

# "the man who was almost a man" analysis

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Richard Wright once said, " I have no religion in the formal sense of the word ..

.. I have no race except that which is forced upon me." Richard Wright was an author of many novels and short stories, both fiction and non-fiction.

Many of his stories were controversial because of his usual racial themes.

Because of his racial beliefs, he changed the way people looked and discussed race relations in the mid-20th century (Rayson). He had " The Man Who Was Almost a Man" published in 1961, which was also a story about racial issues. Using racial criticism, a reader can analyze Richard Wright's " The Man Who Was Almost a Man" by using the aspects of family relationships in character relationships, white-black relationships in character relationships and dialogue. To begin, Wright uses family relationships to display the typical minority family of the 1930's suffering from poverty. Dave's family was poor, and he knew that a gun was not a necessity.

He also knew that his father would not approve of his purchase, because of the gun and their lack of money. " He did not want to mention money before his father. He would do much better by cornering his mother when she was alone." It is typical for a child to want to talk to their mother rather than their father, especially when their father is very strict. Dave is also obviously intimidated by his father. " Yuh wan me t take a tree n beat yuh till yuh talk!" Even the threat of violence scares Dave into being frightened by his father.

His father is most likely stressed out over money and now his son being in trouble, but it is unnecessary for him to threaten his son. In addition, Wright

uses white-black relationships to illustrate the superiority whites once had over blacks. In the years the story was written, there was no longer a race war, but there were still beliefs that whites were higher in society than blacks. Most blacks were clearly intimidated by their inferiority to whites. “ He felt very confident until he saw fat Joe walk in through the rear door, then his courage began to ooze.

” Dave felt very good walking in the store asking for the gun, but as soon as he saw Joe, his confidence was crushed all because he saw a white man. Dave also feels as if he needs to prove himself to the white men. “ Lawd, ef Ah had jus one mo bullet Ah’d taka shot at tha house. Ah’d like t scare ol man Hawkins jusa little ... Jusa enough t let im know Dave Saunders is a man.” Because Dave now has a gun, he thinks that he needs to show all the white men how much of a man he is. Also, Wright uses dialogue to demonstrate the lack of education blacks once had and also to show that it was an ordinary thing.

Dave combines his words when talking or even thinking to himself, which makes himself seem very uneducated. “ Shucks, Ah ain scareda them even ef they are biggem me! Aw, Ah know whut Ahma do.” His combination of two or three words does not only show his lack of education but also how much he doesn’t seem to care. He lives around white people, so he has to notice that his speech is improper. Not only does Dave combine his words, but he uses incorrect spelling and grammar.

“ Ahm going by ol Joe’s sto n git that catlog n look at them guns.” His lack of education is now also shown in both the spelling and grammar, not only his

word combination. In conclusion, a lot can be learned after reading “ The Man Who Was Almost a Man”. After reading, people can learn how others were judged in earlier times based on race. The reader can also learn how families in poverty deal with things differently because of their money troubles. Using racial criticism, a reader can analyze “ The Man Who Was Almost a Man” by using the aspects of family relationships in character relationships, white-black relationships in character relationships and dialogue.