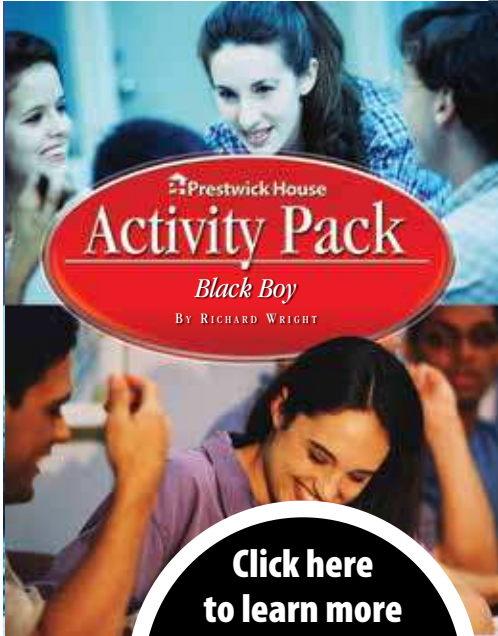




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## BLACK BOY

BY RICHARD WRIGHT



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Written by Darcy Carmichael

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Autobiography****Objective:** Write your own autobiography**Activity**

*Black Boy* is Richard Wright's autobiography. He is open and honest about his experiences. He does not merely write the facts of his life, but puts creativity into his writing to make it an enjoyable experience to read. He incorporates all the aspects of a story (theme, plot, protagonist, etc.) as well as utilizing a number of literary devices such as similes, metaphors, irony, etc.

Take a few moments to consider how you might write your own autobiography. Create an outline of your life. You do not need to mention everything that has happened to you, but choose those events that most influenced you. After you have a complete outline, transform it into a brief autobiography of your life.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 1

### Point of View & Tone

**Objective:** Understanding the main character's point of view and how it sets the tone for the rest of the novel

#### Activity

It is important to keep in mind that *Black Boy* is a story told from Richard Wright's perspective, and, therefore, what we come to understand as readers is greatly influenced by Wright's point of view and is responsible for setting the tone of the story.

Imagine yourself as the author, who at the start of the story is four years old. You live in your grandmother's house in a small town in Mississippi. Your grandmother appears white in complexion, while the others around you—your mother, your father, your brother, your grandfather, an uncle, etc.—all have the same dark complexion as you. How would you describe your life in this small town, living with your family? Use a few paragraphs that could serve as the introduction to this novel, in which you describe yourself, those around you, and how you feel about your life in your home, and in your town.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Chapter 3

#### Character Growth

**Objective:** Understanding the change in character that has occurred in the protagonist.

#### Activity

By the end of Chapter Three, Richard explains that his outlook on life has been indelibly formed. After witnessing the constant suffering his mother must endure and feeling helpless when it comes to easing her pain, Richard believes he will go through the rest of his life suspecting that pain lies in every corner, under every moment of happiness, in every person he meets. He believes he will never be able to find true happiness because of this suspicion, and he will only relate to others who have this grim and rebellious outlook on life.

Imagine you are a contemporary artist commissioned to represent Richard's feelings toward life present by the end of this chapter. You must communicate to your audience through symbolic representations the description of his attitudes and feelings found at the end of this chapter. Your painting should be abstract in nature; that is, you should not include concrete images of objects, people, and/or places. Instead, you must use shape, line, pattern, and color to communicate what Richard feels and believes.

Create your abstract painting on a poster-sized piece of paper. On the back of the poster, attach a brief explanation of what you have created, including what the colors, shapes, and lines are supposed to represent. Be prepared to share your creation with the class.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 8****Strong Points****Objective:** Exploring strength of character**Activity**

Richard Wright, in this chapter, is to give a valedictory speech at graduation, but he refuses to read the speech that was prepared for him and wants to use his own words instead. The pressure of classmates, friends, and relatives increases, but Wright has made his stand and intends to stick to it: He will not read the professor's speech. Surely you also have principles that you will not compromise on which guide your life and can understand Wright's reluctance to speak someone else's words. Put yourself in Wright's position. Compose a letter to his professor that explains Wright's position. Try to convince the man that Wright does have some valid points. Make your letter about a page long.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 11

### Inference

**Objective:** Making inferences about a character's words and actions.  
Writing paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting evidence

#### Activity

When Richard arrives in Memphis, the first people he meets is Mrs. Moss and her daughter, Bess. Richard does not learn much about their past, but he is curious about most of their behaviors. What can the reader infer about their past, present, and future?

Choose to write on either Mrs. Moss or Bess. In the first paragraph, infer something about her past and then write supporting evidence to back your inference. In the second paragraph, state something about her present that could also be true in addition to what is specifically stated in the book. Again, make sure you support your inference with evidence from the book. For your final paragraph, make a statement about what you think her future holds. Explain why you think her future is heading in that direction.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 13

### Creative Writing and Drama

**Objective:** Writing and performing a skit related to the story

#### Activity

Each small group will be expected to write and perform a skit based on the following quotation. "If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself." (Pg. 253)

Create a skit that involves an incident where Richard would give and explain the above quotation to a person or group of people who are in the process of violating themselves. You can decide to set it in the time period of the book or adapt it to something that might happen today. Once you have decided on an idea, work together to come up with a script for a 8-10 minute skit. You will be performing your skit for the entire class. Props are up to you, but are not required and need not be lavish.

**IMPORTANT:** Skits may include humor, but must *not* contain any instances of violence or profanity.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 15

### Paradox

**Objective:** Identify and explain paradoxes in literature and life

#### Activity

A paradox is a statement that is self-contradictory on its surface, yet makes a point through the combination of the ideas and words within the paradox.

After being in Chicago for a short time, Richard came to the realization that he was a paradox in America. He says, "Culturally the Negro represents a paradox: Though he is an organic part of the nation, he is excluded by the entire tide and direction of American culture." (Pg. 272) Although he was an American, he felt left out and not truly a member of America.

Complete the following chart by filling in examples of paradox in life and literature. Try to recognize an equal number of paradoxes from life and literature. The paradoxes you find in literature can be from *Black Boy* or from other pieces of writing.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 16

### Debate

**Objective:** Constructing arguments towards and participating in a debate

#### Activity

People say, "Ignorance is bliss." Do you agree or disagree with this? Richard believes he grew up in complete ignorance and believes it did him a disservice instead of making life better for him. In other words, he would disagree with the above statement.

Write an argument for both sides of this issue. You will, of course, be more passionate about one side than the other; however, a good debater needs to be able to debate both stances. After you are ready to debate either side, your teacher will assign you a position and you will debate with someone from the other position in front of the class.

Debates shall be conducted in the following format:

**Position A** gives opening argument. (3 minutes)

**Position B** gives opening argument. (3 minutes)

**Position A** makes rebuttal. (2 minutes)

**Position B** makes rebuttal. (2 minutes)

**Position A** makes closing statement. (1 minute)

**Position B** makes closing statement. (1 minute)

At the conclusion of each debate, the audience (your fellow class members) will vote as to which side argued its position more effectively. NOTE: Do *not* automatically vote for the person whose position you agree with. Rather, concentrate on how well each person presented his argument and responded to that of the opposition.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 18

### Persuasive Speech

**Objective:** Writing a persuasive essay

#### Activity

Wright expresses some strong feelings he has about his life as a black boy/man in America. His experiences have caused him to have definite feelings about life in general. He states, "My life as a Negro in America had led me to feel—though my helplessness had made me try to hide it from myself—that the problems of human unity was more important than bread, more important than physical living itself; for I felt that without a common bond uniting men, without a continuous current of shared thought and feeling circulating through the social system, like blood coursing through the body; there could be no living worthy of being called human." (Pg. 318)

Pretend you are Wright trying to persuade your peers to stand with you on the issue of the importance of human unity above all else. You must write a speech that you will give at one of the meetings. Use any information or language from the text that will support your speech. Think creatively about other textual information you could use. Be prepared to share your speech with the class.