

Homework Exercise: Walker

1. Why does Walker start her narrative at age 2 ½? What are the problems with writing about such early memories? Do you trust Walker as a narrator?
2. How does Walker portray herself before and after the incident? In what ways does her writer's voice change after the incident? What do you think of her use of italics?
3. What is Walker saying about gender, about the ways in which femininity and masculinity were defined in her family? How does the question of race-- in the American South in the 1940s and 50s—enter this story?
4. Why does Walker jump backward and forward in time? What would it have been like if this was a more linear narrative? What is she saying about the nature of trauma? What is the most important trauma in the essay?
5. Why does she include a poem in the essay? Is this choice an effective one?
6. Compare the introduction and conclusion. Why does Walker end this essay in the way that she does? What is the primary meaning of this essay? In what other directions might Walker have taken this piece?

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