

# Native son analysis essay



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Sympathy is an important aspect of human nature. Without it, the entire human race would be overcome with tyrants; however, it is also a major downfall of society. Sometimes, people undeserving of the sympathy of others still attain it unjustly.

This is the case of Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Although some may argue that it was merely his response to the conditions in which he lived, Bigger does not deserve the sympathy those people give him because all colored people were oppressed, he had people supporting him, and he was clearly violent from the start and enjoyed the kill. First, in the time period in which Bigger lived, all black people were living in the same oppressive conditions, but they did not all lash out in socially and morally unacceptable behavior like he did. For example, the city in which Bigger lived, Chicago, is huge.

There were at least hundreds of others living in similar, if not worse, conditions to those in which Bigger and his family lived. What did they do? They toughed it out, dealt with it, worked hard, did what they could, and did it all without sawing a girl's head off and blaming it on a man that loved her. In addition, some actually overcame the obstacles set forth, such as the Dalton's previous chauffeur, Green, who went to night school. As a result, he acquired a government job. Why did Green go to night school? Mrs. Dalton gave him the opportunity and pushed him to reach his potential out of her concern for the less fortunate (Wright 56).

Moreover, Mrs. Dalton wanted to give Bigger the chance to further his education through night school, like Green. Bigger had people, like Mrs.

Dalton, supporting him, which was a luxury many colored people probably did not possess. Mr.

Dalton was “ a supporter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,” (Wright 55). Young Miss Mary Dalton also wished to help Bigger, along with her friend, Jan. They were both actively working to help the colored people gain true equality. Jan even asked Bigger not to call him sir (Wright 67). Then Jan insisted on driving and letting Bigger enjoy the ride. After that, Jan and Mary asked Bigger for a suggestion of where to eat on the South Side and bought his food and shared drinks with him.

Besides the Daltons and Jan, Bigger also had his mother, who was a Christian woman who took her children to church when they were young. (Bigger did not like it. )She did her best and worked hard for her family. When Bigger was in jail, his mother, brother, and sister came to visit him, along with his friends, Gus, G.

H. , and Jack, who also supported him. They always had his back. There was also Mr. Max, who offered to represent Bigger, free of charge, at the request of Jan. (Even after Bigger had attempted to frame him, Jan still wanted to help Bigger.

) Reverend Hammond came to the jail to strive to assist Bigger in his spiritual matters. The whole world was clearly not against Bigger. It seems many people were on his side. Furthermore, Bigger was quite obviously violent from the beginning. First, he cusses Gus (Wright 28), followed by holding a knife to Gus’s stomach (Wright 40), and finally slashing Doc’s pool table (Wright 42). However, these were only Bigger’s minor infractions.

As the novel progresses and reaches the gruesome mutilation of Mary, Bigger's true colors are revealed (Wright 90). Only a twisted, sadistic psycho could saw off the head of a beautiful young lady, as he is burning her body in her own furnace, then steal her money, of all things, and blame it on the man that loved her, of all people! The worst part is Bigger Thomas enjoyed the thrill. He enjoyed killing and mutilating that poor girl. "The hidden meaning of his life—a meaning which others did not see and which he had always tried to hide—had spilled out. No; it was no accident, and he would never say that it was.

There was in him a kind of terrified pride in feeling and thinking that some day he would be able to say publicly that he had done it. It was as though he had an obscure but deep debt to fulfill to himself in accepting the deed. Now that the ice was broken, could he not do other things? What was there to stop him?" (Wright 101). However, that still is not the worst part. Wright goes on to say, "Now, who on earth would think that he, a black timid Negro boy, would murder and burn a rich white girl and would sit and wait for his breakfast like this? Elation filled him" (Wright 102). Elation.

Bigger enjoyed the kill. How does that deserve any kind of sympathy? He goes on to kill his girl, Bessie, soon after she said, "If you killed her you'll kill me," and Bigger replied, "Don't be a fool. I love you." On that same page, Bigger is already thinking that he could, "take the butcher knife and cut her throat" (Wright 168).

Again, he enjoys it. "... there remained to him a queer sense of power. He had done this.

He had brought all this about. In all of his life these two murders were the most meaningful things that had ever happened to him. He was living, truly and deeply, no matter what others might think... never had his will been so free as in the night and day of fear and murder and flight” (Wright 225).

Again, how does that deserve any kind of sympathy? It does not. He does not. Bigger Thomas does not deserve sympathy. However, some may still argue that Bigger was oppressed by society until he reached his breaking point. Yes, he absolutely did reach his breaking point, but, as stated above, others overcame the obstacles set forth by the social status or simply accepted it and moved on.

Reaching one’s breaking point does not have to result in two murders, the first including mutilation. Others may question his sanity. There is substantial evidence in the book that proves that he is exceedingly capable of making his own choices and accepting the consequences that follow. First, Bigger devised a devilish scheme to avert suspicion from himself and thrust it on Jan.

As part of his scheme, Bigger decided to write a ransom letter, sign it “ Red,” put a communist symbol on it, and force Bessie to retrieve the ransom money, thus keeping himself ultimately out of harm’s way. Bigger even went so far as to concoct an intricate procedure to have the money delivered to Bessie. How long would it take a rather bright person to come up with a plan like, “...

ride your car up and down Michigan Avenue... Blink your headlights some. When you see a light in a window blink three times throw the box in the

snow and drive off" (Wright 167). It came right off the top of his head, like it was natural.

Bigger is incontestably mentally capable of knowing right from wrong and the consequences for doing wrong. In conclusion, Bigger Thomas does not deserve the sympathy those people give him because he was not the only one being oppressed, he had people around him to support him, and he was inexplicably violent from the start and savored the kill. Even though Mary's murder was initially an accident, the mutilation was not. Bessie's murder was not an accident. After he threw Bessie down the air-shaft, his greatest concern was that Bigger's money was down there with her.

He felt no remorse. Instead, elation filled him! Bigger was twenty when he killed his employer, Mary, burned her body in her own furnace, sawed off her head, stole her money, blamed it on Jan, tried to collect ransom money in the name of the "reds," then killed his own girl, Bessie, and threw her body down an air-shaft. Bigger's behavior was unquestionably socially and morally unacceptable on any grounds and deserves absolutely no sympathy.