

# American literature and composition, period 6 essay



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In 1883 the Southern states of the United States passed new laws which created several rules for the segregation of white and black people.

Many of these laws, which are also called “ Jim Crow Laws,” said, for example, that black people could not have the same rights and opportunities as whites in schools and jobs. For example, it was unlawful for whites and blacks to attend school in of another color. The United States Supreme Court, the highest judicial tribunal in of the country, decided in 1896 that these laws were valid. The former slaves, who were freed in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln, were in this time mistreated again. On December 1st 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama to a white passenger, as the Jim Crow laws required. After her arrest, many black people demonstrated against the Jim Crow laws and set a common goal of getting attention from the public about the mistreatment of blacks.

This was the first demonstration of blacks against the mistreatment and segregation. In the Jim Crow era many black poets and writers founded different ways to express their feelings and emotions. One of these artists was Richard Wright, who is one of the most famous and important black writers of this time. His work *Black Boy* (1945) is his most popular autobiography novel and talks about many problems for black people in the Jim Crow era, especially in education and work.

*Black Boy*, an autobiography of Richard’s life, which describes his development from a boy to a young man. In the beginning of the book, Richard lives a life full of mistreatment, misunderstandings, and mistrust between black people and white people. Some of the biggest issues and

most discussed topics in the book are the conditions of school and work for black people. Richard gets his first experience about working as a black, when he goes with his mom to work.

His mother Ella works for a white family in the kitchen. Richard cannot understand why the white people have plenty full of food while he watches his mother, "...hungrily and silently in a corner of a kitchen" and waits until he would get "occasional scraps of bread and meat." Richard often asks himself "Why could I not eat when I was hungry? Why did I always have to wait until others are through?" (26).

However, he not only experiences the differences of work in his childhood, also in his youth it is easy to recognize how hard it is to work for black people in a white environment. Another very important part in the development of Richard's life is school. Richard graduates after 9th grade, which is very good for a black American in this time. When he is accused falsely by his teacher and Aunt Addie of spitting walnuts on the classroom floor, he pretends that he does not "know anything about that" (116) and does not tell Addie the truth until the evening. Even though he respects and protects his classmates, he fights them.

Richard has the opinion that he can only be accepted and respected by beating up classmates. Almost everyday of school Richard "...was prepared to meet it. Upon what terms would [he] be allowed to remain upon the school grounds?" (136).

School is was a very important issue. In the Jim Crow area and today it is the biggest advance to get respect in the environment. Richard doesn't like <https://assignbuster.com/american-literature-and-composition-period-6-essay/>

school even he is smart. After graduating Richard has to move on and keep supporting his family.

Richard begins working after his mom falls sick and is not able to work to get money for the family. Richard tries to find a job to earn money to help the family but mostly for him to be able to join the other boys buying candies and chocolate after school. Granny tells Richard that he "...couldn't work on Saturdays while [he] slept under her roof" because her "Seventh Day Sabbath" (139) religion forbid it.

Richard is very angry about this and threatens Granny that he will leave her house if he is not allowed to work on Saturdays. He starts working as a newspaper boy but quits immediately after he finds out that the Ku Kux Klan is involved in publishing the newspaper. The Ku Kux Klan is a organization with the goal of restoring white domination over newly enfranchised blacks. This shows how cruel the whites were, letting black innocent students sell magazines which supports their own killings. Richard's last job in Chicago is, in an optical shop, where he cleans and runs errands. His white foreman Olin tells him lies, such as that Harrison, another black worker from a competing optical shop, wants to kill Richard.

Richard and Harrison meet and figure out the scheme of their co workers and bosses. Harrison and Richard agree that "...it's fun for white men to see niggers fight," and "to white people [they are] like dogs or cocks"(260). It is the first time in Richard's life that he talks about racism and the mistreatment by white people with a black.

They also have the same opinion that their co workers and bosses "... wouldn't care if [they] killed each others"(261). Finally, Richard and Harrison fight anyway because both need the money to be gained by their white co workers betting on them.

In conclusion, this book is one of a few books that explains and describes the racism and segregation of white and black people in the Jim Crow era in a truthful and detailed manner. However, racism is the topic of the theme. *Black Boy* is also very special because it reflects and shows the hardness of work for black people in a white environment. Also today there are many companies, offices, and even schools who still judge people by their skin color. The book represents the work environment of black with white people in a view, which was not easy to publish in 1945.

It still is very important to remember the mistreatment of black people in their work at this time. Even though the book was published in 1945, 58 years ago, it is still one of the most popular novels about the mistreatment and lifestyles of black Americans. The Jim Crow era ended shortly after Martin Luther King Jr., the model demonstrating against these laws, was murdered April 4th 1968. It was probably the worst time period for black people in the last 100 years.