

BIOGRAPHY

ALICE WALKER (1944-)

Alice Malsenoir Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia, on February 1944, the eight and last child of Willie Lee and Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker. Among her ancestor she counts a person born into slavery lives over 1020 years, a Cherokee great-grand mother, and a slave-owner who raped her great-great-grandmother when she was only eleven. Like most Southern rural American families in the first half of century, Walker's family was caught up in the sharecropping system, slavery. Parents and children worked the fields, cramped, and battered housing, a few hundred dollars a year. For the adults in that community where Walker grew up, education was a route of escape from poverty that they could provide for the next generation.

When Walker was eight years old, accidentally, a pellet one of her brother shout from BB gun struck her in the right eye, blinding it leaving a large scar. At fourteen, her brother and his wife in Boston help Meridian to get simple surgery that

removes the scar, leaving only a small bluish crater. With the rehabilitation scholarship for which her blind eye qualified her and seventy-five dollars collected by neighbors, she enters Spelman College in the Atlanta at the age of seventeen. It was accomplished oldest college for black women. Walker transferred to Sarah Laurens, an elite, mostly white women's college in Bronxville, New York. She felt Spelman limited the political activism that she joined. She committed an abortion in her senior year. Emerging from her despair, she wrote poems steadily for a week that finally were published as Walker's first book once in 1968.

After graduating in 1965, she works for the New York City Welfare Department to become a writer. Her first essay on the civil right movement won the American Scholars Essay Contest in 1960. She married Melvyn Leventhal, a civil right attorney and conscientious objector to the Vietnam war in 1967, and they moved to Mississippi. She worked on voter registration, taught black history to have start teachers, and served as writer-in-residence at Jackson State and then Tugaloo College. She finished her first novel, *The Life of Grange Copeland*, days before her daughter, Rebecca Grant Rosental, was born. Then they moved to Boston. Her second collection of poems, *Revolutionary Pentunias* (1973), received a National Book Award nomination and won the Lilian Smith Award of the Southern Regional Council. The following years, her first collection of short-stories, *In Love in Trouble* (1973), received The Rosenthal Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1974 her tribute to the poet Langston Hughes, a biography for

children was published. Walker moved to Brooklyn, New York, in 1974 and became a contributing of *Ms.* In 1976 she published her second novel, *Meridian*.

Walker and Lenenthal were divorced in 1970. Walker moved to Northern California in 1979. She published her edition of Zora Neale Houston's writings, 1979; her third book of poems, *Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning* (1979); and her second collections of stories, *You Can't Keep a Woman Down* (1981). Walker's third novel, *The Color Purple* was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award when it was published in 1982, received both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award, and the film was made. Her important first collection of "womanish essays," *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* was published in 1983. Furthermore her fourth book of poems was *Horses Make Landscape More Beautiful* (1984), her second volume of essays was *Living by the Word* (1988), her fourth novel was *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989).

Throughout the 1980s Walker extensively, lectured and read her work at universities and conferences, and joined the delegation to other countries. She also appeared and spoke at political gatherings, such as during Nelson and Winnie Mandela's visit to San Francisco in 1990.

SYNOPSIS

Meridian is a young black woman of seventeen years old. In her school, she is categorized as a smart student. Unfortunately, she has to drop out from high school because she is pregnant and getting married with her school friend Eddie. He is luckier than Meridian since he can still continue his study.

Meridian's father, Mr. Hill, is a school teacher as well as her mother. Yet, he faces the life pessimistically since his only land that he got from his parents is taken by the government, the whites. The land is turned to be a public park, Sacred Serpent Park, which is not opened for the colored. Mrs. Hill, Meridian's mother has to give up her career as a teacher since she has children. When she wants to have her job again since her children have grown-up, she cannot deal with the new development. She fails to be a teacher again and that is the time she turns to be strange and ignorant.

In her marriage, Meridian faces many problems until one day Eddie leaves her and the baby. Meridian does not want to stay at home, she joins the local movement after seeing the bombing of the black people house. Then, from her friend in the movement she knows that she has a chance to enter Saxon College.

Although she does not get her mother's approval, she insists on going and leaving her son away.

Meridian really enjoys her first year in Saxon College, she makes friends and joins the Atlanta movement. She is just like other students, studying and following the demonstrations held by the revolution movement. However she cannot keep her happiness longer, she starts to get recurring nightmares and bad headache. She dreams of a boy who is crying and calling her every night and everywhere, even when she is awake. She also has a problem with her friends in revolution since she refuses to declare that she will kill for the revolution. Her pain becomes more serious and her body is frailer.

Fortunately, Meridian is able to survive. After graduating from college, she goes to small towns in the South. She is looking for any job and helping to take care of the children when their parents work in the plantation or in the white's kitchen. She teaches them and leads them in a play. Besides, she also tries to ask and to pursue the black people to vote.