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Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Black Boy
by Richard Wright

written by Michael McCoy

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ISBN-10 1-58049-892-2
ISBN-13 978-158049-892-0
Reorder No. 204990

Black Boy

To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

For *Black Boy*, we also have these materials:

Book
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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Name_____ Section_____ Date_____

[illegible]

Black Boy

Introduction

1. Right from the start, we are informed that *Black Boy* is an autobiography of a man who was born in 1945. At this time, World War II was ending, and the Civil Rights movement wasn't far off. Imagine you were growing up during this time of turmoil in the United States. Write a journal entry about what struggles you are facing at this time. What specific challenges would an African-American face that other citizens wouldn't?

Chapter 1

2. Whether it's talking when he should be quiet, lighting his house on fire, or killing a kitten, young Richard Wright is no stranger to trouble. As he reflects back on these episodes in *Black Boy*, it is clear that Wright knew what he was doing was wrong yet continued to do them despite this knowledge. While he doesn't directly apologize, we are lead to infer that he is sorry.

Think of a time when you did something that you knew was wrong and write an apology to the person you hurt. If you can't think of a time in your own life, write a card to Richard's mother as if you were Richard Wright. Be specific regarding how you feel.

3. Throughout his childhood, hunger is never far from Richard Wright. In *Black Boy*, he remembers, "whenever I felt hunger I thought of [my father] with a deep biological bitterness." Associating your father with something as painful as extreme hunger is not healthy for anyone, especially a young child.

Imagine Richard Wright is now a teenager and you are his psychologist. How would you help Richard forgive his father and move on with his life? What would you ask him and what would you expect him to say in return? Write a script of his visit to your office using the prompt below.

Psychologist: Richard, how did it feel when you father left? Did your feelings change after he had been gone for a long period of time?

Richard: I feel...

4. As Richard grows up, we see his mother place more responsibilities on him. During one episode Richard has the grocery money stolen from him repeatedly. Seemingly callous, his mother refuses to let him into the house until Richard has done his job. Do you think this is the right thing to do? Pick one side and write an advice column as if Richard's mother had written to you asking your opinion.

Chapter 2

- 5 Whether it's in church, at school, or various other places in society there are times when people need to feel like they fit in. Richard admits he has felt that way many times in his life, but the place where that feeling was the strongest was at church. Because his family all believed, they put a strong emphasis in being "saved." No matter how hard he tries, Richard explains he just can't feel God, but goes along with the church rituals anyway just so he will fit in.

Can you think of a time at school where you were "acting in conformity with what others expected?" Write an article for the school paper about the pressure to fit in and address whether this is a good thing. If you think it is a bad thing, suggest ways to resist the pressure.

6. Richard begins to notice that members of different races are treated differently at the train station on his way to Arkansas. It is then that he begins to question his mother as to what it means to have different color skin, especially as it pertains to his family. Richard is angry at the end of their conversation because he feels that she left information out, specifically the attitudes and feelings people have about skin color.

Write a conversation between Richard and his mother as if she did tell him about what being black meant to society at that time. Include if you think it would have helped Richard for his mother to address more of his concerns or do you think it was better for Richard to grow up not knowing what white people, in general, thought of him?

Response Journal

7. When Uncle Hoskins is killed, the reader is not filled in on all the details. After his death, Richard learns that the murder was at the hands of white men who were jealous of Uncle Hoskins' flourishing saloon. Instead of fighting back though Richard's family immediately moves away and puts his death behind him. Richard reports they didn't even have a funeral or time to grieve; instead, Uncle Hoskins was gone like he had never been there before.

At this time, the newspapers in the area were mostly run by and staffed with white men. Because of the racial tension, their reporting might not have been as objective as we have come to expect now. Knowing this, come up with a headline for the article that might have appeared in the newspaper regarding Uncle Hoskins' death.

8. Despite the fact that black people were frequently persecuted during this time in American history, in Chapter 3 we see Richard and his friends harassing another person just because he is different. Because the owner of the local corner store is Jewish, Richard and his friends feel like they are superior to him based on religion. Imagine you are the storeowner and are bothered by what Richard is saying. Write an e-mail telling him how you feel and explaining a little bit about Judaism and how the fundamental values are similar to those of Christianity. You may need to consult the Internet or alternative research pieces.

Chapter 3

9. Even at a young age, Richard and his friends have hostile feelings towards white people, mainly as a result of things they have heard from their parents. It is common knowledge in Richard's group that white people are enemy number one to black people. Make a list of reasons that are mentioned in the conversation between Richard and his friends that show why black people are just in hating white people. Do you think their judgment is fair? This question is NOT asking if you think racial hatred, in general, is right if people are justified in feeling the emotions they do. In one or two paragraphs, write a persuasive argument either for or against this statement:

The black community that Richard Wright belongs to is just in hating white people.

Use the list of arguments to support your side or refute these arguments with stronger points.

10. When Richard's mother falls ill, it becomes clear that she will no longer be able to care for her sons. Aunt Maggie takes Richard's brother to Detroit with her, and Richard is taken to Greenwood with Uncle Clark. For the first time in his life, Richard is living without his mother, father, or brother. Have you ever been away from home for a long period of time? What did you miss while you were away? Write a letter home describing how you felt, and highlight any similarities you think Richard may have felt. If you have not had this experience, pretend you are Richard writing a letter to his mother.
11. It isn't long after moving to Greenwood that Richard requests to be sent back to his grandmother's house. This request comes after he refuses to sleep on a bed where a girl had died. Uncle Clark says flat out to Richard, "we tried to make you happy," even though he insisted Richard use that bed. Pretend you are Uncle Clark, and you now have to write a letter back to Grandma to ask if Richard can come to live with her. Explain the situation, and how you feel about the incident. In your letter answer this question:

Do you think Richard asked to leave Uncle Clark's because he was genuinely scared of the bed or because he missed his mother?

Chapter 4

12. Being punished for a reason is one thing, but in Chapter 4 we see Richard punished for something he didn't do. As a result of being accused of eating walnuts when he shouldn't have, Richard refers to his aunt in an improper way for a schoolroom, acts insubordinately when told to go up to the front of the class, and runs away when he was supposed to stand still and take his lashing. In this incident, the commotion Richard causes by stating his innocence is far more than what would be caused if he admitted to eating the walnuts.

Write a short note to a relative of yours explaining the value of telling the truth opposed to lying. Make sure to relate what you say to the circumstances in the book, which are that lying frequently causes more problems than admitting the truth.

13. Even as a child, Richard is resistant to church and God. No matter how hard his family or friends try, Richard is determined not to have anything to do with church other than attending at his family's demand. Write a journal entry of a time where you have felt pressured to do something by people close to you. How did their insistence make you feel? If you resisted their heeds, write about the result of that. If you went along with their desires write about what the result was.
14. During one of his mandatory praying times, Richard picks up a piece of paper and a pencil and just writes. It is not an assignment for school or for anyone else to read. He writes for himself. Without being assigned a topic, write a poem. You can choose Indians as Richard did, something that is happening in your life now, a fictional situation, or any other topic you can think of.

Chapter 5

15. Even though he has never been to school consistently before, it takes Richard Wright only weeks to advance from the fifth grade to the sixth. While he is immensely proud and runs home to tell his family, Richard is also skeptical at first as to whether he can handle the workload.

Make a list of three things that you are good at and write a sentence of two explaining what you had to do to be successful at each one.

16. Richard precisely describes one of his classmates by writing, "In my class was a tall, black, rebellious boy who was bright in his studies and yet utterly fearless in his assertion of himself: he could break the morale of the class at any moment with his clowning and the teacher never found an adequate way of handling him."

Pair up with one of your classmates and write one or two sentences about the other person. Use descriptive language for both actions and appearance. Before reading what your partner has written, write one or two sentences about how you see yourself in class. Compare the two statements. Are they similar?

17. In order to help pay for food and clothes, Richard takes a job delivering newspapers from Chicago. One night we see a man confront Richard over the subject of the material. It is at this time that Richard realizes that he has been aiding the Ku Klux Klan by delivering their messages within the paper. Both Richard and his friend are humiliated that they could have done something like this without being aware.

Have you been duped into doing something you later regretted? If so, write a journal entry for that day. If not, imagine a situation where it could happen and write a journal entry for that situation.

Response Journal

18. It is common for Richard to receive beatings from his family as a punishment for his actions. In Chapter 5 we see his grandmother try to slap him only to fall and hurt herself. Richard adamantly defends himself, claiming that since he didn't touch her he couldn't possibly be at fault. Throughout the book, Richard has described countless incidents that he's involved in, such as the one with Aunt Addie at school, but never does he take responsibility for causing the commotion. Do you think Richard is as innocent as he describes in *Black Boy*, or do you think he is biased? Support your side with evidence from the book.
19. Richard never has a close bond with his grandfather. The two do not talk much and when they do it is usually a threat for Richard to behave. One thing that the two consistently do together is read and write letters to the U.S. Treasury regarding Richard's grandfather's pension. The cycle of Richard reading the letter to his grandfather and then writing back is just one example of how the whole family is constantly looking for another source of income. Suffering from hunger is a constant battle for Richard. This is a struggle many sixth graders do not have to worry about.

Imagine you were responsible for paying for your own food and clothes. Make a list of ways in which your life would be different. If this is a responsibility you already have, make a list of things you would like to do but can't because of other obligations.

Chapter 6

20. After selling newspapers doesn't pan out for Richard, he secures a job working as a laborer for a local white family. One day, while he is tending to his responsibilities, the woman of the house questions Richard about his schooling. She can't believe that he is continuing his education into the seventh grade and is even more shocked to hear Richard's dream of being a writer.

Can you recall a time when someone told you that you couldn't do something like the white woman told Richard he couldn't be a writer? If so, write letter to the person and tell them whether or not you accomplished your goal. If you cannot think of a time this has happened, write a letter to the white woman as if you are Richard Wright in 1959, a year before he died and fifteen years after *Black Boy* was published.

21. Through guilt and pressure, Richard finally allows himself to be baptized to the delight of his family and disgust of himself. Even though Richard later finds out that he isn't the only one who can't feel connected to God, he remains unhappy about the event. In fact, Richard feels taken advantage of. Write a letter to the pastor at the church as if you are Richard and explain to him how you feel after the baptism.
22. Chapter Six closes with Richard getting into a shouting match with Uncle Tom after the latter thought Richard's response to a question was disrespectful. Threatening him with a razor, Richard warns Uncle Tom to leave him alone. Uncle Tom can only shake his head and tell young Richard, "You think you're a man but you'll learn, and you'll learn the hard way." Write a paragraph to another student who doesn't understand what Uncle Tom means by this. Also predict how Richard might "learn the hard way" to be a man.

Chapter 7

23. It seems as if Richard Wright is always looking for a job. Trying to earn enough money to buy clothes, food, and help with household expenses keeps Richard busy throughout the summer. Richard expresses his like for some of those jobs, like getting a chance at reading the magazine section of the newspaper, and his disdain for others, like trying to track golf balls through the air. In a couple of sentences, write about what you do to earn money. Be specific about what you do and do not like about the job duties.
24. “A dog bite can’t hurt a nigger,” a tall white man said to Richard. Angry with the way he had been treated, Richard and the other black men at the brickyard curse at the white man. They know this statement is a lie he told just so he could avoid chaining up the dog.

Brainstorm about other things that people in positions of authority have told you that you know to be a lie. Think of an example and write a telegram to the person explaining how you feel. Since a telegram charges by the word, you are limited to twenty words, so make them effective ones.

25. By the age of 15, Richard Wright is a published author. Yet even with this title, he receives neither compensation nor congratulations from his friends or family. No one can understand why a black teenager would take the time to write a story let alone get it in a newspaper.

Many times in newspapers, there will be preview articles letting the community know what to expect in the coming days. Pretend you are a journalist, and you are writing a story about Richard Wright: the new young author in Jackson. Write an article summarizing Wright. You may fabricate quotes and attribute them to people in *Black Boy*, BUT they must represent how the person honestly felt. For instance, you may not have Richard’s grandmother talk about how she has always supported his writing and encouraged him in schoolwork.

Chapter 8

26. At the end of his ninth grade year, Richard is selected as his school's valedictorian. This honor loses importance to him when the principal demands that Richard read the speech that he has prepared for him. Richard is caught between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, he could read the principal's speech and have a better chance at earning a scholarship or a job or Richard could read the speech he had prepared and stick to his morals. What would you do in this situation? Rewrite the conversation between Richard and the principal, pretending that you are Richard. What would you tell the principal? Explain why you think it is important to Richard that he read his own work.
27. It is 1925, and Richard has the opportunity to address both blacks and whites at his graduation. For this exercise, write Richard's speech. Be creative and be specific. What do you think is important for the audience to hear at this auspicious event? Use examples from the book to support your main points.

Chapter 9

28. It has been noted that society becomes desensitized to events when they are portrayed in a certain way. For instance, those who watch the news may not feel sorrow for a murder because it is a regular occurrence usually reported the same way.

Living in the South, Richard Wright sees whites beating blacks constantly. He opens Chapter 9 with a scene at the clothing store he worked at where a black woman was beat because of a debt she could not pay.

How do you suspect you would react to seeing beatings or hearing about murders? Do you think that you would become accustomed to the constant violence? Write a newspaper editorial about a beating you've witnessed. Talk not only about what happened but also your reaction to the event. Give the editorial a clever headline, too.

29. After Richard is forced to leave his job at the clothing store, he runs into his friend Griggs. Griggs levels with Richard and tells him the reason he has so much trouble keeping a job is because he does not act as a black person should in the presence of white people.

Richard cannot see the sense in being two completely different people depending on who is around and is frustrated by this racial requirement. Can you think of a time where you had to maintain two different personalities for an extended period of time? If so, describe that situation. If not, write about how you chose not to do this.

30. It isn't long after Richard adapts to his new personality and lands himself a job at an optical center. Only a couple of months into the job, Richard encounters trouble from his two white co-workers. The boss, who is from the north, wishes to know what happened. We can only infer what would have happened if Richard would have told Mr. Crane the truth. Write out a conversation between Richard and Mr. Crane where Richard DOES explain to him the events that proceeded. How do you suspect Mr. Crane would react? How do you think Mr. Pease and Mr. Reynolds would have reacted?

Chapter 10

31. When Richard gets a job in the hotel, he seems to stick out in the negro crowd. While most gamble, he chooses not to. When the white guard pats the bottom of a black woman, Richard is appalled to learn that it happens virtually every night. In one or two paragraphs, answer this question using evidence from the book:

Is Richard unique in his feelings or do you think most black people feel this way but have learned to suppress their feelings?

32. Once he lands a job at the movie theater, it takes Richard only two weeks to amass the one hundred dollars he feels necessary to escape the South. He accomplishes this through stealing tickets, and later a gun, and canned fruit. Richard writes that he has never stolen anything since then, but he acknowledges having done it on these three occasions. Was Richard right in stealing from a racist society, or is stealing from others always wrong?

Make a list of situations in which you believe stealing might be justifiable, if you think stealing is never the right choice, explain why you believe it is not in a short personal opinion piece for your school paper.

33. “An hour later I was sitting in a Jim Crow coach, speeding northward, making the first lap of my journey to a land where I could live with a little less fear,” Richard Wright writes at the end of Chapter 10. On a journey like this, there must be so many emotions running through Richard’s body. Imagine you are Richard sitting on this train “speeding northward” and write a journal entry dealing specifically about your current feelings and what you anticipate when you reach Memphis.

Chapter 11

34. “Why was she treating me so kindly? It made me self-conscious,” Richard thinks to himself while eating at Mrs. Moss’ home. This statement demonstrates Richard’s uneasiness and unfamiliarity with kindness. Write a paragraph explaining to a classmate who doesn’t understand why he is so wary of hospitality.
35. It is clear that Richard feels uncomfortable with the situation at the Moss’ home. Between Bess and Mrs. Moss, Richard constantly feels pressure to take Bess for his own and to marry her. Early on, the reader can see that this is NOT what Richard wants.

Put yourself in Richard’s shoes. He has virtually no money, no home, and no friends. By marrying Bess, he could have all three. On the other hand, Richard doesn’t even know if he likes Bess because he has only been at the house a short while.

Pretend you are an advice columnist and Richard wrote a letter asking what he should do. What advice would you give him? Talk to Richard about how he is feeling and also about the pros and cons of getting married.

36. When Richard is finished looking for a job, he returns to the Moss home with a can of beans in his pocket. Bess quickly finds the can and insists that Richard have chicken with her instead. Richard feels very uncomfortable with this demand. Why? He is hungry, the food is free, and it is better than the beans he was planning on eating. In two paragraphs, write why you think Richard acts the way he does. In the second paragraph, write about what you would have done in a similar situation.
37. When Richard and Bess are sitting in the front room, Bess comes on strong to garner Richard’s love. Throughout this scene, Richard feels uncomfortable and torn between his desires and what he knows to be the right decision.

Right after this incident, Richard goes off to bed for the night. Pretend that you are Richard, and when you get to your room you write a letter to a friend. Write about the conflict in your head and whether you are satisfied with the decision you have made. Explain your feelings using evidence from the book.

Chapter 12

38. After Richard begins his work at the optical company, he becomes acquainted with Shorty, a fellow black person who works in the building. Shorty has a unique way of making a quarter quickly. In a few sentences write about how Shorty earns his lunch money.

This tactic appalls Richard. In the next paragraph write about why this bothers Richard and list ten legal things you could do if you had no money and needed to eat.

39. During lunch hour, the Negroes in the building would congregate and discuss their disdain for their white bosses. They would complain about specific incidents but not about the racial inequality as a whole. Why do you suppose this is? This seems to be a crucial hour for the Negro community in the building. In a paragraph or two, write about why you think that is the case. Do you see similar situations in your school?
40. Throughout his early life, Richard struggles with hunger. He is used to eating very little and stays very thin. One day a white man tries to help Richard with his plight. Re-write the scene where the white man offers Richard a dollar. This time have Richard accept the dollar. Include at least two of the following:
- What do you think the white man would say?
 - How does Richard feel at this time?
 - By accepting the money, Richard is changing how the races behave towards one another.
 - What is the repercussion of this?

Chapter 13

41. In his daily readings, Richard comes across a scathing article about H. L. Mencken. A white editorialist was furious over Mencken's writings, and this raised Richard's interest. Do your own research about Mencken, and write one or two paragraphs addressing your findings. Who was Mencken? What did he write about? Do you suppose he and Richard would have seen eye-to-eye as to race in America?
42. Thanks to his boss, Richard is soon able to get his hands on a library card and take books out on his own. He devours them. Reading anything he can get his hands on, Richard fills his head with the thoughts of classic and controversial authors. On some occasions, Richard is questioned as to the purpose of his constant reading. Mr. Falk seems to understand Richard's love for books and supports his quest for knowledge.

Pretend you are Richard receiving a literary award years later. Write your acceptance speech emphasizing Mr. Falk's impact on your life.

Chapter 14

43. Richard has a very clear plan for leaving and how to handle quitting his job. He waits until two days before he is to leave for Chicago before breaking the news.

Have you ever quit a job? Write a dialogue recounting a time when you had to tell your supervisor that you were not coming back to work. Explain to your boss how you felt.

If you have never quit a job before, write a journal entry for Richard the night before he is to quit his job. Speak about how Richard feels and why he feels the need to go north.

44. The first part of the book ends with Richard set to leave for Chicago. Predict what you think will happen in Part Two. Do you think he will make it to Chicago with his family? Will they find success there or continue on to a new city? In two paragraphs write about how you think *Black Boy* will end.

Chapter 15

45. To begin Part II of *Black Boy*, Richard Wright inserts a Negro folk song. The song is like a poem with its meaning to be inferred. Read the lines given to us in *Black Boy*, and write a few sentences about what you think the song refers to in regards to Richard's life.

If you desire, research the purpose of Negro folk songs and incorporate your findings in your response.

46. Riding the streetcar, on the way to Aunt Cleo's house, Richard sits next to a white man, a phenomenon Richard had never known. He is uncomfortable yet overjoyed to come to a place where the racial relations were completely different than anything he had ever experienced. Richard questions, "How could that possibly be? Was he aware of my blackness?"

Richard's mom had never experienced the racial indifference that her son was in the midst of. Write her a telegram of the event as if you are Richard. Prepare her for her journey north with the information you noticed as you came to Chicago.

Black Boy

47. Soon after arriving in Chicago, Richard accepts a job working for a Jewish couple as a porter. He is caught in a lie by the Jewish couple, and Richard refuses to admit his guilt. It is clear in their conversation that Mr. Hoffman knows Richard is lying and even knows why he lied, but Richard will not admit to his obvious guilt.

Beginning with Mr. Hoffman's statement, "I didn't think you would ever come back," re-write the conversation between Richard and Mr. Hoffman as if Richard had told the truth. How do you think Mr. Hoffman would have responded to hearing about Richard's exam?

48. You are an advice columnist responding to letters from people seeking answers. One day you open a letter from a young black adult asking what he should do about the head white chef spitting in the food. Write an advice column responding to the question. Take into consideration racial discrimination and the fact that Richard must hold onto his job. Are there any options that would allow him to resolve the situation without negative repercussions?

Chapter 16

49. It is in Chicago that Richard is finally exposed to academic groups, and varying solutions for the world, and black community specifically. Beginning with the Communists, and later the Garveyites, Richard is fascinated by what people believe. Although he is new to an academic environment, Richard is not easily swayed by the rhetoric of each group.

In one or two paragraphs, write about a time where someone has tried to persuade you to do or believe something. How did their insistence make you feel? Did you change your opinion and agree with them, or did you stand in opposition of that person? Give reasons for your actions.

50. Richard is forced to develop a “me first” attitude as he sells insurance policies to poor black families. Even though the people he meets are just as poor as he, Richard knows that he has to sell policies to them if he is to survive.

What do you think of this type of behavior? In an editorial about the prevalence of the “me first” attitude in American society explain if you think it is wrong or if it is all right to look after one’s self first. Think of an appropriate title for the article.

Chapter 17

51. The Great Depression hit the entire nation, but blacks were specifically at a disadvantage. The jobs that blacks held were the first to be cut, and because of racial discrimination employers were not apt to hire a black person when they could hire a white person. It is at this time that Richard is developing his political thoughts and beliefs. In a letter addressed to President Herbert Hoover, describe how Richard sees the plight of the black person, and what can be done.

Chapter 18

52. As Richard is preparing himself for the John Reed Club he states, "I was cynical and I would rather have heard a white man say that he hated Negroes, which I could have readily believed, than to have heard him say that he respected Negroes, which would have made me doubt him."

It seems that Richard is saying he would rather be disliked than liked. To most, a comment like this seems hard to believe. Write your response to Richard's statement in an e-mail to Richard. Do you think his feelings are valid or off base?

53. As Richard becomes more and more involved with the John Reed Club, he becomes intertwined with the Communist Party. Make a list of at least ten things you know, or believe, about the Communist Party. Then, do some research to find out whether your statements are true or false.
54. In Chapter 18, we see more headlines in bold print included in the *Black Boy* text. Wright does this to draw our attention to certain facts. Take 10 different times in Wright's life, and write a succinct headline about them. Make sure to have a headline for the most important events or times in his life. You may go back in the book to refresh yourself.

Chapter 19

55. When Richard attends his first unit meeting, the situation is similar to the day when he returned to school. Not thinking he was smart enough, Richard studied every minute of every day, convinced that it was the only way he would make it. At the unit meeting, Richard is, at first, uncomfortable being referred to as a writer. He later discovers that he is, possibly, the most intellectual of the entire unit.

Write a letter to Richard, telling him of a time where you went in feeling less than adequate only to find you were ahead of the curve. If you cannot think of a time that matches this situation, refer to a book you have read or a movie you have seen and write to Richard about that character's situation.

56. There is a saying that you fear what you don't understand. It seems that phrase sums up how the Communist Party felt about Richard in many instances. Brainstorm three times that Richard faced persecution or questioning because of his, seemingly harmless, actions. Take this list and answer the following questions:

What could you tell the Communist Party that could help them understand Richard's actions?

57. It is clear to the reader that Richard fancies the study of racial relations more so than politics. This is perhaps the reason why he and the Communist Party are at constant odds with one another. Yet the Communist Party provided the one atmosphere where Richard could forge relationships with people and be a part of a group that were "color blind."

Do you think Richard was right to leave the Party the way he did, or should he have toughed it out for the benefits it brought? All of a sudden, Richard was able to have friends, he had an outlet to write, and saw eye to eye on many key issues of Communism. Why, in your opinion, did the relationship not work out. Answer this question in a letter to Buddy Neelson as if you are Richard.

Chapter 20

58. Richard discovers just how forceful the Communist Party is and how weak his friend is at the May Day parade. Marching together, black and white Communists make their way around the Loop. When the white leader of the unit requests that Richard leave, his friend does not utter a word about inviting him to march.

This event sticks with Richard as he stands in disbelief of what happened. Do you consider the event to be politically or racially motivated? Write to Richard explaining how you saw the event and offer him necessary advice.

59. Richard notices, after some time, that the Communist Party is not able to achieve the goals it set out to achieve because of constant internal disputes among members. Can you think of a team or group you have been part of that was unable to succeed because of internal strife? Write a list of rules and regulations that you consider vital to a group's overall harmony. Give a brief explanation as to why you think each rule is important.

W r a p - U p

60. African-American history has gone through an up and down period since the Civil War. Draw a timeline of events from the Civil War to present day. Identify at least ten significant events that have occurred for blacks.

Once you have completed the timeline answer this question in an essay:

During which time period did blacks make the greatest stride towards achieving equality? Do you think they have achieved equally in the present.

Black Boy

Test

1. Why isn't Richard's father part of his life?
 - A. He was murdered by Southern whites.
 - B. He died not long after Richard was born.
 - C. He did not return one night after work.
 - D. Richard's mother told him to stay away from the family.

2. Who or what was Kate Adams?
 - A. Richard's first girlfriend
 - B. the ship that took Richard and his family to Memphis
 - C. the teacher who taught Richard to read
 - D. the boat that Richard and his brother played on each day

3. Uncle Hoskins worked as a _____; when he didn't come home after work one day, his family was worried and later found out _____.
 - A. bartender... he was murdered by white people.
 - B. porter... he ran off to the north.
 - C. bartender... he ran off with another woman.
 - D. cook... he ran off to the north.

4. Starting at a young age, Richard and his friends comment on how whites treat blacks. They speak about how whites are mean and lazy. Richard's friend says something in regards to the smell of the different races. What is it?
 - A. "White people stink like yesterday's garbage."
 - B. "My ma says white folks smell like dead folks."
 - C. "Niggers smell from sweat. But white folks smell *all* the time."
 - D. Both B and C

Response Journal

5. When Richard was young, his mother fell ill. What does the doctor say is wrong with her?
 - A. She has cancer.
 - B. She suffered a stroke.
 - C. malnutrition
 - D. She has a cold and will feel better in a few days.
6. Richard asks to leave Uncle Clark's and Aunt Jody's because
 - A. he misses his mother.
 - B. his aunt and uncle beat him.
 - C. he does not want to sleep where someone had died.
 - D. he is getting beaten up at school.
7. Richard stands apart from other Southern black children in that
 - A. he always has food to eat.
 - B. he can read and write.
 - C. he never sees racism.
 - D. he is a faithful member at church.
8. Richard gets in trouble for
 - A. setting the house on fire.
 - B. telling his aunt to die
 - C. eating cake in class
 - D. All of the above
9. Richard says, at different times, that two things would make him belief in God. What are they?
 - A. seeing an angel like Gabriel
 - B. hearing God talk to him
 - C. if he saw the suffering in the world stop
 - D. if he had food to eat and shelter every night

Black Boy

10. One of the men in Richard's neighborhood tells him that he should stop selling newspapers. Why?
 - A. The newspapers cost too much.
 - B. The papers are filled with Ku Klux Klan doctrines.
 - C. The papers are poorly written.
 - D. No one in the neighborhood can read.
11. Why does Richard agree to get baptized?
 - A. He comes to see that God loves him
 - B. The girl he likes thinks it's important
 - C. His family and friends pressure him into doing it
 - D. Richard doesn't get baptized
12. Identify the three jobs that Richard held while growing up.
 - A. banker
 - B. porter
 - C. reporter
 - D. doctor's aid
 - E. delivery boy
 - F. sanitation worker
 - G. water boy
13. Why does the white boss tell Richard not to worry when Richard is bitten by the dog at the brickyard?
 - A. The bite did not break the skin.
 - B. A dog bite can't hurt a black person.
 - C. The bite doesn't look infected.
 - D. The boss calls a doctor to look at the wound for Richard.

Response Journal

14. It seems as if Richard is getting along quite well at the optical company, but suddenly Richard is attacked by his two white co-workers. Why do Pease and Reynolds say they're beating Richard up?
- A. Richard did not refer to Pease as Mr. Pease
 - B. Being black is a good enough reason to deserve a beating
 - C. Richard asks to learn the trade
 - D. Richard constantly talks back to them
15. When Richard travels to Memphis, he finds a room
- A. with his Aunt Cleo.
 - B. at a local shelter.
 - C. with Mrs. Moss on Beale Street.
 - D. at a whorehouse.
16. What do Richard and Harrison do together?
- A. read and talk about books
 - B. beg for money from white people
 - C. refuse to talk after their bosses try to cause trouble
 - D. fight
17. Upon first arriving in Chicago, what was Richard's opinion of the city?
- A. It is a big city with a lot of opportunities.
 - B. depressing and mocked his fantasies
 - C. beautiful architecture, but too cold for his liking
 - D. just like the cities he had lived before
18. Richard is well aware that Cooke and Brand don't get along, but he never dreams that a fight would break out at work. What happens as a result of the altercation?
- A. All four black workers are fired.
 - B. Cooke and Brand were beaten by their black bosses.
 - C. Nothing happens.
 - D. All the test animals are mixed up between the cages.

Black Boy

19. Richard follows Sol's lead and joins _____. It is there that Richard's given a chance to contribute to the club's _____ by _____.
- A. the Chicago John Reed Club... magazine... writing for Left Front.
 - B. Communist Party... political rules and regulations... writing for Masses.
 - C. the Chicago John Reed Club... politics... leading the group in a revolution.
 - D. Communist Party... newspaper... handing it out on the streets.
20. What sours Richard's taste for New York City?
- A. It is much colder than Chicago.
 - B. The convention is a waste of time.
 - C. There is virtually nowhere a black man can sleep.
 - D. He misses his family.

Notes

Black Boy

Test
Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

4. _____

14. _____

5. _____

15. _____

6. _____

16. _____

7. _____

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

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Black Boy

Test
Answer Key

1. ___C___

2. ___B___

3. ___A___

4. ___D___

5. ___B___

6. ___C___

7. ___B___

8. ___A___

9. ___A,C___

10. ___B___

11. ___C___

12. ___B,E,G___

13. ___B___

14. ___A___

15. ___C___

16. ___D___

17. ___B___

18. ___D___

19. ___A___

20. ___C___

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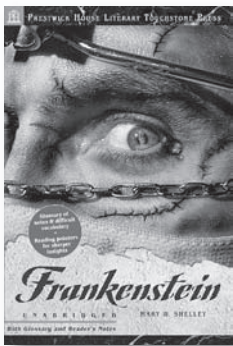
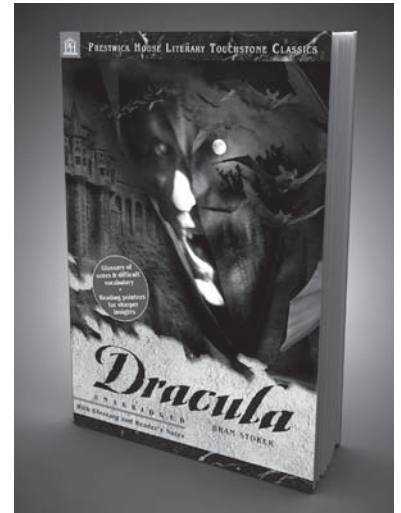
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