

The man who was almost a man. roxie: richard wright

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Every man goes through that certain stage in their life where they believe that having specific items makes them a man.

Richard Wright born on a plantation on September 4, 1908 in Roxie, Mississippi, started off his career writing novels about the life of African-Americans. *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* was inspired by the racism and prejudice in the South in the early nineteenth century. Using racial/cultural criticism; the reader can analyze Richard Wright's *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* through dialogue, symbols, and character relationships. For the most part dialogue plays a great deal in showing social stature in the short story *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*. For example when Dave says, " Shucks, Ahain scareda them even ef they are biggem me!" it shows that he is uneducated and poorly schooled (Wright).

Proper grammar was used by the whites and some well educated blacks in the early nineteenth century. Also, when Jim Hawkins says, " What're yuh doing out here so early?" and Dave replies " Ah didn't know Ah wuz gittin up so early, Mistah Hawkins. Ah wuz fixin t hitch up ol Jenny n take her t the fields" (Wright). There is a clear difference in the way Jim Hawkins talks to Dave, and this shows very different levels of education. Dialogue helps the reader understand the character and the amount of education Dave has. Furthermore, symbols also help the reader criticize Richard Wright's story.

The first and most important symbol is the gun. Earlier in the story Dave says " But, Ma, we needa gun. Pa ain got no gun. We needa gun in the house. Yuh kin never tell what might happen" this foreshadows a problem that comes out later in the story (Wright).

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The gun in this story represents manhood and how Dave is trying to become a man by having a gun and showing all the other blacks that he can wield a weapon. This whole story is based off of showing different ways that Dave is trying to become man. Another example is Jenny, Mr. Hawkins mule. When Dave goes out in the fields to plow the land he brings his gun along with so he can try and practice using it and firing it, instead he ends up firing it and killing ol Jenny. Shocked and not knowing what to do, Dave didn't know what to do.

He kept saying, "Jenny, Jenny..." hoping that it was all a dream and this wasn't happening, but at the sight of the blood he realized what he did (Wright). By Dave killing Mr. Hawkins mule he had to grow up and take responsibility for his actions, whether or not he liked the punishment. His punishment was to work for Mr. Hawkins and pay him two dollars every month and to return the gun to Joe. Lastly, each character has a certain relationship with each other.

With Dave and Joe, Dave always formally greets him by calling him Mistah Joe. When Dave walked into the store to get a catalog for the gun that he was planning on buying he said this when he walked in, "How yuh Mistah Joe?" this shows how Dave and Joe get along and Dave seems to be intimidated by Joe, which is why he still formally approaches him (Wright). Another example would be between Dave and his Mother. As Dave walks in from being out and about his mom says, "Where yuh been, boy?" showing that his mother doesn't address him by his actual name she refers to him as boy representing that she is in charge and that he needs to follow all her

rules making her superior to him (Wright). In conclusion the reader can analyze Richard Wright's *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* by using racial/cultural criticism through dialogue, symbols, and character relationships.

The reader can learn some different aspects of the African American culture and social class status by reading this short story. The significance of this essay is to signify some symbolizations of becoming a man, and to understand different cultures and races. Works Cited Wright, R. (1961). *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*. Roxie: Richard Wright.