

Short essay on the man who was almost a man

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It's hard to become a man in a world that looks at someone as a child. In the story "The Man Who Was Almost a Man", by Richard Wright, is a short story about a young black man named Dave focused on buying a gun to get respect from those he knew. The reader can analyze this story by looking at dialogue, setting, and character relationships. The setting of this story is about an African American named Dave that works for a white man who owns a large piece of land. His family is not wealthy and you can see this when his mother says "Waal that's good. We kin use it [Sears Catalogue] in the outhouse" (Wright).

This is one way that shows his family is poor. The family doesn't trust Dave with his own money to the point that he has his owner pay his mother what Dave earns. "She stooped, turned slightly to one side, and raised the hem of her dress. Rolled down the top of her stocking and came up with a slender wad of bill" (Wright). David is not trusted with his own money because his parents seem to think he would spend it on stupid things which he shows us in the story.

This makes David feel like he's not a man, that he's just a boy still. David's mother shows us that she cares about her family and that she doesn't want to waste any type of money irresponsibly. The dialogue in this story shows how African Americans were looked at during this time period. "'Ma, ef yuh lemme buy one Ah'll never ast yuh fer nothing no mo'" (Wright). The way this book was looked upon made Dave seem like he had no knowledge of proper English. In the story, white men are looked at as more respected and seem very well mannered.

Throughout the story Dave was called a boy. He felt that he was old enough to be called a man, but his parents never looked at him like that. When Dave asked his mother to give him money to buy a gun she was not happy. She said “ Ah don care whut Ah promised! Yuh ain nothing but a boy yit”(Wright). Dave felt that he was old enough to have a gun. He felt owning a gun meant that he would have a little more respect and maybe they would look at him as a man.

The way his family and others around him call him a boy makes Dave feel that he's nothing but a little boy. At the end of the story Dave buys a gun and doesn't know how to use it. He ends up shooting his owner's mule and kills it. This shows that he wasn't ready for a gun at all. The relationship between Dave and his parents wasn't very good.

“ Yuh git up from there and git to the well n wash yosef! Ah ain feedin no hogs in mah house!’ She grabbed his shoulder and pushed him. He stumbled out of the room, then came back to get the catalogue,” (Wright). This shows that Dave's mother still looked at him as a boy and didn't really treat him fairly. This also shows that Dave feels like he's nothing to his mother but a little boy and that he will never be good enough for his mother. Dave's relationship between his father didn't seem good either. You can see in the story that Dave was afraid of his father and was nervous of telling him where the gun was.

“ N Pa says he's gonna beat me ... He remembered other beatings, and his back quivered,” (Wright). As Dave goes home the day he confessed of shooting the mule on accident, he sits up at night and thinks about how his

dad had beaten him before. So he goes out to dig up the gun where he hid it and shoots his final rounds. He then realizes that if he goes home he will never become a man because his family looks at him as a boy still. So he sees a train and jumps in an empty box cart with his gun.

David wants to show everyone that he can be a man and he should be respected like everyone else. Through the racial and cultural criticism one can better analyze "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" by examining the setting, character relationships through family, and dialogue. This shows how African Americans were treated back in this time period. David felt that by having a gun, it would make him more powerful, and get more respect from others. In the end it shows that he never became a man because he just ran away from his problems.