

A close-up, overlapping photograph of three Black women's faces. The woman on the left has her hair in braids and is looking slightly to the right. The woman in the center has her eyes closed and is looking upwards. The woman on the right is looking directly at the camera. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting their skin tones and features.

# WOMEN

By Alice Walker

Compiled by Caitlinjessica



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON POET:

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- **Alice Walker** wrote this poem for her mother.
- She speaks about how the women of the previous generation (her mother's generation) were strong and determined despite coming from poor and illiterate backgrounds.
- These women had to face prejudice because of their skin colour but were determined to **fight** for equality and **an education for their children**.
- She conveys a feeling of **deep respect** and **admiration** for the women.

# EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

The poem consists of **26 lines**.

It has a **free verse** rhyme scheme.

It has a tone of **admiration and deep respect**.

The diction suggests a **military/army theme**.

It has a specific sense of rhythm similar to that of **a march done by soldiers**.

Only a single full stop at the end of the poem.

There are capital letters at the beginning of each line.

1. They were women then

2. My mama's generation

Deep, strong and authoritative voice – implies a toughness

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> description of the women

3. Husky of voice – Stout of

4. Step

Strong step –shows determination.

5. **With fists** as well as

6. Hands

Connotation of being fearless warriors

Their 1<sup>st</sup> action described

7. How they **battered down**

8. Doors

Their 2<sup>nd</sup> action described.  
A **contrast** to the first action.

9. And ironed

10. Starched white

3<sup>rd</sup> Action described

11. **Shirts**

Connotation of being fearless warriors

12. **How they led**

13. **Armies**

Wearing a rag or piece of cloth one's head.

3<sup>rd</sup> description of the women

14. **Headragged Generals** Metaphor

Metaphor - comparing their efforts of trying to get their children an education, to being in a war. (Shows that they risk their lives).

15. **Across mined**

16. **Fields**

Connotation of being fearless warriors

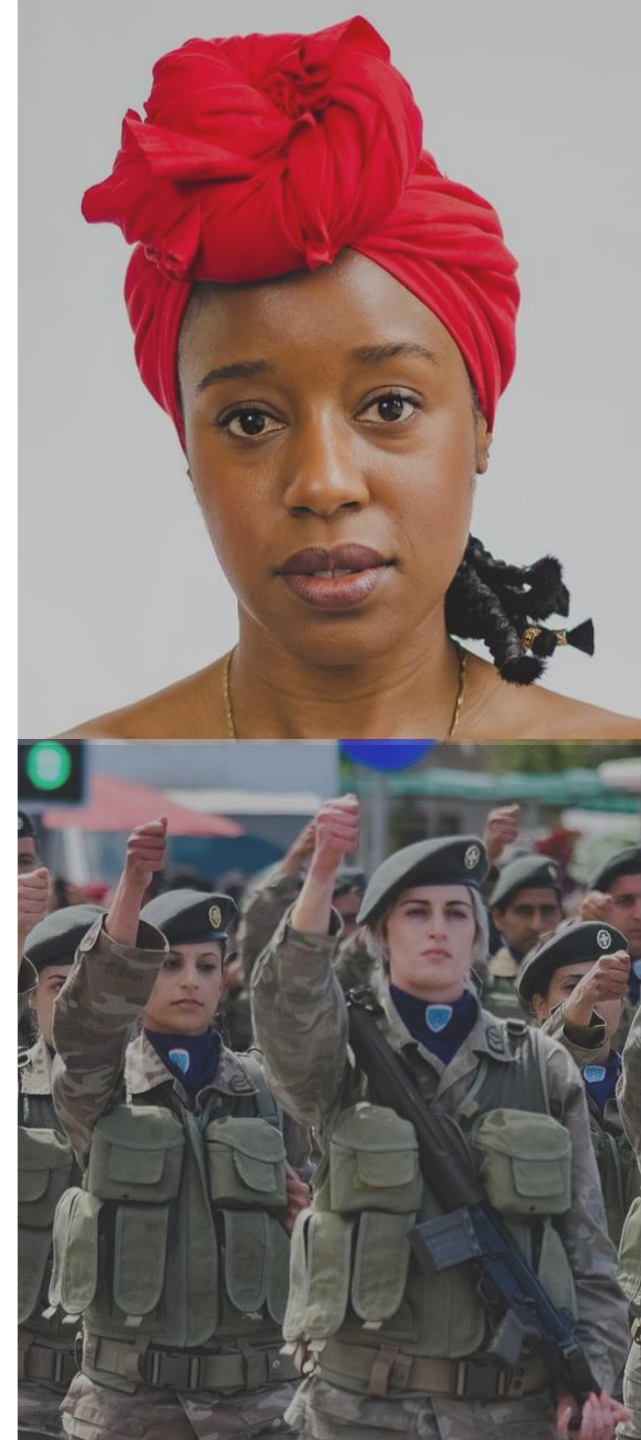
17. **Booby-trapped**

18. **Ditches**

4<sup>th</sup> Action described

19. **To discover books**

20. **Desks**





21. **A place for us**

22. **How they knew what we**

23. **Must know**

24. **Without knowing a page**

25. **Of it**

26. **Themselves.**

The women knew the importance of education and even though they did not have an education, they knew it was vital that their children had one.

# INTERNAL ANALYSIS

IMAGERY:	REPRESENTING:
“Husky of voice”	Their toughness.
“Stout of Step”	Their determination.
“With fists as well as hands”	Being aggressive warriors as well as passive (caring) mothers.
“battered down”	Being aggressive warriors .
“And ironed starched white shirts”	Motherly duties and love for their children.
“books / Desks”	An education.
“knew, know, knowing”	The wisdom of the women (education is important).
“Led armies / headragged generals”	Courage and leadership of the women.
“Across mined fields/ booby-trapped ditches”	The dangerous the path they chose, to fight for the education of their children.

# QUESTIONS

1. **What or whom is the subject of Walker's poem?**
2. **How does the speaker describe the women?**
3. **How does Walker describe the women's actions?**
4. **How does Walker use metaphor to develop her portrait of the women?**
5. **What is the role of the imagery in lines 15–18 of the poem?**
6. **Based on your responses to the previous question, what can you infer about the meaning of "husky of voice" and "stout of step" in lines 3–4?**
7. **How does Walker use these physical characteristics to depict inner qualities of the women she describes?**
8. **What is the women's goal?**
9. **What is the impact of repetition in the final four lines of the poem?**
10. **What central idea does Walker develop in this poem?**