

# A man who was almost a man

[Business](#)



Martin Luther King once wrote, “ Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them”. The view of African Americans has become one of a negative nature. Using racial/cultural criticism, a reader can analyze Richard Wright’s *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* through dialogue, setting, and character relations. Dave, a young man is caught up with the man he wants to become. His main focus is on a gun and how he will get that gun. The way he is talked to and the way he talks is that of one who is uneducated.

The African American culture has negative views which will be made apparent in Mr. Wright’s short story. During the early 1900s, African Americans were given the wrap of being uneducated. This view was given due to the way they speak. A great example of this is when Dave goes into a local store and is talking to the store owner Joe. Dave stated, “‘ How yuh, Mistah Joe? Aw, Ah don wanna buy nothing.

Ah jus wanted t see eh yuhd lemme look at tha catlog erwhile’” (1). With the improper spelling as well as the terrible grammar give the African American culture an awful light. African Americans are being compared with the education of a child. Dave himself even talks badly of his fellow workers. Dave stated, “ Them niggers; can’t understan nothing” (1). In lame terms, Dave is simply helping prove the view that African Americans are uneducated.

This perception is elongated with the fact that at this time in history the ‘ white race’ was the ultimate race. African Americans had to prove

themselves with everything they did, even speaking. Similarly, African Americans were criticized by where they lived and what they believed in. The Man Who Was Almost a Man sets itself in a southern state. The story focuses on where Dave worked and where he lives. African Americans were perceived as working for the white man on a farm or in the fields.

A great example of this is the first line of the story, “ Dave struck out across the fields, looking homeward through parting light” (1). This quote gives the reader allusions that African Americans are suppose to be on the farm.

Running a business or having workers of their own, would be a dream for the African American culture. Another great example of African American criticism is when Dave is talking about getting a gun to be a man, “...aftah he done worked hard all day” (1). This quote alone gives proof that African Americans are ‘ workers’ for the white man. Each person deserves to have their shot at life any way they choose.

African Americans should be seen as equals not a worker bee. Additionally, in African American culture, the relationships between the man of the house compared to the woman are different. In A Man Who Was Almost a Man, Dave has no problem asking his mother for something but he wouldn’t dare ask his father. This is shown when Dave asks his mother for a gun, “ But Ma, Ah wans a gun. Yuh kin lemme have two dollahs outta mah money. Please, Ma.

I kin give it to Pa... Pleas, Ma!” (4). It is perceived that the father would have all say in a house hold. It is also shown that Dave gives his father more respect because he never second guesses or fights with his father. At dinner

Dave's father stated, " Boy, how come yuh don quit foolin wid tha book and eat yuh suppah" (5). With that said Dave replies, " Yessuh"(5). Dave had no issue pushing his mothers buttons but he wouldn't dream of doing that was his father.

In African American culture this short story displays a fear of the father or the male of the household. In conclusion, in the early 1900s, African Americans weren't given the respect they deserved. In A Man Who Was Almost a Man, the dialogue, setting, and character relationships show how racist criticism tears apart their culture. Whether it is the view that African Americans are uneducated or speak differently to their fathers and mothers, there is no reason to criticize them for their beliefs. The view of others doesn't set the standards of each individual.

Dave is just a boy who doesn't make a correct decision. His race should have nothing to do with the decisions he makes. Each person has their right to have an opinion but criticizing another group of people because their beliefs are different is unjust.