It is crucial for showcasing how writers interact with the society of their time, blending characters' emotions into the plot's fabric. Epistolary novels present narratives authentically, enhancing their storytelling impact and posing insightful questions to the audience. These works are esteemed as significant additions to American prose fiction (Asci, 2020:12).

Two characters, Celie and Nettie, use letters to convey the themes in the novel. Two young African-American sisters play the main roles. One may argue that Walker wanted to give a firsthand account of sexual oppression in her book. She gets assistance from Celie, the novel's narrator, whose lack of knowledge of current events highlights her propensity to think in terms of literary categories that are more personal than political. Celie confides in God through letters about a secret she can never share because her abuser warned her, "*You better not ever tell anybody but God. It'd kill your mammy*" (Walker, 2003: 3). By exposing readers to dual brutality affecting both body and mind, Walker horrifies them. Celie constantly endures emotional suffering from Albert, who dehumanizes her and disregards her feelings.

Walker expresses her characters' want to flee their harsh surroundings through letter writing. The epistolary novel contains three different kinds of letters: Nettie's letters to Celie, Celie's letters to her sister, and letters from God (Talif & Sedehi, 2014:430). The work's structure may aid readers in following the storyline even though the novel makes less use of logos.

Table (1) : Epistolary in Alice Walker's "The Colour Purple"

Examples of epistolary	Explanation
Celie's letters to God	The novel mostly consists of letters from Celie to God, allowing the reader to delve into her deepest thoughts and emotions.
Nettie's letters to Celie	Nettie's letters detail her life and experiences in Africa, providing a unique perspective.
Celie's letters to Nettie	Later letters exchanged between Celie and Nettie depict Celie's growing self-awareness and the evolution of their sisterly relationship.

6.2. Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a technique used to hint at events that have not yet happened or will occur later in a work. It can be used both overtly and subtly, often signaling or suggesting that something is going to happen before it actually does. The subsequent disclosure of Celie's children's whereabouts is hinted at by her early pregnancies. The fact that Nettie is leaving home foreshadows the difficulties she will encounter and the significance of her correspondence with Celie.

There are various hints and revelations scattered throughout the Novel that foreshadow Celie's eventual understanding of her own worth, strength, and autonomy. These include her growing sense of self-esteem, her artistic expression through her sewing of trousers, and her intimate connection with Shug. "*cause she the only one you ever love, she say, sides me.*" (Walker, 2003: 123).

Alice Walker effectively uses foreshadowing in "The Color Purple" to enrich the narrative, explore character development, and immerse readers in Celie's journey toward self-discovery and liberation.

6.3. Irony

Irony is a rhetorical device in which words are employed to suggest something quite different from what they actually imply. Verbal irony is examined as a trope in classical rhetoric, which is a statement that deviates from its literal meaning in one of several accepted ways. It frequently conveys irony, emphasis, or sarcasm.

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The difference between what seems to be happening and what is actually happening is highlighted by irony (Wilson and Sperber, 2012:123)

Celie undergoes a significant transformation from a suppressed and submissive young woman to a confident and self-reliant individual throughout the novel:

"You a lowdown dog is what's wrong." I say. 'It's time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body is just the welcome mat I need... But Nettie and my children coming home soon' (Walker, 1982: 202).

Ironically, Celie's resilience and inner strength stem from the adversity and harshness she faces. Ultimately, her suffering acts as a catalyst for her liberation.

Celie is left ignorant and forced into domestic labour, while her sister Nettie completes formal schooling and goes on to serve as a missionary in Africa. The irony is that Celie eventually experiences the greatest amount of personal development and self-discovery, even in spite of Nettie's education and global exposure.

Shug Avery, a major character in the novel, rejects social norms and has a liberal attitude towards sexuality, which challenges established moral standards *"That's when I notice Shug sometimes talk and act like a man."* (Walker, 1982: 81). Shug, though seen by the community as morally tainted, is shown to be a kind and kind person who defies strict societal conventions.

The use of irony in "The Color Purple" highlights the human spirit's resiliency in the face of injustice, challenges social conventions and expectations, and sheds light on the complexity of the human experience.

6.4. Symbolism (Pants)

Celie transforms from an oppressed woman into a human when she eventually escapes Mr. __ and patriarchal society. Pants represent her metamorphosis into a fully realised, unrepressed woman. Celie never wore pants for the most of her life as she believed they were only appropriate for males, as did the culture in which she lived. Gender prejudices are broken when Celie chooses to not only wear trousers but also launch a profitable company producing pants for both men and women. Therefore, pants represent both economic and sexism- and patriarchy-free liberty:

*"I got pants now in every color and size under the sun.
Since us started making pants down home, I aint been able*

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to stop. I change the cloth, I change the print, I change the waist, I change the pocket. I change the hem, I change the fullness of the leg” (Walker, 1982: 211).

Additionally, Celie sews pants for Nettie, her sister. As can be seen in the paragraphs that follow, Celie makes Nettie's pants suitable for her lifestyle as a missionary since she is aware that Nettie is far away in a hot region:

“Nettie, I am making some pants for you to beat the heat in Africa. Soft, white, thin. Drawstring waist. You won't ever have to feel too hot and overdress again. I plan to make them by hand. Every Stitch I sew will be a kiss” (Walker, 1982: 214).

6.5. Allusion

The term "allusion" is a literary device where an author refers to or incorporates elements from past literary, artistic, historical, or cultural works (Irwin, 2001:287). Numerous biblical stories, characters, and themes are referenced throughout the novel. For instance, in a discussion between Celie and Sofia regarding anger, Celie remembers how, in her youth, the Bible emphasized the importance of honoring one's parents. As a result, she believed that expressing anger towards them meant going against the Bible and showing them disrespect, leading to her feeling physically unwell:

“I think. I can't even remember the last time I felt mad, I say. I used to git mad at my mammy cause she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick she is. Couldn't stay mad at her. Couldn't be mad at my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what. Then after while every time I got mad, or start to feel mad, I got sick. Felt like throwing up. Terrible feeling. Then I start to feel nothing at all.” (Walker, 1982: 41-42)

Shug and Celie discuss how the Bible compares Jesus' hair to that of a lamb. However, most people associate Jesus with long, somewhat curled hair, not an afro. This biblical reference highlights how white people have transformed God into an image of themselves rather than the one portrayed in the Bible:

“Nettie say somewhere in the bible it say Jesus' hair was like lamb's wool, I say.... Well, say Shug, if he came to any of these churches we talking about he's have to have it

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conked before anybody paid him any attention. The last thing niggers want to think about they God is that his hair kinky. That's the truth, I say..... Ain't no way to read the bible and not think God white, she say. Then she sigh. When I found out I thought God was white, and a man, I lost interest. You mad cause he don't seem to listen to your prayers. Humph! Do the mayor listen to anything colored say?" (Walker, 1982:194-195)

Shug persuades Celie about God. Naturally, he wouldn't heed an African American woman if she views him as the stereotypical white male. No man of color would at that time. However, she can rekindle her faith if she starts to cherish herself and perceives God as a representation of love.

6.6. Rhetorical Questions

Information-seeking questions, rhetorical questions (RQ), examination questions, and indirect requests are the four categories of inquiries based on their purpose and speakers' intents. Informational inquiries (RQs) are asked with the purpose of providing information rather than eliciting a response. Depending on the type of reaction they provoke (Špago, 2016:103).

Rhetorical questions are employed by Alice Walker in "The Color Purple" to draw attention to the characters' inner conflicts, question accepted wisdom, and elicit feelings. Throughout the novel, the characters are portrayed as grappling with complex and nuanced issues surrounding their individual identities and the value they place on themselves. These struggles are a recurring theme that adds depth and richness to the story, highlighting the human experience of navigating the complexities of self-discovery and self-worth "*Why any woman give a shit what people think is a mystery to me*" (Walker, 1982: 230). This rhetorical question invites readers to reflect on the significance of self-acceptance while challenging the expectations society places on women.

Rhetorical questions were also used to challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Shug shows Celie the reviving and uplifting power of storytelling when he declares that she is "still a virgin" since she has never had a fulfilling sexual life. Shug also gives Celie a fresh perspective on religion, encouraging her to accept a non-conventional, non-patriarchal conception of God.

6.7. Language and Dialect

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African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a common language spoken by characters, especially those from rural or Southern origins. Because of this dialect, which symbolises the linguistic and cultural heritage of African Americans, the dialects of the characters seem more authentic. For example, in her (AAVE) letters to God, Celie mimics the rhythm and cadence of her speech by using phonetic spelling and grammatical structures.

The Southern US setting of the text is reflected in the accents and colloquialisms used by the characters. This comprises grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary that are specific to a certain area. For instance, the characters could use "y'all" and "ain't," which are Southern expressions and intonations. Because of their upbringing and life experiences, each character in the book has a unique voice. Through their speech and narrative, readers are able to identify distinctions in personality, social class, and educational attainment. Celie's basic, illiterate language, for instance, is a reflection of her challenging background and scant education. Characters like Shug Avery or Sofia, on the other hand, express themselves with refinement and confidence.

6.8. Syntax

The syntax of the novel regularly changes to account for shifts in the narrative voice or point of view. For example, when the narrative moves from Celie's letters to third-person narration, the syntax may become increasingly complex and formal, reflecting the omniscient narrator's broader perspective.

The distinctive grammar used in Celie's letters to God is a reflection of her illiterate background and the constraints placed on her by her violent childhood. Her lack of formal education and vocal suppression are evident in the short, broken, and punctuation-free phrases she frequently uses.:

"Dear God, he beat me today." (Walker, 1982:5)

Walker writes in a style reminiscent of a stream of consciousness, with lines that flow naturally from one idea to the next. Readers may experience the characters' deepest feelings and thoughts in real time thanks to this approach.

The syntax in "The Color Purple" deepens characterization, conveys emotions, and enhances the authenticity and impact of the narrative. Through skillful manipulation of sentence structure and syntax, Alice Walker creates a rich and immersive reading experience that captures the voices and experiences of her characters.

7. Conclusion

Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" is a potent story that uses a variety of rhetorical and artistic devices to portray themes of perseverance, empowerment, and resistance. Walker examines black women's lives in the early 20th century Southern United States via the perspectives of its protagonists, stressing their fights against injustice and quests for emancipation.

Walker uses rhetorical devices including allusion, and rhetorical questions to give the Novel a deeper thematic focus. The story is brought to life with striking visuals that captures the awful realities of racism, sexism, and abuse in addition as the lovely, resolute, and bonding moments. Allusions to biblical stories give the story more depth and perspective, while rhetorical questions challenge social norms and provoke thought.

Walker's use of vocabulary, accent, and grammar adds stylistic depth and authenticity to the tale. Among the different linguistic types employed in the book are Southern dialects and African American Vernacular English (AAVE), which reflect the characters' diverse upbringings and experiences. Through their dialogue and story, readers are able to comprehend the characters' deepest thoughts, emotions, and points of view, allowing for a detailed portrayal of their experiences.

Walker gives voice to the disadvantaged and highlights the strength and perseverance of African American women in order to inspire readers to confront injustice and fight towards a more fair and equitable society. She creates a timeless work of literature that is readable by everyone by doing this.

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