

# Alienation in black boy

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Carlos Hernandez Eng. 111 Prof. Weitz 02/18/2009 Causes of Alienation in Black Boy Black Boy demonstrates how the protagonist, Richard Wright, alienated himself from his community because he did not share the same religious and societal beliefs practiced by his community and felt that the questions he had about everyday life would not be answered if he conformed to his degraded position in society. Richard alienated himself from his community because he wanted to find answers to his questions about racism that were not being answered.

His desire and capacity for knowledge is discouraged and underestimated by whites and blacks due to living in the Jim Crow South. Religion is also a cause of alienation because Richard does not share the same enthusiasm for religion as the community does. These are all causes of alienation for Richard. The first signs of alienation come as a result of Richard's curiosity with the world around him. An insatiable sense of curiosity grew in him after learning to read, write, and count to one hundred that he soon became, " a nuisance by asking far too many questions of everybody. This led him to learn about the relations between whites and blacks. After finding out about the white man beating the black boy he began to ask questions regarding race and why there is a puzzling coexistence between whites and blacks. He asked his mother why that happened and she simply responded by saying, " You're too young young to understand. " She did this to dodge this controversial topic. He had so many questions regarding this topic and no one in his community was willing to give him a straight, if any, answer.

On another occasion, Richard asked his mother if they could look in the white side of the train and noticed his mother becoming irritated. " I had begun to

notice that my mother became irritated when I questioned her about whites and blacks, and I could not quite understand it. ” His inquisitive nature and lack of answers lead him to alienate himself from his community by going on his journey to the North in order to answer these questions of racism.

Richard’s curiosity led him to desire knowledge.

This thirst for knowledge is another cause of alienation for Richard. It results in alienating himself as well as being alienated from the black community.

For example, when Granny found out that her tenant, Ella, was reading *Bluebeard and His Seven Wives* to Richard, she objected to it and forbade her from reading to him on religious grounds by saying, “ That’s the Devil’s work. ” When Richard protested, she responded by saying, “ You’re going to burn in Hell. ” It seems that her deep religious beliefs did not promote creativity or knowledge.

Her disallowance of creativity and expanding his mind only made it more desirable for Richard. He secretly took books from Ella and tried to read them. Another example of this is when he wrote the story in the local black paper. His own classmates did not believe that he had written it himself and thought he had stolen the idea for the story. After this occurrence he said, “ If I had thought anything in writing the story, I had thought that perhaps it would make me more acceptable to them, and now it was cutting me off from them more completely than ever. This experience led him to want to go to the North to pursue a writing career, something he could not do in the South because it was discouraged by whites and could have fatal consequences, and because his community is not all that supportive because

of that. In this way he is alienated from his community and alienating himself. His curious nature and thirst for knowledge led him to seek religion to answer the questions he had regarding racism. Religion is an additional source of alienation for Richard.

He is constantly being pressured to join the church congregation by his mother, Aunt Addie, and Granny. One of the first unpleasant experiences he had with religion can be found in the first pages of the book. His mother invited their local church's preacher to dinner and that night's dinner consisted of soup and fried chicken, a sign that it was a special dinner. Richard refused to eat the soup and while everyone else finished their soup and began eating chicken he became upset, believing that " the preacher [was] going to eat all the chicken. This dinner had a negative effect on him because he learned that " the preacher, like his father, was used to having his own way. " Since he disliked his father for abandoning his family, it was natural for him to associate this religious figure with his father and therefore, he saw religion in a negative way. After being persuaded by his classmates to give religion a try, he makes an effort to join the crowd, " I was so starved for association with people that I allowed myself to be seduced by it all. although he made an effort, he could not share his family's rigid Christian fundamentalism, further alienating himself from his family and his community. Richard was not a believer because he " had not settled in [his] mind whether [he] believed in God or not; his existence or nonexistence never worried [him]. " After going to a revival at the local church and confessing to the other boys that he felt nothing, " they too admitted that

they felt nothing. ” This only confirmed his belief that religion led to conformism.

He believed this because of the harsh environment in which he had to live that was reluctant to answer the questions he had about society. He realized that the conformist nature of religion would not lead him to finding the answers he sought of racism, nor would it satisfy his desire for knowledge on the issue. Had he succumbed to the wishes of his friends and family he would have given up his individuality and conformed to the way of life available in the South. By not being able to share in his community's religious beliefs, he further alienates himself from the rest of the group because of his nonconformity.

Richard Wright alienates himself from his community because he does not share societal and religious beliefs followed by those in his community. He refuses to conform to his degraded position in society. Richard does not accept a fundamentalist Christianity because it is used to obstruct his goal of becoming a writer, primarily by Granny. Although he is an outsider who feels little connection with other people, he still cares for them nonetheless, as it is shown when he decides to go North with the promise to send for his mother and his brother. These are the causes of alienation seen in Black Boy.