

# The man who was almost a man by richard wright free essay

[Business](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Man Who Was Almost a Man By Richard Wright Living in a place stripped of dignity and personal growth by the members of his own race and the ones opposite to it, Dave is left alone, power-hungry.

As a racial critic for the story The Man Who Was Almost a Man by Richard Wright: the dialogue, setting, and social environment contribute to the main character's constant struggle toward manhood. This short story tells the tale of an African American boy's effort to prove a sense of power over his life and achieve a great amount of maturity. Throughout the story the reader finds that Dave believes with gun ownership, comes manhood. The continuous childish acts Dave make, his family's threats, and the fear of a dominant white lifestyle terrorizes the slight existence of him ever becoming a man. Spoken to like a child, Dave is constantly being put down by the people in his life and it reflects the language that he uses.

After countless measures of ridicule from the people who surround him, he discovers the idea of owning a gun to prove his maturity. When putting his plan to action the store owner fat Joe laughs in his face and says, " You ain't nothing but a boy. You don't need a gun" (Wright 2). Already intimidated by Joe in the first place the ounce of confidence he has is put to shame. Not only fat Joe, but his own family, the people of the same color are the ones he finds himself being bullied by. The lack of education provided for Dave shown from the dialogue portrays the differences between a white man's grammar and a black man's.

If he was more educated he would sound more established and wouldn't have to fight for the same respect a white male would get when becoming a

man. His mother says, " Ahm keeping tha money sos yuh kin have cloes t go to school this winter" (Wright 4). The dialect shows the diversity between two races and reflects the poor education they have both received. The education Dave was given has only made his quest to become a man a greater failure. Dave's struggle with racial oppression reveals the fight the African Americans produced in the Civil War.

He feels as if he is trapped with a limited future because of the social order judged by the color of his skin. He works a job in the field where he is bullied by the other workers, and makes pay that his mother keeps. With the gun Dave would be in control, Wright says, " Could kill a man with a gun like this. Kill anybody, black or white. And if he were holding his gun in his hand, nobody could run over him; they would have to respect him" (Wright 6).

In the story he cried a blur of black and white faces. The gun was the tool to Dave that would equal them, especially when he says he could kill anyone ' black or white'. Not only that, but the ownership of a gun would get rid of the degrading ridicule against him and give him control of his life. However, his own family is a threat to the possibility of him ever sustaining manhood. John Loftis, a literary critic said, " To get his mother to give him the money for the gun, Dave must act like a child" (Loftis 2). When he wants to own a gun, first he must ask permission from his mother, and proceeds to beg for money so he can pay for it.

Ironically, it tosses his attempts at manhood out the door. Dave's surroundings and home life have just added to his never-ending desire for respect. Everyone in Dave's life holds authority over him. His parents are the

<https://assignbuster.com/the-man-who-was-almost-a-man-by-richard-wright-free-essay/>

constant shadow in his life that anchors him toward childhood. The father offers no support to him when the mule is shot and therefore explains Dave's resistance against his current lifestyle.

His mother is hesitant to give him money, threatens to burn the catalogue Dave receives from the store clerk, and won't even allow him to own the gun himself. Also, when entering the store to get the catalogue Dave is even intimidated by the clerk. Wright wrote that Dave feels that "his courage began to ooze" (Wright 1). In addition to the store clerk he feels suppressed even jealous of his employer. Jim Hawkins is especially resented because of the power he holds and the humiliation he causes Dave when he shoots the mule.

The fact that he's a white male who owns a plantation in which African Americans work make it uneasy for Dave to live up to the now supposed to be equal racial standard. Again, Loftis explains, "This success in turn provides the confidence he needs to reject his childhood, turn his back on his family, and board the freight train..." (Loftis 3). The power Dave seeks isn't gained until he leaves town with the gun, away from weight that's ever held him down. In this story, Dave's lifestyle doesn't allow him to gain any superiority. The dialogue, setting, and character relationships greatly reflect the outcome of his never achieved manhood.

Richard Wright's story is of crucial importance because it shadows the lack of power and discrimination the African Americans went through during the Civil War. Dave's conquest to find manhood did not establish itself the way planned, but it eventually found him freedom to a life he never had. Works  
<https://assignbuster.com/the-man-who-was-almost-a-man-by-richard-wright-free-essay/>

Cited Loftis, John. ACCOUNT: JOHN E LOFTIS ON “ The Man Who Was Almost a Man” As a Parody of the Hunt Tradition. Print.

Wright, Richard. The Man Who Was Almost a Man. Print.