Boekverslag Engels The color purple door Alice Walker

Auteur: Alice Walker
Genre: Sociale roman
Eerste uitgave: 1982
Vak: Engels

A. 1. Title
The Color Purple, Groningen, 1997, (BlackBirds nr.4)
The book has 229 pages

2. Mottto
Show me how to do like you
Show me how to do it.
-Stevie Wonder

3. Title explanation
The color purple stands for independence and liberation of one’s mind and feelings. It plays an important role in Celie’s and Shug’s life. When Celie can choose a dress for the first time in her life, she chooses a purple one. In her house Celie has a purple room. When Shug explains to Celie how important freedom is, she says: “I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don’t notice it.”

B. Genre
It’s a historical/ psychological novel.

C. 1. Theme
The theme of the book is to be honest to yourself in spite of difficulties and never let go of what you believe in. Do not let people make you think you are something that you’re not.

2. Motives
-Exploitation- The exploitation of women by men, blacks by white and the African culture by the western culture.
-Liberation- The liberation of women and men from their respective traditional rules, but within their own cultural context.
-Love- The love from Mr___ and Celie for Shug Avery

D. Short summary
The book starts on a farm down in the Southern United States at the beginning of the 20th century. Celie, a 14 year old girl lives there with her stepfather and her sister Nettie. She and her sister care a lot about
each other. Celie (the eldest of the two sisters) has been raped by her father several times and she has two children by him. Both of the children have been taken away from her and she thinks her father killed them. Celie is not allowed to go to school, and as a result has a poor education. In the church there is a man who always looks at Nettie. His name is Mr. ___. Mr. ___ finally comes to the house of Celie and Nettie. He asks for Nettie’s hand. Father refuses it, but promises him a cow if he marries Celie. Mr. ___ accepts the offer and marries Celie. He doesn’t love Celie, but his wife died and he wants a woman to keep the house for him and look after his four children. Mr. ___ continues the cycle of sexual and physical abuse which Celie had to deal with when she lived with her father. One day Celie and her husband are in town. When they walk into a shop Celie sees a little girl who looks just like her daughter. She begins to speak with the mother, the wife of a reverend.

Nettie runs away from home and comes to Celie. She stays with Celie and her family. But Celie’s husband tries to seduce her, so Nettie leaves, promising that she will write till her death. To Mr. ___ she says she is glad to go, but actually she hates to leave Celie. Celie never receives a letter from her sister and she doesn’t know if Nettie is alive or not. Therefore she goes on writing her lonely letters to God.

Harpo, Mr. ___.’s son, decides he wants to marry a girl named Sofia. His father forbids him to get married, but he does it anyway and they are going to live on the land near Celie’s house. Sofia is a strong, confident and emancipated woman.

Mr. ___ is always talking and fantasising about a woman called Shug Avery. He loves her very much. Shug also means a lot to Celie, although she only knows her from a picture, she becomes an obsession for her. A little later Shug comes to visit Mr. ___. Celie is very excited that she will meet her, but when Shug arrives she is horrible because she is drunk. After a while Shug becomes very ill and Celie has to take care of her. This event is very important, because during this period Celie and Shug become good friends. They discuss many things together. They talk about sex with Mr. ___ (Cелиe knows by this time his name is Albert). Celie hates the sex, but Shug likes it. Celie also says, “He just do his business, get off, go to sleep.”

When Shug is in the house, Mr. ___ doesn’t beat or abuse Celie, Shug forbids him to do that. Even when she leaves he obeys her. Shug and Celie really love each other, although they are both married. Celie learns a lot about Shug and gets more confidence. In the time that Celie and Shug become friends, Sophia leaves Harpo and moves in with her sister Odessa. After Sofia has left, Harpo opens jukejoint. Shug is a good blues singer and is she going to sing in the jukejoint. Without Shug singing there wouldn’t be so many people comming in there. Harpo also finds a new girlfriend, Squeak. She is very different from Sofia, she is submissive and obedient.

After a while Shug goes away, Celie wants to say that she wants to come with her but she can’t. In that time Sophia has beaten the mayor and she has to go to prison. She will be there twelve years. Because she is very ill no one believe that she will survive. Squeak is a relative of the warden, so she goes to speak with him. She gets Sofia out of prison and instead of being in prison she has to serve a white woman, the mayors wife. She is never allowed to see her children.

Shug always writes letters to Mr. ___. One day she says that she is coming back. When she comes back she is married to a man, Grady. Mr. ___ and Grady are drunk all the time. In that time Celie tells Shug about her family, that her mother has died and that her sister has ran away. She says to Shug that almost nobody ever loved her. Shug says to her: “I love you”, and kisses Celie. Celie kisses Shug back and they have sex. After a while Shug discovers that Mr. ___ has been hiding all the letters from Nettie to Celie. Celie starts
reading the letters and reads about Nettie’s life. Nettie lives with a woman (Corrine) her husband (Samuel a reverend) and their two children, Olivia and Adam. These two children turn out to be Celie’s children. Nettie travels with the family to Africa where she goes to do missionary work. They live in a village in Africa and run a school for the natives, the Olinka. Corrine hears from Nettie on her deathbed that Adam and Olivia are actually Celie’s children and Samuel tells Nettie that her father isn’t her real father. Their real father was killed in a lynching when they were very young. In Africa Adam falls in love with a native and they get married. After Corrine dies Nettie falls in love with Samuel and they also get married. When Celie reads her father isn’t her real father she decides to go back with Shug to Shug’s house in Memphis. In Memphis Celie starts to make pants for a hobby and finally she starts running a shop in pants. During this time Harpo and Sofia fall in love again. Shug also falls in love, with a 19 year old boy and goes with him, promising Celie that she will return. Celie does not believe her, but decides to live her own life. She is going to live in her old house, because her stepfather died. The house used to belong to her ‘real father’ and he left it to his children. Sofia is coming to live with Celie, she doesn’t have to work any longer for the mayor’s wife. Mr___realises that he has treated Celie very wrong and he and Celie become friends. Their relationship is based on their love for Shug. Finally Shug returns to Celie and Mr___, Celie and Shug are reunited. One day Nettie, Samuel, Olivia, Adam and his wife return. Celie is totally surprised and she is very happy to see them. The last letter of the book is a letter to God, but with Celie’s new look at the world. “Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God. ”In this letter she thanks god for bringing Nettie back to her. At the end of the book Celie is full of confidence and love for life, others and herself.

E.1. Construction
The story of Celie’s life is conveyed to the reader in the form of letters from Celie to God and when Celie finds out Nettie is still alive there are letters to and from Nettie.

2. Language usage
Celie’s language is very limited and awkward, it’s obvious that she has never had a proper education. Nettie’s language is grammatically more correct, but less characteristic.

F. Main characters
Celie:
In the beginning of the book Celie is an uneducated, 14 year old black girl. She has two children from her stepfather who raped her and gave the children away. Celie is a submissive woman, due by the positive influence of Shug Avery, she grows into a strong, independent woman who stands up for herself.

Nettie:
Nettie is the younger sister of Celie. In the middle of the book she lives with Samuel and his family in Africa. She take care of Celie’s children.

Mr___(Albert):
Mr__ is Celie’s husband. He is inconsiderate, cruel and contemptuous of woman. At the end of the book he changes and he become friends with Celie. Their friendship is based on their love for Shug Avery.

Shug Avery:
Shug Avery is the hero of the story. She is an attractive, independent woman with her own philosophy, based on her experiences in life. She is a famous blues singer. She loves Celie and teaches her how to be her own person.
G. Time
The story takes place in the beginning of the 20th century. The book describes ± 40 years of Celie’s life. The story is told chronologically.

H. Perspective
The Color Purple is written with a first-person narrator, alternated by Celie and Nettie.

I. Space
Celie lives on a farm in a small town in the Southern United States. In her environment is a lot of racial discrimination. Nettie lives at the beginning of the book with her sister, later she live in a village in Africa.

J. Own opinion
The Color Purple, a fascinating and interesting book. When I start reading this book I didn’t realise what terrible things happened in Southern United States in the beginning of the 20th century. Soon I realised there was a lot of racial discrimination and in that time people found that woman were worth nothing. I was very shocked when I read this and the book made me almost cry. It is a touching novel. The events are conveyed in the form of letters which this makes the novel very realistic. I find it very interesting to read about the terrible things which happened in Southern United States. I learned a lot about this book and it has given me a different look at the world. The events makes you think about that period and makes you aware of the terrible situation.

The language of Celie is very important. It makes the book more realistic, because you can tell that she is very poorly educated. I’ll give an example of Celie’s language: when she is pregnant, she says she is big. This makes the book more interesting, although in the beginning it was very hard to read, later it became a bit more easy. The style which A. Walker uses makes you feel sorry for Celie and makes you think about the book and the situation in that period.

All the characters of the book have a relationship with each other. It makes the book interesting, but I found it very difficult. Many times I had to search and think about who that character was and what his relation was with that person. Another thing I don’t like about the book is that it was hard to get a good idea of what the characters look like, because A. Walker doesn’t describe the looks of the characters very well. At the end when Celie and Mr__ become friends I was very surprised, I didn’t expect that at all, I really like that part. But I also dislike the ending, It’s a bit too beautiful, it makes the end unrealistic. If I was the writer I would give the book a totally different ending. I wouldn’t bring Nettie and Shug back to Celie.

I think you should read this book, because you can learn a lot from it and it gives you a good impression of the situation in the Southern United States in the beginning of the 20th century. Despite that it took me a long time to read The Color Purple I really enjoyed reading it.