



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LitPlan Teacher Pack™

for

Black Boy

based on the book by
Richard Wright

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Black Boy
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11504 Hammock Point
Berlin MD 21811

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SHORT ANSWER STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *Black Boy*

Chapter 1

1. Who is the narrator?
2. Why did little Richard set the house on fire?
3. What happened to little Richard as punishment for setting the fire?
4. How and why did Richard kill the kitten?
5. Why did Richard's mother make him go to the store even though she knew he might be beaten again?
6. Why was Richard always hungry?
7. What did Richard do to pass the time of day when he was six years old?
8. How did Richard learn to count, and what did he learn in his first day of school?
9. What happened in court, and what effect did it have on Richard's attitude towards his father?
10. Why did Richard have to go to an orphans' home?
11. Why did Mrs. Wright and Richard go to see Mr. Wright? What happened?
12. How did Richard describe his father at the end of the chapter, in retrospect?

Chapter 2

1. Why didn't Granny want Richard to read story books?
2. Why did Granny hit Richard with a wet towel? Why does his punishment seem unjust to him?
3. On the trip to Arkansas, Richard becomes more aware of the separations between blacks and whites. When he asks his mother questions about racial differences, what is her reaction to him?
4. What happened to Uncle Hoskins? Why?
5. What two groups of men did Richard see when he and his mother and aunt returned to Granny's?
6. Why did the Wrights have to move again soon after they got to West Helena?
7. Why were Aunt Maggie and "uncle" forced to leave?
8. What was ironic about Betsy's death?

Chapters 3-4

1. Why did Richard move to Greenwood with Uncle Clark and Aunt Jody?
2. What fear forced Richard to ask to leave Greenwood?
3. What effect did Richard's mother's illness have on him?
4. Who was Granny's ally in trying to make Richard get religion?
5. Why did Addie beat Richard, and what was his reaction?
6. How did Granny get embarrassed in church?
7. Why did Richard write his first story?

ANSWER KEY SHORT ANSWER STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *Black Boy*

Chapter 1

1. Who is the narrator?
Richard Wright is the narrator; the book is an autobiography.
2. Why did little Richard set the house on fire?
He was playing with fire and just wanted to see what the curtains would look like as they were burning. It was indirectly an accident.
3. What happened to little Richard as punishment for setting the fire?
His mother almost beat him to death. He was very ill following the beating.
4. How and why did Richard kill the kitten?
Richard hanged the kitten. His father, in anger and trying to get some peace and quiet so he could sleep, told the boys to kill the kitten. He didn't mean it literally, but Richard did kill the kitten as a way of hitting back at his father and showing his hatred.
5. Why did Richard's mother make him go to the store even though she knew he might be beaten again?
She was teaching him to stand up for himself--to fight back and survive in the real world.
6. Why was Richard always hungry?
His father left home. Although his mother worked, she couldn't earn enough money to provide shelter and all the food and clothes the boys needed. Later when she became ill, hunger was even more of a problem.
7. What did Richard do to pass the time of day when he was six years old?
He went to the local saloon where people bought him drinks and urged him to repeat obscenities.
8. How did Richard learn to count, and what did he learn in his first day of school?
The coal man taught him to count. On the first day of school he learned lots of four-letter words, which he soaped on the neighbors' windows when he got home.
9. What happened in court, and what effect did it have on Richard's attitude towards his father?
Mrs. Wright and the boys went to court to try to get more child support from Mr. Wright. Mr. Wright smiled and lied to the judge, saying he was doing all he could. The judge ruled in his favor. Richard saw the injustice and lost any respect he had had for his father. He didn't want to see his father any more.

10. Why did Richard have to go to an orphans' home?
His mother became ill and could no longer support him.
11. Why did Mrs. Wright and Richard go to see Mr. Wright? What happened?
They went to ask him for money so they could move to live with Mrs. Wright's sister. The point was to get Richard out of the orphanage. They found Mr. Wright with another woman. He refused to give Richard anything but a nickel of charity, which Richard refused.
12. How did Richard describe his father at the end of the chapter, in retrospect?
". . . my father was a black peasant who had gone to the city seeking life, but who had failed in the city; a black peasant whose life had been hopelessly snarled in the city, and who had at last fled the city --"

Chapter 2

1. Why didn't Granny want Richard to read story books?
She was a very religious woman who believed all pleasurable things were sinful, that one would burn in hell for enjoying anything.
2. Why did Granny hit Richard with a wet towel? Why does his punishment seem unjust to him?
Richard told Granny she could "kiss back there" when she finished scrubbing him. Granny took great offense at such "obscenities" being said to her, so she beat him (and so did his mother later). He didn't realize the meaning of the words he had said, so his punishment seemed unfair to him.
3. On the trip to Arkansas, Richard becomes more aware of the separations between blacks and whites. When he asks his mother questions about racial differences, what is her reaction to him?
She brushed his questions off with a few bare facts. He later said, "She was not concealing facts, but feelings, attitudes, convictions, which she did not want me to know."
4. What happened to Uncle Hoskins? Why?
White men shot him because he would not heed their threats. They were jealous of his flourishing liquor business.
5. What two groups of men did Richard see when he and his mother and aunt returned to Granny's?
He saw soldiers and prisoners.
6. Why did the Wrights have to move again soon after they got to West Helena?
They had unknowingly moved in next to a whore house. Richard's peeking into the room next door led to an argument with the landlady, and she told them to leave.