

# A racial cultural critique of "the man who was almost a man"

[Business](#)



“ Kill anybody, black or white. And if he were holding his gun in his hand, nobody could run him over; they would have to respect him” (Wright).

Richard Wright an African American writer, poet and author of *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* was born on Sept. 4, 1908 (“ Richard Nathaniel Wright”).

Wright was a sharecropper and only went to school through ninth grade, many of the stories he’s written are formed through his experiences including *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* (“ Richard Nathaniel Wright”).

The story *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* is written in the cultural/racial aspect of Dave a young African American boy. All Dave wants is to be a man and to become a man by obtaining a gun. Using racial/cultural criticism, the reader can analyze Richard Wright’s *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* through dialogue, character, and the setting/cultural aspects. To begin, through racial/cultural criticism the reader can analyze the dialogue of *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*. Through Dialogue we can look at the way people speak. Support of this is how Dave shortens or combines his words.

Proof of this can be found in the story where the author says “ Ahm going by ol Joe’s sto n git that Sears Roebuck catlog n look at them guns” (Wright).

Dave shortens words such as sto which means store, ahm which means I am, n which means and, and catlog which is catalog. This shows how this culture spoke during that time and it also hints at the location. From this the reader can tell that the story takes place more down south. The ways people talk can sometimes tell if a person is educated or not and how well they are educated.

It is unknown if Dave's mother is educated or not but it is hinted at that she is not educated well by the way she speaks. Support of this can be found in the story where the author says " Yuh git up from there and git to the well n wash yosef! Ah ain feedin no hogs in mah house" (Wright). Dave's mother talks like she is uneducated or not educated very well. From this readers can learn how well a character is educated. Secondly, using racial/cultural criticism we can analyze characters in the story *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*.

Many African American families were very strict and the readers can analyze this through the way Dave acts in the story. Dave's parents are really strict and when it comes to his parents he does not want to ask his dad if he can get a gun. Proof of this can be found in the story where the author states " He did not want to mention money before his father. He would do much better by cornering his mother when she was alone" (Wright). Dave does not want to ask his father because his father is very strict.

Through character readers can also analyze the relationship and racial difference there was. The way Dave and Joe address each other shows the racial difference between them. Support of this can be found in the story where the author states " Howdy Dave! Whutcha want? How yuh, Mistah Joe" (Wright). Joe addresses Dave with just his name, while Dave addresses Joe with Mister. This shows that Joe is superior to Dave and shows the racial difference between Joe, the white store owner and Dave, the African American boy. Furthermore, through racial/cultural criticism we can analyze the setting/cultural aspects of *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*.

The readers can observe through the setting that many people were poor. In the story Dave's mother talks of having an outhouse and using a magazine as toilet paper. Support of this can be found in the story where the author says "Waal, thas good. We kin use it in the outhouse" (Wright). Dave's mother is talking about using the catalog Dave has in their outhouse.

From the setting of stories readers can occasionally find out peoples occupation. In this case the majority of African Americans worked in fields on plantations. Proof of this can be found in the story where the author says "When he reached the woods, he plowed two whole rows before he decided to take out the gun" (Wright). Dave is working in the field and this the readers can tell from the setting. The reader can also see the cultural aspect of working in the field because this is where most African Americans worked and this tells the reader more about the racial difference between the common white man and African American.

To put it briefly, through racial/cultural criticism readers can analyze dialogue, character, and setting/cultural aspects in the story The Man Who Was Almost a Man. From this many readers can observe and learn about the racial difference that occurred in the time the story took place.

Racial/cultural criticism is important because it helps the reader observe the cultural and racial difference between the white man and the African American man. Work cited "Richard Nathaniel Wright." 2011. Biography.com 03 Nov 2011, 07: 40 . Wright, Richard. The Man Who Was Almost a Man. Print.