

Critique of racial cultural for the man who was almost a man

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The author of *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* is Richard Wright who grew up in the south when there was a large racial prejudice. He was born on September 4, 1908 at the Rucker Plantation in Mississippi.

His mother, Ella Wilson, father, Nathaniel Wright, and brother moved to Memphis, Tennessee in 1912 where their father abandoned him several months later. While growing up he had to deal with racial prejudice and the cultural of his grandparents, which made him hate religion. Using racial/cultural criticism, the reader can analyze Richard Wright's *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* through dialogue, the symbol of the gun and character relationships. The dialogue of the characters gives away important information like exactly what time period it is, the location and the education of the people talking. When Dave walked into Joe's store to buy a gun Joe greeted him like "Howdy, Dave! Whutcha want? How yuh, Mistah Joe? Aw, Ah don wanna buy nothing.

Ah jus wanted t see of yuhd lemme look at the catlog erwhile" (Wright). Even though Dave's sentence is completely fractured he greeted Joe more formally calling him "mistah" which means mister. It can be seen that Dave does not have an advanced education because he mispronounces and combines several words that don't mix together. His grammar is so bad that it's almost to the point where it is impossible to read. However, some people would just assume that African Americans back then didn't have a good education but Joe, the Caucasian shopkeeper also says "whutcha" which is also bad grammar. Since it seems like everybody in this scene has bad grammar it can be assumed that it takes place in the south.

Another example of how people talk can be seen when Mr. Hawkins sees Dave at his plantation so early “ What’re yuh doing here so early! Ah didn’t know Ah wuz gittin up so early, Mistah Hawkins, Ah wuz fixin t hitch up ol Jenny n take her t the fiels”(Wright). This also shows that white people also have bad grammar because of the “ yuh” Mr. Hawkins said. Dave also talks respectfully to Mr. Hawkins, which is completely different than with how he would talk with his mom or brother.

The gun Dave buys is one of the major items that the story centers around. If the gun didn’t exist then most of this story would never happen. If there wasn’t a gun in the story Dave would keep on wishing he was a man and without causing any big trouble. That is because Dave thought “ And if he were holding his gun in his hand nobody could run over him: they would have to respect him” (Wright). Without the gun Dave would have never gotten over confident and tried to harm anything or fight anyone. He also would have never gotten the courage or reason to run away.

To Dave the gun meant that he was a man and he thought he had to act like a man when he had it. Despite Dave feeling like this he became hypocritical, when any problem arose that he was afraid of he didn’t stand and face it, like a man, he just hid his gun and acted like a kid “ He picked up the gun and held it gingerly between his thumb and forefinger. He buried it at the foot of a tree. He took a stick and tried to cover the pool a blood with dirt – but what was the use”(Wright)? The gun became a symbol of his man hood so when he had it he was a man, however when he hid it he became a kid again. The setting of the story takes place in the south at some time during

the past with all of the cultural differences and stereotypes. Like most families during that time period there was high tension between the father and son “ His father was watching him.

He eased the book under the table and rested it on his knees. After the blessing was asked, he ate” (Wright). As seen in the quote the relationship between Dave and his father isn’t a good one. This was actually quite common in the past because all of the fathers usually had to work and were only really involved in punishing their child. Dave appeared to fear him instead of respecting him, which is what people would normally assume.

When Dave approached his mom for money to buy the gun she said “ Yeah, but ain no usa yuh thinking bout throwin nona it erway. Ahm keepin tha money sos yuh kin have cloes t go to school this winter”(Wright). This quote actually shows more than what would be expected. Since Dave went to his mother for money instead of the father it shows that his mom is in charge of it. Normally it would be the head of the household in charge of the money so that shows that Dave’s mom is the head of the house.

She also says the reason she’s not giving him any money is because he needs to save it to buy clothes for school. One would think that’s normal, however, for Dave’s mom to realize the importance of school during their time period is very impressive. Lots of people didn’t even go to school but she knows of its value. Using racial/cultural criticism, the reader can analyze Richard Wright’s *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* through dialogue, the symbol of the gun and character Relationships. The dialogue in *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* is hard to read and takes some getting used to.

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This is mainly because of how fractured it is but it helps deliver the essence and realism of the story. The reader can learn how people really talked back then because no one had perfect grammar and accents back then in the south. The reader can also learn how little the laws restrained people in the past that Dave could just walk into a store and buy a gun for two dollars with no paperwork. The cultural relationships of families back then is also important because it shaped the people and culture of today. People can also learn from the past and not make the same mistakes twice so we can keep moving forward.