

The man who was almost a man: naturalism

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? The short story *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* written by Richard Wright is a short story about an African American slave who struggles to find respect. Throughout the story, the slave, Dave, wants to buy a gun and when he finally is able to get his gun, he loses respect by committing a childish act. The author Richard Wright was born on a plantation in the early 1900s.

Using racial/cultural criticism, the reader can analyze Richard Wright's *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* through character, dialogue, and symbol.

Through the character Dave from the story, *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*, the reader can indicate that the character wants so badly to earn the respect of others. " In the gray light of dawn he held it loosely, feeling the sense of power. Could kill a man with a gun like this. Kill anybody, black or white. And if he were holding his gun in his hand nobody could run over him; they would have to respect him" (Wright).

In the passage from the story, *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*, the reader can analyze that the character Dave is in desperate need of people to see him and respect him. He thinks people lack respect for him. " Something hot seemed to turn over inside him each time he remembered how they had laughed" (Wright). This example from the story shows the reader that things like this really get to the main character Dave and this is why he wants people to respect him. Although character shows a lot of detail into racial/cultural criticism, dialogue also displays the mood and how the main character talked and thought. " Mebbe Ma will lemme buy one when she gits mah pay from ol man Hawkins.

Ahma beg her t gimme some money. Ahm ol ernough to hava gun” (Wright). Shows how the main character thinks about things. How he’s convinced himself that having this gun will make him seem older and help him earn respect. “ Whut’s the use talkin wide m niggers in the field? Anyhow, his mother was putting supper on the table.

Them niggers; can’t understand nothing. One of these days he was going to get a gun and practice shooting, then they couldn’t talk to him as though he were a little boy” (Wright). This passage explains how he hates his elder African American people and the dialogue. Even though dialogue displays mood, there’s a variety of symbolism within this short story. In the ending of the short story, Dave runs away.

“ Ahm ridin yuh ternight, so hep me Gawd” (Wright). This passage from the short story symbolizes that Dave is not a man and is just a boy who runs away from his problems. The main character, Dave, shoots the mule then lies about shooting the mule. ““ Come on and tell the truth,’ said Hawkins. ‘ Ain’t nobody going to hurt you.

‘ His mother crowded close to him. ‘ Did yuh shoot the mule, Dave?’ Dave cried, seeing blurred white and black faces” (Wright). At first Dave didn’t admit that he shot the mule. He wanted people to believe something had happened to her. By lying about shooting the mule, Dave acted very boyish like.

In conclusion, the short story The Man Who Was Almost a Man was a life-changing short story. It expresses how the young slave, Dave, felt about his life and how he just wanted to be treated like a man. However, for a boy who
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wanted to be treated like a man he didn't own up to his mistakes like a man would do therefore expressing details as to why he would not really ever be a man.