



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Native Son

based on the book by  
Richard Wright

Written by  
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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR  
Richard Wright

WRIGHT, Richard (1908-1960). The American author Richard Wright pictured with brutal realism what it meant to be black in a white society. His writings speak with the raw voice of an anguish not often evident in novels.

Richard Nathaniel Wright was born on Sept. 4, 1908, on a plantation near Natchez, Mississippi. His father was a mill hand, and his mother taught in a country school. Young Wright's childhood was generally one of poverty, frustration, and despair. When he was 5, his father left the family, and when he was not yet 10, his mother became paralyzed. He was sent to live with relatives. At 15 he left home and for several years drifted from one city to another, working at whatever jobs he could find. In Chicago he worked nights in the post office. Days he spent reading and writing. During the depression of the 1930's, he lost his job and had to go on relief. Not long afterward he joined the Communist party, as did thousands of other young Americans at the time.

In 1937 Wright moved to New York City, where he worked on a Federal Writers' Project. His first published book, *Uncle Tom's Children*, appeared in 1938. It was a collection of four stories dealing with racial prejudice and violence in the South. But it was Wright's novel *Native Son* (1940) that brought him world fame. This powerful story of a Chicago black driven to crime was made into a play by Wright and Paul Green. It was successfully staged in 1941.

Wright's first marriage--to a ballet dancer--ended in divorce. In 1941 he married Ellen Poplar of New York City, and they had two daughters. Wright became increasingly disillusioned with the Communist party and finally left it. In 1945 he published *Black Boy*, an autobiography of his childhood and youth. It confirmed him as a major American writer.

His discontent with American society persisted. As a youth he had experienced not only hardship but vicious racial prejudice as well, and as a man he continued to encounter it. In 1946 he and his white wife left the United States to live in Paris.

Wright wrote several novels during the next 14 years, but they were not well received. He also wrote some travel books and other nonfiction. On November 28, 1960, he died in Paris of a heart attack.

---- Courtesy of Compton's Learning Company

## INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Native Son* by Richard Wright. It includes eighteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to some background to the novel through a bulletin board activity. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are done by "book" divisions (Book One: Fear, Book Two: Flight, Book Three: Fate). Students have approximately 20 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. If your school has the appropriate machinery, it might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

A lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is a **group activity** in which students work in small groups to discuss symbolism, imagery and themes from the novel.

The group activity is followed by a **reports and discussion** session in which the groups share their ideas about the themes with the entire class; thus, the entire class is exposed to information about all of the themes and the entire class can discuss each theme based on the nucleus of information brought forth by each of the groups.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to inform: students explain how the title of the first "book" (Fear) is appropriate. The second assignment is to express personal opinions: students will have read several articles related to the ideas presented in the novel. They will review their notes and write a composition explaining their own ideas about the topic of their research. The third assignment is to persuade: students persuade you that Bigger's sentence was (or was not) "just"; he did or did not get what he deserved.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment project**. Students are required to read five different nonfiction articles related in some way to *Native Son*. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer test for students who need more of a challenge.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **resource sections** include suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. Only the student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *Native Son*

1. Through reading *Native Son* students will gain a better understanding of racial issues facing Americans.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will consider the central themes of the book: a. The plight of the black man; that is, the inherent problems a black person had/has in our society b. The idea of seeing a person as *a person* rather than a *black* person or a *white* person c. How we face and attempt to overcome racial prejudice d. The influence of Communism in America e. The functioning of our criminal justice system relating to racial issues
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *Native Son* as they relate to the author's theme development.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas  
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
  - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - d. To encourage logical thinking
  - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *Native Son*

Date Assigned	Assignment	Completion Date
	Book One: Fear	
	Book Two: Flight	
	Book Three: Fate	

UNIT OUTLINE - *Native Son*

<b>1</b>  Introduction	<b>2</b>  PVR Book One	<b>3</b>  Project/Library	<b>4</b>  Study ?s Book One PVR Book Two	<b>5</b>  Read Book Two
<b>6</b>  Writing Assignment #1	<b>7</b>  Study ?s Book Two PVR Book Three	<b>8</b>  Read Book Three	<b>9</b>  Study ?s Book Three  Extra Questions	<b>10</b>  Vocabulary
<b>11</b>  Writing Assignment #2	<b>12</b>  Group Activity	<b>13</b>  Group Reports & Discussion	<b>14</b>  Nonfiction Reports	<b>15</b>  Nonfiction Reports
<b>16</b>  Writing Assignment #3	<b>17</b>  Review	<b>18</b>  Test		

P=Preview Study Questions V=Prereading Vocabulary Worksheets R=Read



## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To introduce the *Native Son* unit.
2. To distribute books and other related materials
3. To preview the study questions for Book One
4. To familiarize students with the vocabulary for Book One

NOTE: This introduction requires that you have put up a bulletin board as follows:

Title the board NATIVE SON. Under the title, divide the board into three sections and title each: FEAR, FLIGHT and FATE. In the FEAR section, place pictures of things which cause fear or people who look afraid. In the FLIGHT section, place pictures of things in flight or fleeing (airplane, bird, person running away, etc.). In the FATE section, place pictures of things that represent different fates of people (person in jail, person winning the lottery, poor person, rich person, etc.).

### Activity #1

Ask students to look at the bulletin board. (If you do not have a bulletin board, you can tape the pictures noted above onto bulletin board paper on the chalk board or on a wall.) Explain that the book students are about to read is divided into three sections titled FEAR, FLIGHT, and FATE. Explain that the meanings of these three words as titles for the sections of the book are significant.

Point out the examples of FEAR. Ask students what things in their lives make them fearful.

Ask students to define FLIGHT. What kinds of flight are there? Does FLIGHT imply freedom (as the symbolic bird flying) or can it imply other things, too? What kinds of things can it imply?

Ask students to define FATE. What is fate? Who, if anyone or anything, controls our fates? Do we have any control over our own destinies?

### Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *Native Son*

### PROMPT

The title of the first book of *Native Son* is "Fear." Your assignment is to write a composition in which you explain why the title "Fear" is appropriate for the first section of this book.

### PREWRITING

In your mind (and with your text if necessary) review all the possible meanings of the word "fear" in Book One. Jot them down on a piece of paper. Include any appropriate examples from the text to illustrate your ideas.

Look at your notes. Try to find a way to make one statement which will include all of your ideas, all the facets of "fear" in this section of the novel. That one statement will become your thesis, your main idea for your composition.

### DRAFTING

Write a paragraph in which you introduce your thesis, your main idea.

Write one paragraph for each of the different facets of "fear" in Book One. In each paragraph use a topic sentence to state your idea and then use examples from the text to support your statement.

Write a paragraph in which you bring together all of your ideas and make your conclusions and concluding remarks.

### PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.