

The man who lived underground

Literature



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Analysis of ' The Man who Lived Underground' by Richards Wright ' The Man who Lived Underground' by Richards Wright is a most profound story that depicts the harsh realities of a world that is biased and full of illusion. I feel that the story of Fred Daniel is symbolic in its experience of a colored person who is always pursued not for his genuine merits but for finding ways to pin him to crimes by the whites. Indeed, like Fred, they are easy to be victimized and as the story's end implies, their death is easy way to camouflage the crimes of whites. The protagonist's discovery of the wider meaning of human values and the illusion of good, underpins the main objective of the author: the life of people, especially colored people is ridden with guilt because they are under illusion that praying to God would solve their problems and absolve people of their sins.

The experiences of Fred Daniel in the story reflect the social structure and conditioning of people which evolves into a gross pattern of human behavior against the vulnerable and poor. When Fred escapes the police station where he was falsely accused of murder and forced to sign confession of the same, underground sewage becomes his safe haven. Indeed, the life that he observes through the peephole and what he comes across while he is moving in the dirty sewage is highly disturbing. The underground metaphorically becomes a place where the sins of human beings come alive. The dead child, naked dead body and finally where the protagonist himself finds himself as the target of the police who does not want to be burdened with a ' nuts'. The author has successfully portrayed the guilty illusions of human life which bestows people with false dreams of grandeur and happiness. I think it is very true of people who are poor and are non white.

(words: 306)

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Reference

Richard Wright. (1997) ' The Man Who Lived Underground', In The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. W. W. Norton & Company, New York.