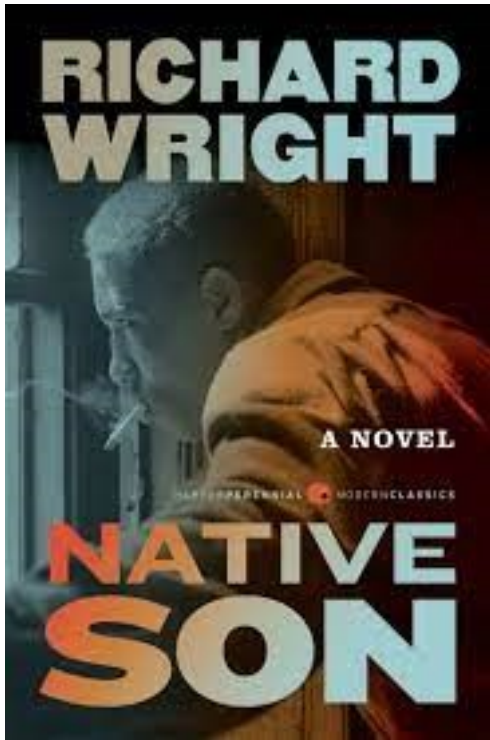


# NATIVE SON



*Adult*

## Book Summary:

Set in Chicago in the 1930's, a young black man's fear and perceived oppression, cause him to make life-altering decisions.

## Summary of Concerns:

This book contains violence; inflammatory racial commentary; controversial social commentary; sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity/derogatory terms; and alcohol use.

## Mitigating Factor:

Illustrates the destructive nature of racism, oppression and inequality on oneself and society.

**By Richard Wright**

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**3** / 5

**Minor Restricted**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
ix	Nevertheless, Wright knew, blacks and whites alike continued to cling to a range of fantasies about the true nature of the relationship between the races even as the nation lurched inexorably toward a possible collapse over the fundamental question of justice for the despised African American minority.
xvi	The remaining prototypes of Bigger, however, distinguished themselves by the way in which their antisocial behavior was linked to their hatred of whites.
xviii	<p>In material expurgated by the Book-of-the-Month Club (but restored in this edition of the novel) Bigger responds sexually to a newsreel that shows Mary and other apparently wealthy, carefree, young white women cavorting on a beach in Florida. In a scene that particularly appalled the Club, Bigger and a friend masturbate soon after in the movie house. Bigger essentially rapes his girlfriend Bessie before killing her. Wright makes it clear that Bigger's harsh upbringing has left his sexuality contaminated with feelings of aggression and violence toward women, black and white. Because the sexuality of white women is flaunted in movies and magazines but absolutely forbidden to black men, Bigger and men like him sometimes develop a potentially murderous fixation on these women. Rape may then acquire the illusion of being a political act; but the underlying threat to women is real and deadly.</p> <p>...These details included copious examples of raw white racism, especially in depicting the black defendant as hardly more than an animal.</p>
xix	He worked hard to evoke and dramatize the sordid, unstable reality of his main character's inner life, which matched the sordidness and instability imposed on Bigger by white racism and the deep effects of that racism on black culture.
14	<p>And, too, they had never held up a white man before. They had always robbed Negroes. They felt that it was much easier and safer to rob their own people, for they knew that white policemen never really searched diligently for Negroes who committed crimes against other Negroes.</p> <p>...They had the feeling that the robbing of Blum's would be a violation of ultimate taboo; it would be a trespassing into territory where the full wrath of an alien white world would be turned loose upon them; in short, it would be a symbolic challenge of the white world's rule over them; a challenge which they yearned to make, but were afraid to.</p>
16	<p>"Yeah; them old white landlords sure don't give much heat."          "And they always knocking at your door for money."</p>
18	Then they guffawed, partly at themselves and partly at the vast white world that sprawled and towered in the sun before them.
19	<p>"They don't let us do nothing."          "Who?"          "The white folks."          ..."I swear to God I can't. I know I oughtn't think about it, but I can't help it. Every time I think about it I feel like somebody's poking a red-hot iron down my throat. Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I'm on the outside of the world peeping in through a knothole in the fence. . . ."</p>

Page	Content
21	<p>“What in hell can a man do?” Bigger asked, turning to Gus.  “Get drunk and sleep it off.”</p>
23	<p>“How come? You scared ‘cause he’s a white man?”</p>
24	<p>“If old Blum was a black man, you-all would be itching to go. ‘Cause he’s white, everybody’s scared.”</p>
29	<p>They bought tickets and walked into the darkened movie and took seats. The picture had not yet started and they sat listening to the pipe organ playing low and soft. Bigger moved restlessly and his breath quickened; he looked round in the shadows to see if any attendant was near, then slouched far down in his seat. He glanced at Jack and saw that Jack was watching him out of the corners of his eyes. They both laughed.  “You at it again?” Jack asked.  “I’m polishing my nightstick,” Bigger said.  They giggled.  “I’ll beat you,” Jack said.  “Go to hell.”  The organ played for a long moment on a single note, then died away.  “I’ll bet you ain’t even hard yet,” Jack whispered.  “I’m getting hard.”  “Mine’s like a rod,” Jack said with intense pride.  “I wished I had Bessie here now,” Bigger said.  “I could make old Clara moan now.”  They sighed.  “I believe that woman who passed saw us.”  So what?”  “If she comes back I’ll throw it in her.”  “You a killer.”  “If she saw it she’d faint.”  “Or grab it, maybe.”  “Yeah.”  Bigger saw Jack lean forward and stretch out his legs, rigidly.  “You gone?”  “Yee-eeah. . . .”  “You pull off fast. . . .”  Again they were silent. Then Bigger leaned forward, breathing hard.  “I’m gone. . . . God. . . . damn. . . .”  They sat still for five minutes, slumped down in their seats. Finally, they straightened.  “I don’t know where to put my feet now,” Bigger said, laughing. “Let’s take another seat.”  “O.K.”</p>
32	<p>“I’d like to be there.”  “You can,” Bigger said. “But you’d be hanging from a tree like a bunch of bananas. . . .”</p>
33	<p>“Rich people don’t like Communists.”  . . . “Ah, them rich white women’ll go to bed with anybody, from a poodle on up.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>They even have their chauffeurs. Say," Jack said, punching Bigger in the ribs, "if you run across anything too much for you to handle at that place, let me know."            ...Sure, it was all a game and white people knew how to play it. And rich white people were not so hard on Negroes; it was the poor whites who hated Negroes. They hated Negroes because they didn't have their share of the money. His mother had always told him that rich white people liked Negroes better than they did poor whites. He felt that if he were a poor white and did not get his share of the money, then he would deserve to be kicked. Poor white people were stupid. It was the rich white people who were smart and knew how to treat people.</p>
43	<p>He was going among white people, so he would take his knife and his gun; it would make him feel that he was the equal of them, give him a sense of completeness. Then he thought of a good reason why he should take it; in order to get to the Dalton place, he had to go through a white neighborhood. He had not heard of any Negroes being molested recently, but he felt that it was always possible.</p>
44	<p>Suppose a police saw him wandering in a white neighborhood like this? It would be thought that he was trying to rob or rape somebody. He grew angry. Why had he come to take this goddamn job? He could have stayed among his own people and escaped feeling this fear and hate.</p>
49	<p>And he suddenly remembered the many times his mother had told him not to look at the floor when talking with white folks or asking for a job. He lifted his eyes and saw Mr. Dalton watching him closely. He dropped his eyes again.</p>
68	<p>He knew that they would not have cared if he had made himself more comfortable, but his moving would have called attention to himself and his black body. And he did not want that. These people made him feel things he did not want to feel. If he were white, if he were like them, it would have been different. But he was black. So he sat still, his arms and legs aching.</p>
74	<p>Jan ordered a fifth of rum and poured a round. Bigger felt the liquor warming him. After a second drink Jan began to talk.</p>
75	<p>"Listen, Bigger, that's what we want to stop. That's what we Communists are fighting. We want to stop people from treating others that way. I'm a member of the Party. Mary sympathizes. Don't you think if we got together we could stop things like that?"            "I don't know," Bigger said; he was feeling the rum rising to his head. "There's a lot of white people in the world."            ...He said nothing. He drained his glass and Jan poured another round. He was getting drunk enough to look straight at them now.</p>
77	<p>Bigger drove in silence. He heard the faint, musical gurgle of liquor.</p>
78	<p>...Through the rear mirror he saw her tilt the bottle and drink.            "Maybe Bigger wants another one, Jan. Ask him."            "Oh, say, Bigger! Here; take a swig!"            He slowed the car and reached back for the bottle; he tilted it twice, taking two huge swallows.            ...Bigger wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and continued driving slowly through the dark park. Now and then he heard the half-empty bottle of rum</p>

Page	Content
	<p>gurgling. They getting plastered, he thought, feeling the effect of the rum creeping outward to his fingers and upward to his lips. Presently, he heard Mary giggle. Hell, she's plastered already! The car rolled slowly round and round the sloping curves. The rum's soft heat was spreading fanwise out rom his stomach, engulfing his whole body. He was not driving; he was simply sitting and floating along smoothly through darkness. His hands rested lightly on the steering wheel and his body slouched lazily down in the seat. He looked at the mirror; Mary was lying flat on her back in the rear seat and Jan was bent over her. He saw a faint sweep of white thigh. They plastered, all right, he thought. He pulled the car softly round the curves, looking at the road before him one second and up at the mirror the next. He heard Jan whispering; then he heard them both sigh. Filled with a sense of them, his muscles grew gradually taut. He sighed and sat up straight, fighting off the stiffening feeling in his loins. But soon he was slouched again. His lips were numb. I'm almost drunk, he thought. His sense of the city and park fell away; he was floating in the car and Jan and Mary were in back, kissing, spooning. ... "I'll call you in the morning before I go."</p> <p>"Sure. What time?"</p> <p>"About eight-thirty."</p> <p>"Gee, but I hate to see you go to Detroit." "I hate to go too. But I got to. You see, honey, I got to make up for being bad with you down in Florida. I got to do what Mother and Father say for awhile."</p> <p>"I hate to see you go just the same."</p> <p>"I'll be back in a couple of days."</p> <p>"A couple of days is a long time."</p> <p>"You're silly, but you're sweet," she said, laughing and kissing him.</p> <p>"You better drive on, Bigger," Jan called.</p> <p>He swung the car out of the park and headed for Forty-sixth Street.</p> <p>"I'll get out here, Bigger!" He stopped the car. Bigger heard them speak in whispers.</p> <p>...Jan stood at the front door of the car and held out his palm. Bigger shook timidly.</p> <p>"It's been great meeting you, Bigger," Jan said.</p> <p>"O.K.," Bigger mumbled.</p> <p>"I'm damn glad I know you. Look. Have another drink."</p> <p>Bigger took a big swallow.</p> <p>"You better give me one, too, Jan. It'll make me sleep," Mary said.</p> <p>"You're sure you haven't had enough?"</p> <p>"Aw, come on, honey."</p> <p>She got out of the car and stood on the curb. Jan gave her the bottle and she tilted it.</p> <p>"Whoa!" Jan said.</p> <p>"What's the matter?"</p> <p>"I don't want you to pass out."</p> <p>"I can hold it."</p> <p>Jan tilted the bottle and emptied it, then laid it in the gutter. He fumbled clumsily in his pockets for something. He swayed; he was drunk.</p> <p>"You lose something, honey?" Mary lisped; she, too, was drunk.</p>

Page	Content
80	Mary slumped down in the seat and sighed. Her legs sprawled wide apart. The car rolled along. Bigger's head was spinning. ...She was very drunk.
81	She's drunk, really drunk, Bigger thought.
82	"I sure am drunk. . . ." ...But she was beautiful, slender, with an air that made him feel that she did not hate him with the hate of other white people. But, for all of that, she was white and he hated her. ..."I didn't know I was sho drunk," she mumbled. He led her slowly up the narrow stairs to the kitchen door, his hand circling her waist and the tips of his fingers feeling the soft swelling of her breasts.
84	He stared at her dim face, the forehead capped with curly black hair. He eased his hand, the fingers spread wide, up the center of her back and her face came toward him and her lips touched his, like something he had imagined. He stood her on her feet and she swayed against him. He tightened his arms as his lips pressed tightly against hers and he felt her body moving strongly. The thought and conviction that Jan had had her a lot flashed through his mind. He kissed her again and felt the sharp bones of her hips move in a hard and veritable grind. Her mouth was open and her breath came slow and deep. He lifted her and laid her on the bed. Something urged him to leave at once, but he leaned over her, excited, looking at her face in the dim light, not wanting to take his hands from her breasts. She tossed and mumbled sleepily. He tightened his fingers on her breasts, kissing her again, feeling her move toward him. He was aware only of her body now; his lips trembled.
86	"You're dead drunk! You stink with whiskey!"
87	The reality of the room fell from him; the vast city of white people that sprawled outside took its place.
89	He stood with her body in his arms in the silent room and cold facts battered him like waves sweeping in from the sea: she was dead; she was white; she was a woman; he had killed her; he was black; he might be caught; he did not want to be caught; if he were they would kill him.
103	"Wasn't nobody looking at her," Bigger said. "You looked under my dress when I was buttoning my shoes!"
107	Now, who on earth would think that he, a black timid Negro boy, would murder and burn a rich white girl and would sit and wait for his breakfast like this? Elation filled him.
113	Would any of the white faces all about him think that he killed a rich white girl? No! They might think he would steal a dime, rape a woman, get drunk, or cut somebody; but to kill a millionaire's daughter and burn her body? He smiled a little, feeling a tingling sensation enveloping all his body. He saw it all very sharply and simply: act like other people thought you ought to act, yet do what you wanted.
114	To Bigger and his kind white people were not really people; they were a sort of great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead, or like a deep swirling river stretching suddenly at one's feet in the dark. As long as he and his black folks

Page	Content
	<p>did not go beyond certain limits, there was no need to fear that white force. ...He would dream of making a stand against that white force, but that dream would fade when he looked at the other black people near him.</p>
115	<p>But he felt that such would never happen to him and his black people, and he hated them and wanted to wave his hand and blot them out.</p>
125	<p>“Mary was drunk last night. I hope nothing’s happened to her.”          ...“I went to her room just after she came in. . . . She was too drunk to talk. She was drunk, I tell you. I never thought she’d come home in that condition.”</p>
126	<p>Oh, shucks! The girl was drunk. That was it. Mary was so drunk that she didn’t know what she was doing.</p>
131	<p>He knew that she was trying to see how badly he wanted her, trying to see how much power she still had over him. He grabbed her arm and pulled her to him, kissing her long and hard, feeling as he did so that she was not responding. When he took his lips away he looked at her with eyes full of reproach and at the same time he felt his teeth clamping and his lips tingling slightly with rising passion.</p>
132	<p>When he kissed her this time she responded a little. To let her know that he wanted her he allowed her to draw his tongue into her mouth.</p>
133	<p>“Kiss me, honey.”          He felt her relax completely; he kissed her and she drew him to the bed. They sat down. Gently, she took the money from his hand.</p>
134	<p>Finally, his arm about her waist felt her body relax into a softness he knew and wanted. She rested her head on the pillow; he put the money in his pocket and leaned over her.          “Gee, honey. I been wanting you bad.”          ...He placed his hands on her breasts just as he had placed them on Mary’s last night and he was thinking of that while he kissed her. He took his lips away for breath and heard Bessie say:          “Don’t stay away so long from me, hear, honey?”          ...He kissed her again and he felt her arm lifting above his head and he heard the click as the light went out. He kissed her again, hard.          ...They were still a moment longer; then she rose. He waited. He heard her clothes rustling in the darkness; she was undressing. He got up and began to undress. Gradually, he began to see in the darkness; she was on the other side of the bed, her dark body like a shadow in the denser darkness surrounding her. He heard the bed creak as she lay down. He went to her, folding her in his arms, mumbling.          “Gee, kid.”          He felt two soft palms holding his face tenderly and the thought and image of the whole blind world which had made him ashamed and afraid fell away as he felt her as a fallow field beneath him stretching out under a cloudy sky waiting for rain, and he slept in her body, rising and sinking with the ebb and flow of her blood, being willingly dragged into a warm night sea to rise renewed to the surface to face a world he hated and wanted to blot out of existence, clinging close to a fountain whose warm waters washed and cleaned his senses, cooled them, made them strong and keen again to see and smell and touch and taste and</p>

Page	Content
	<p>hear, cleared them to end the tiredness and to reforge in him a new sense of time and space;—after he had been tossed to dry upon a warm sunlit rock under a white sky he lifted his hand slowly and heavily and touched Bessie’s lips with his fingers and mumbled,  “Gee, kid.”  “Bigger.”  ...Then, like the long withdrawing sound of a receding wave, the sense of night and sea and warmth went from him and he lay looking in the darkness at the shadowy outline of Bessie’s body, hearing his and her breathing.</p>
139	<p>Most nights she was too tired to go out; she only wanted to get drunk. She wanted liquor and he wanted her. So he would give her the liquor and she would give him herself. He had heard her complain about how hard the white folks worked her; she had told him over and over again that she lived their lives when she was working in their homes, not her own. That was why, she told him, she drank.</p>
142	<p>He lifted the glass and drained the liquor and set it down and leaned forward and toyed with the cigarette in his fingers.</p>
147	<p>Her lips smiled faintly and she lifted her hand and touched his face with her fingers. He knew that she was fighting out in her feelings the question of just how much he meant to her. She grabbed his hand and squeezed it, telling him in the pressure of her fingers that she wanted him.</p>
163	<p>“Well, you see ’em one way and I see ’em another. To me, a nigger’s a nigger.”  “But he’s sort of a problem boy. He’s not really bad.”</p>
164	<p>He was conscious of this quiet, warm, clean, rich house, this room with this bed so soft, the wealthy white people moving in luxury to all sides of him, whites living in a smugness, a security, a certainty that he had never known. The knowledge that he had killed a white girl they loved and regarded as their symbol of beauty made him feel the equal of them, like a man who had been somehow cheated, but had now evened the score.</p>
178	<p>All right. They white folks. They done killed plenty of us.”  “That don’t make it right.”</p>
179	<p>He reached under the pillow and brought out the bottle and took out the stopper and put his hand round her and tilted her head.  “Here; take a shot.”  “Naw.”  “Drink. . . .”  He carried the bottle to her lips; she drank a small swallow. When he attempted to put the bottle away, she took it from him.  “That’s enough, now. You don’t want to get sloppy drunk.”</p>
182	<p>Some rich folks lived here once, he thought. Rich white folks. That was the way most houses on the South Side were, ornate, old, stinking; homes once of rich white people, now inhabited by Negroes or standing dark and empty with yawning black windows. He remembered that bombs had been thrown whites into houses like these when Negroes had first moved into the South Side.</p>



Page	Content
197	<p>“How long were you in the park?”</p> <p>“Well, about two hours, I reckon, suh.”</p> <p>“Come on, now, boy. Did he lay the girl?”</p> <p>“I don’t know, suh. They was back there kissing and going on.”</p> <p>“Was she lying down?”</p> <p>“Well, yessuh. She was,” said Bigger, lowering his eyes because he felt that it would be better to do so. He knew that whites thought that all Negroes yearned for white women, therefore he wanted to show a certain fearful deference even when one’s name was mentioned in his presence.</p> <p>“They were drunk, weren’t they?”</p> <p>“Yessuh. They’d been drinking a lot.”</p>
212	<p>After all, their attitude toward him so far made him feel that they did not consider him as being mixed up in the kidnapping. He was just another black ignorant Negro to them.</p>
214	<p>“Say, I’m slanting this to the primitive Negro who doesn’t want to be disturbed by white civilization.”</p>
221	<p>Yes, he would have to tell Bessie not to go to that house. It was all over. He had to save himself. But it was familiar, this running away. All his life he had been knowing that sooner or later something like this would come to him. And now, here it was. He had always felt outside of this white world, and now it was true. It made things simple.</p>
227	<p>So deeply had he pushed it all back down into him that it was not until now that its real meaning came back. They would say he had raped her and there would be no way to prove that he had not. That fact had not assumed importance in his eyes until now. He stood up, his jaws hardening. Had he raped her? Yes, he had raped her. Every time he felt as he had felt that night, he raped. But rape was not what one did to women. Rape was what one felt when one’s back was against a wall and one had to strike out, whether one wanted to or not, to keep the pack from killing one. He committed rape every time he looked into a white face. He was a long, taut piece of rubber which a thousand white hands had stretched to the snapping point, and when he snapped it was rape. But it was rape when he cried out in hate deep in his heart as he felt the strain of living day by day. That, too, was rape.</p>
232	<p>He lay quietly, feeling the warmth of the alcohol spreading through him.</p> <p>...He was tense with desire, but as long as he knew that Bessie was standing there in the room, he kept it from his mind.</p> <p>...Now that she was close to him the whiskey made him whirl faster and the tensivity of his body mounted.</p> <p>...He laid his fingers upon Bessie’s shoulders; slowly he felt the stiffness go out of her body and as it left the tensivity in his own rose and his blood grew hot.</p> <p>...He turned from his back and lay face to face with her, on his side. He kissed her; her lips were cold. He kept kissing her until her lips grew warm and soft. A huge warm pole of desire rose in him, insistent and demanding; he let his hand slide from her shoulder to her breasts, feeling one, then the other; he slipped his other arm beneath her head, kissing her again, hard and long.</p> <p>“Please, Bigger. . . .”</p>

Page	Content
	<p>She tried to turn from him, but his arm held her tightly; she lay still, whimpering. He heard her sigh, a sigh he knew, for he had heard it many times before; but this time he heard in it a sigh deep down beneath the familiar one, a sigh of resignation, a giving up, a surrender of something more than her body. Her head lay limp in the crook of his arm and his hand reached for the hem of her dress, caught it in his fingers and gathered it up slowly. His cold fingers touched her warm flesh, and sought still warmer and softer flesh. Bessie was still, unresisting, without response. His icy fingers touched inside of her and at once she spoke, not a word, but a sound that gave forth a meaning of horror accepted. Her breath went out of her lungs in long soft gasps that turned to a whisper of pleading. "Bigger. . . . Don't!"</p> <p>Her voice came to him now from out of a deep, faraway silence and he paid her no heed. The loud demand of the tensivity of his own body was a voice that drowned out hers. In the cold darkness of the room it seemed that he was on some vast turning wheel that made him want to turn faster and faster; that in turning faster he would get warmth and sleep and be rid of his tense fatigue. He was conscious of nothing now but her and what he wanted. He flung the cover back, ignoring the cold, and not knowing that he did it. Bessie's hands were on his chest, her fingers spreading protestingly open, pushing him away. He heard her give a soft moan that seemed not to end even when she breathed in or out; a moan which he heard, too, from far away and without heeding. He had to now. Yes. Bessie. His desire was naked and hot in his hand and his fingers were touching her. Yes. Bessie. Now. He had to now. don't Bigger don't He was sorry, but he had to. He. He could not help it. Help it. Sorry. Help it. Sorry. Help it. Sorry. Help it now. She should. Look! She should should should look. Look at how he was. He. He was. He was feeling bad about how she would feel but he could not help it now. Feeling. Bessie. Now. All. He heard her breathing heavily and heard his own breath going and coming heavily. Bigger. Now. All. All. Now. All. Bigger. . . .</p> <p>...He turned from her and lay on his back again, stretching his legs wide apart. He felt the tenseness flow gradually from him.</p>
240	He hated his mother for that way of hers which was like Bessie's. What his mother had was Bessie's whiskey, and Bessie's whiskey was his mother's religion.
243	To hint that he had committed a sex crime was to pronounce the death sentence; it meant a wiping out of his life even before he was captured; it meant death before death came, for the white men who read those words would at once kill him in their hearts.
245	Police are not yet satisfied with the account Erlone has given of himself and are of the conviction that he may be linked to the Negro as an accomplice; they feel that the plan of the murder and kidnapping was too elaborate to be the work of a Negro mind.
247	In one bed sat three naked black children looking across the room to the other bed on which lay a man and woman, both naked and black in the sunlight. There were quick, jerky movements on the bed where the man and woman lay, and the three children were watching. It was familiar; he had seen things like that when he was a little boy sleeping five in a room. Many mornings he had awakened and

Page	Content
	<p>watched his father and mother. He turned away, thinking: Five of 'em sleeping in one room and here's a great big empty building with just me in it. He crawled back to the chimney, seeing before his eyes an image of the room of five people, all of them blackly naked in the strong sunlight, seen through a sweaty pane: the man and woman moving jerkily in tight embrace, and the three children watching.</p>
249	<p>No white real estate man would rent a flat to a black man other than in the sections where it had been decided that black people might live.          ...Bread sold here for five cents a loaf, but across the "line" where white folks lived, it sold for four.</p>
251	<p>"Lissen, Jim. Ef he wuzn't guilty, then he oughta stayed 'n' faced it. Ef Ah knowed where tha' nigger wuz Ah'd turn 'im up 'n' git these white folks off me."          "But, Jack, ever' nigger looks guilty t' white folks when somebody's done a crime."          "Yeah; tha's 'cause so many of us ack like Bigger Thomas; tha's all. When yuh ack like Bigger Thomas yuh stir up trouble."          "But, Jack, who's stirring up trouble now? The papers say they beatin' us up all over the city. They don't care whut black man they git. We's all dogs in they sight! Yuh gotta stan' up 'n' fight these folks."          "'N' git killed? Hell, naw! Ah gotta family. Ah gotta wife 'n' baby. Ah ain't startin' no fool fight. Yuh can't git no justice pectectin' men who kill. . . ."          "We's all murderers t' them, Ah tell yuh!"          "Lissen, Jim. Ah'm a hard-workin' man. Ah fixes the streets wid a pick 'n' shovel ever' day, when Ah git a chance. But the boss tol' me he didn't wan' me in them streets wid this mob feelin' among the white folks. . . . He says All'll git killed. So he lays me off. Yuh see, tha' Goddamn nigger Bigger Thomas made me lose mah job. . . . He made the white folks think we's all jus' like him!"</p>
259	<p>Would he jump off and kill himself? He did not know. He had an almost mystic feeling that if he were ever cornered something in him would prompt him to act the right way, the right way being the way that would enable him to die without shame.</p>
267	<p>He wanted to shoot, but remembered that he had but three bullets left. He would shoot when they were closer and he would save one bullet for himself. They would not take him alive.</p>
270	<p>"Kill that black ape!"</p>
275	<p>And regulating his attitude toward death was the fact that he was black, unequal, and despised.          ...Maybe they were right when they said that a black skin was bad, the covering of an apelike animal. Maybe he was just unlucky, a man born for dark doom, an obscene joke happening amid a colossal din of siren screams and white faces and circling lances of light under a cold and silken sky.</p>
280	<p>All in all, he seems a beast utterly untouched by the softening influences of modern civilization. In speech and manner he lacks the charm of the average, harmless, genial, grinning southern ducky so beloved by the American people.          ...But the brutish Negro seemed indifferent to his fate, as though inquests, trials, and even the looming certainty of the electric chair held no terror for him. He</p>

Page	Content
	acted like an earlier missing link in the human species. He seemed out of place in a white man's civilization.
281	<p>"Down here in Dixie we keep Negroes firmly in their places and we make them know that if they so much as touch a white woman, good or bad, they cannot live."</p> <p>... "We of the South believe that the North encourages Negroes to get more education than they are organically capable of absorbing, with the result that northern Negroes are generally more unhappy and restless than those of the South. If separate schools were maintained, it would be fairly easy to limit the Negroes' education by regulating the appropriation of moneys through city, county, and state legislative bodies."</p> <p>"Still another psychological deterrent can be attained by conditioning Negroes so that they have to pay deference to the white person with whom they come in contact. This is done by regulating their speech and actions. We have found that the injection of an element of constant fear has aided us greatly in handling the problem."</p>
285	<p>Again the preacher's words seeped into his feelings:  Son, yuh know whut tha' tree wuz? It wuz the tree of knowledge. It wuzn't enuff fer man t' be like Gawd, he wanted t' know why. 'N' all Gawd wanted 'im t' do wuz bloom like the flowers in the fiel's, live as chillun. Man wanted t' know why 'n' he fell from light t' darkness, from love t' damnation, from blessedness t' shame. 'N' Gawd cast 'em outa the garden 'n' tol' the man he had t' git his bread by the sweat of his brow 'n' tol' the woman she had t' bring fo'th her chillun in pain 'n' sorrow. The worl' turned ergin 'em 'n' they had t' fight the worl' fer life. . . ."</p>
287	<p>Son, yuh know whut tha' tree wuz? It wuz the tree of knowledge. It wuzn't enuff fer man t' be like Gawd, he wanted t' know why. 'N' all Gawd wanted 'im t' do wuz bloom like the flowers in the fiel's, live as chillun. Man wanted t' know why 'n' he fell from light t' darkness, from love t' damnation, from blessedness t' shame. 'N' Gawd cast 'em outa the garden 'n' tol' the man he had t' git his bread by the sweat of his brow 'n' tol' the woman she had t' bring fo'th her chillun in pain 'n' sorrow. The worl' turned ergin 'em 'n' they had t' fight the worl' fer life. . . ."</p>
288	<p>"I was in jail grieving for Mary and then I thought of all the black men who've been killed, the black men who had to grieve when their people were snatched from them in slavery and since slavery. I thought that if they could stand it, then I ought to."</p>
296	<p>He felt that all of the white people in the room were measuring every inch of his weakness. He identified himself with his family and felt their naked shame under the eyes of white folks.  ...Had he not taken fully upon himself the crime of being black?</p>
304	<p>"You raped her, didn't you? Well, if you won't tell about Bessie, then tell me about that woman you raped and choked to death over on University Avenue last fall."</p>

Page	Content
305	<p>"But Mrs. Clinton, the sister of the woman you killed last fall, came to your cell and pointed you out. Who'll believe you when you say you didn't do it? You killed and raped two women in two days; who'll believe you when you say you didn't rape and kill the others? Come on, boy. You haven't a chance holding out."</p>
308	<p>"I know how you feel, boy. You're colored and you feel that you haven't had a square deal, don't you?" the man's voice came low and soft; and Bigger, listening, hated him for telling him what he knew was true.</p> <p>... "Maybe you've been brooding about this color question a long time, hunh, boy?" the man's voice continued low and soft. "Maybe you think I don't understand? But I do. I know how it feels to walk along the streets like other people, dressed like them, talking like them, and yet excluded for no reason except that you're black. I know your people. Why, they give me votes out there on the South Side every election. I once talked to a colored boy who raped and killed a woman, just like you raped and killed Mrs. Clinton's sister. . . ."</p>
310	<p>Buckley looked down at Bigger and said. "Just a scared colored boy from Mississippi."</p>
323	<p>"Just tell me, Mr. Erlone, how drunk was Miss Dalton?"</p> <p>"Well, she was a little high, if you know what I mean."</p>
324	<p>"You felt that she, being drunk, would be as satisfied with anyone else as she had been with you?"</p> <p>"No; no. . . . Not that way. You're leading..."</p> <p>"Just answer the questions. Had Miss Dalton, to your knowledge, ever had sex relations with a Negro before?"</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"Did you think that that would be as good a time as any for her to learn?"</p>
331	<p>White people never searched for Negroes who killed other Negroes. He had even heard it said that white people felt it was good when one Negro killed another; it meant that they had one Negro less to contend with. Crime for a Negro was only when he harmed whites, took white lives, or injured white property.</p>
334	<p>". . . burn that black ape. . . ."</p>
337	<p>"You black ape!"</p> <p>...The cross the preacher had told him about was bloody, not flaming; meek, not militant. It had made him feel awe and wonder, not fear and panic. It had made him want to kneel and cry, but this cross made him want to curse and kill. Then he became conscious of the cross that the preacher had hung round his throat; he felt it nestling against the skin of his chest, an image of the same cross that blazed in front of his eyes high upon the roof against the cold blue sky, its darting tongues of fire lashed to a hissing fury by the icy wind.</p> <p>"Burn 'im!"</p> <p>"Kill 'im!"</p> <p>It gripped him: that cross was not the cross of Christ, but the cross of the Ku Klux Klan.</p>
348	<p>"But they hate black folks more than they hate unions," Bigger said. "They don't treat union folks like they do me."</p> <p>"Oh, yes, they do. You think that because your color makes it easy for them to</p>

Page	Content
	<p>point you out, segregate you, exploit you. But they do that to others, too. They hate me because I'm trying to help you. They're writing me letters, calling me a 'dirty Jew.'"</p> <p>"All I know is that they hate me," Bigger said grimly.</p>
350	<p>"Well, I acted toward her only as I know how. She was rich. She and her kind own the earth. She and her kind say black folks are dogs. They don't let you do nothing but what they want. . . ."</p>
351	<p>"Aw, I don't know, Mr. Max. White folks and black folks is strangers. We don't know what each other is thinking. Maybe she was trying to be kind; but she didn't act like it. To me she looked and acted like all other white folks. . . ."</p> <p>"But she's not to be blamed for that, Bigger."</p> <p>"She's the same color as the rest of 'em," he said defensively.</p> <p>"I don't understand, Bigger. You say you hated her and yet you say you felt like having her when you were in the room and she was drunk and you were drunk. . . ."</p> <p>...I reckon it was because they say we black men do that anyhow. Mr. Max, you know what some white men say we black men do? They say we rape white women when we got the clap and they say we do that because we believe that if we rape white women then we'll get rid of the clap. That's what some white men say. They believe that.</p>
355	<p>"I didn't like it. There was nothing in it. Aw, all they did was sing and shout and pray all the time. And it didn't get 'em nothing. All the colored folks do that, but it don't get 'em nothing. The white folks got everything."</p>
356	<p>"Naw. I'll be dead soon enough. If I was religious, I'd be dead now."</p> <p>"But the church promises eternal life?"</p> <p>"That's for whipped folks."</p>
358	<p>You're a Negro; you know. Don't hope for too much. There's an ocean of hot hate out there against you and I'm going to try to sweep some of it back. They want your life; they want revenge. They felt they had you fenced off so that you could not do what you did. Now they're mad because deep down in them they believe that they made you do it.</p>
359	<p>The fear of hate keeps many whites from trying to help you and your kind.</p>
366	<p>Professional psychologists at University of Chicago pointed out this morning that white women have an unusual fascination for Negro men. "They think," said one of the professors who requested that his name not be mentioned in connection with the case, "that white women are more attractive than the women of their own race. They just can't help themselves."</p>
377	<p>"This boy is young, not only in years, but in his attitude toward life. He is not old enough to vote. Living in a Black Belt district, he is younger than most boys of his age, for he has not come in contact with the wide variety and depths of life. He has had but two outlets for his emotions: work and sex—and he knew these in their most vicious and degrading forms."</p>
385	<p>"...And, because I, a Jew, dared defend this Negro boy, for days my mail has been flooded with threats against my life. The manner in which Bigger Thomas was captured, the hundreds of innocent Negro homes invaded, the scores of Negroes</p>

Page	Content
	<p>assaulted upon the streets, the dozens who were thrown out of their jobs, the barrage of lies poured out from every source against a defenseless people—all of this was something unheard of in democratic lands.</p> <p>“The hunt for Bigger Thomas served as an excuse to terrorize the entire Negro population, to arrest hundreds of Communists, to raid labor union headquarters and workers’ organizations. Indeed, the tone of the press, the silence of the church, the attitude of the prosecution and the stimulated temper of the people are of such a nature as to indicate that more than revenge is being sought upon a man who has committed a crime.”</p>
390	<p>“Do I say this to make you believe that this boy is blameless? No. Bigger Thomas’ own feeling of hate feeds the feeling of guilt in others. Hemmed in, limited, circumscribed, he sees and feels no way of acting except to hate and kill that which he thinks is crushing him.”</p>
393	<p>“Let me, Your Honor, explain further the meaning of Bigger Thomas’ life. In him and men like him is what was in our forefathers when they first came to these strange shores hundreds of years ago. We were lucky. They are not. We found a land whose tasks called forth the deepest and best we had; and we built a nation, mighty and feared. We poured and are still pouring our soul into it. But we have told them: ‘This is a white man’s country!’ They are yet looking for a land whose tasks can call forth their deepest and best.”</p>
394	<p>If it were not for the backwaters of religion, gambling and sex draining off their energies into channels harmful to them and profitable to us, more of them would be here today. Be assured!</p> <p>...“We planned the murder of Mary Dalton, and today we come to court and say: ‘We had nothing to do with it!’ But every school teacher knows that this is not so, for every school teacher knows the restrictions which have been placed upon Negro education. The authorities know that it is not so, for they have made it plain in their every act that they mean to keep Bigger Thomas and his kind within rigid limits. All real estate operators know that it is not so, for they have agreed among themselves to keep Negroes within the ghetto-areas of cities. Your Honor, we who sit here today in this court room are witnesses. We know this evidence, for we helped to create it.”</p>
395	<p>“What would a boy, free from the warping influences which have played so hard upon Bigger Thomas, have done that night when he found himself alone with that drunk girl? He would have gone to Mr. or Mrs. Dalton and told them that their daughter was drunk. And the thing would have been over. There would have been no murder. But the way we have treated this boy made him do the very thing we did not want.”</p> <p>...“This boy’s crime was not an act of retaliation by an injured man against a person who he thought had injured him. If it were, then this case would be simple indeed. This is the case of a man’s mistaking a whole race of men as a part of the natural structure of the universe and of his acting toward them accordingly. He murdered Mary Dalton accidentally, without thinking, without plan, without conscious motive. But, after he murdered, he accepted the crime. And that’s the important thing. It was the first full act of his life; it was the most meaningful, exciting and stirring thing that had ever happened to him. He accepted it because</p>

Page	Content
	it made him free, gave him the possibility of choice, of action, the opportunity to act and to feel that his actions carried weight."
397	"...Taken collectively, they are not simply twelve million people; in reality they constitute a separate nation, stunted, stripped, and held captive within this nation, devoid of political, social, economic, and property rights."
398	<p>"Your Honor, there are four times as many Negroes in America today as there were people in the original Thirteen Colonies when they struck for their freedom. These twelve million Negroes, conditioned broadly by our own notions as we were by European ones when we first came here, are struggling within unbelievably narrow limits to achieve that feeling of at-home-ness for which we once strove so ardently. And, compared with our own struggle, they are striving under conditions far more difficult. If anybody can, surely we ought to be able to understand what these people are after. This vast stream of life, dammed and muddied, is trying to sweep toward that fulfilment which all of us seek so fondly, but find so impossible to put into words. When we said that men are 'endowed with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' we did not pause to define 'happiness.' That is the unexpressed quality in our quest, and we have never tried to put it into words. That is why we say, 'Let each man serve God in his own fashion.'"</p> <p>..."We know that this may take many forms: in religion it is the story of the creation of man, of his fall, and of his redemption; compelling men to order their lives in certain ways, all cast in terms of cosmic images and symbols which swallow the soul in fulness and wholeness. In art, science, industry, politics, and social action it may take other forms. But these twelve million Negroes have access to none of these highly crystallized modes of expression, save that of religion. And many of them know religion only in its most primitive form. The environment of tense urban centers has all but paralyzed the impulse for religion as a way of life for them today, just as it has for us."</p>
400	<p>"...This Negro boy's entire attitude toward life is a crime! The hate and fear which we have inspired in him, woven by our civilization into the very structure of his consciousness, into his blood and bones, into the hourly functioning of his personality, have become the justification of his existence."</p> <p>"Every time he comes in contact with us, he kills! It is a physiological and psychological reaction, embedded in his being. Every thought he thinks is potential murder. Excluded from, and unassimilated in our society, yet longing to gratify impulses akin to our own but denied the objects and channels evolved through long centuries for their socialized expression, every sunrise and sunset makes him guilty of subversive actions. Every movement of his body is an unconscious protest. Every desire, every dream, no matter how intimate or personal, is a plot or a conspiracy. Every hope is a plan for insurrection. Every glance of the eye is a threat. His very existence is a crime against the state!"</p>
401	<p>"...His relationship to this poor black girl also reveals his relationship to the world. But Bigger Thomas is not here on trial for having murdered Bessie Mears. And he knows that. What does this mean? Does not the life of a Negro girl mean as much in the eyes of the law as the life of a white girl?..."</p> <p>..."...Love is not based upon sex alone, and that is all he had with Bessie..."</p>



Page	Content
	<p>..."...Even though they were intimately together, they were confoundingly alone. They were physically dependent upon each other and they hated that dependence. Their brief moments together were for purposes of sex..."</p> <p>..."...Sex warms the deep roots of life; it is the soil out of which the tree of love grows..."</p>
402	<p>"With cunning calculated to outrage the moral sense, the prosecution brought into this court room a man, a manager from a theatre, who told us that Bigger Thomas and boys like him frequented his theatre and committed acts of masturbation in the darkened seats. A gasp of horror went through the court room. But what is so strange about that? Was not Bigger Thomas' relationship to his girl a masturbatory one? Was not his relationship to the whole world on the same plane?"</p> <p>"His entire existence was one long craving for satisfaction, with the objects of satisfaction denied; and we regulated every part of the world he touched. Through the instrument of fear, we determined the mode and the quality of his consciousness."</p>
403	<p>What does matter is that he was guilty before he killed! That was why his whole life became so quickly and naturally organized, pointed, charged with a new meaning when this thing occurred.</p> <p>..."Your Honor, another civil war in these states is not impossible; and if the misunderstanding of what this boy's life means is an indication of how men of wealth and property are misreading the consciousness of the submerged millions today, one may truly come."</p>
404	<p>The other inmates would be the first men with whom he could associate on a basis of equality. Steel bars between him and the society he offended would provide a refuge from hate and fear.</p> <p>"You cannot kill this man, Your Honor, for we have made it plain that we do not recognize that he lives! So I say, 'Give him life!'"</p> <p>This will not solve the problem which this crime exemplifies. That remains, perhaps, for the future. But if we say that we must kill him, then let us have the courage and honesty to say: 'Let us kill them all. They are not human. There's no room for them.' Then let us do it."</p>
405	<p>"I say, Your Honor, give this boy his life. And in making this concession we uphold those two fundamental concepts of our civilization, those two basic concepts upon which we have built the mightiest nation in history—personality and security—the conviction that the person is inviolate and that which sustains him is equally so."</p> <p>..."When men of wealth urge the use and show of force, quick death, swift revenge, then it is to protect a little spot of private security against the resentful millions from whom they have filched it, the resentful millions in whose militant hearts the dream and hope of security still lives."</p>
408	<p>"My voice may sound cruel when I say: The defendant merits the death penalty for his self-confessed crimes! But what I am really saying is that the law is strong and gracious enough to allow all of us to sit here in this court room today and try this case with dispassionate interest, and not tremble with fear that at this very moment some half-human black ape may be climbing through the windows of our</p>

Page	Content
	<p>homes to rape, murder, and burn our daughters!"</p> <p>...“Your Honor, I regret that the defense has raised the viperous issue of race and class hate in this trial. I sympathize with those whose hearts were pained, as mine was pained, when Mr. Max so cynically assailed our sacred customs. I pity this man’s deluded and diseased mind. It is a sad day for American civilization when a white man will try to stay the hand of justice from a bestial monstrosity who has ravished and struck down one of the finest and most delicate flowers of our womanhood.”</p> <p>“Every decent white man in America ought to swoon with joy for the opportunity to crush with his heel the woolly head of this black lizard, to keep him from scuttling on his belly farther over the earth and spitting forth his venom of death!”</p>
410	<p>“...This Court has already heard of the obnoxious sexual perversions practiced by these boys in darkened theatres. Though Jack Harding would not admit it outright, we got enough information out of him to know that when the shadow of Mary Dalton was moving upon that screen those boys indulged in such an act! It was then that the idea of rape, murder, and ransom entered the mind of this moron!...”</p>
411	<p>“What black thoughts passed through that Negro’s scheming brain the first few moments after he saw that trusting white girl standing before him?...”</p>
412	<p>“...Your Honor, must not this infernal monster have burned her body to destroy evidence of offenses worse than rape? That treacherous beast must have known that if the marks of his teeth were ever seen on the innocent white flesh of her breasts, he would not have been accorded the high honor of sitting here in this court of law!...”</p>
425	<p>“Mr. Max, I know the folks who sent me here to die hated me; I know that. B-but you reckon th-they was like m-me, trying to g-get something like I was, and when I’m dead and gone they’ll be saying like I’m saying now that they didn’t mean to hurt nobody . . . th-that they was t-trying to get something, too. . . .?”</p>
427	<p>“...It’s because others have said you were bad and they made you live in bad conditions...”</p>
428	<p>“Bigger, the people who hate you feel just as you feel, only they’re on the other side of the fence. You’re black, but that’s only a part of it. Your being black, as I told you before, makes it easy for them to single you out. Why do they do that? They want the things of life, just as you did, and they’re not particular about how they get them. They hire people and they don’t pay them enough; they take what people own and build up power. They rule and regulate life. They have things arranged so that they can do those things and the people can’t fight back. They do that to black people more than others because they say that black people are inferior. But, Bigger, they say that all people who work are inferior. And the rich people don’t want to change things; they’ll lose too much. But deep down in them they feel like you feel, Bigger, and in order to keep what they’ve got, they make themselves believe that men who work are not quite human. They do like you did, Bigger, when you refused to feel sorry for Mary. But on both sides men want to live; men are fighting for life. Who will win? Well, the side that feels life most, the</p>

Page	Content
	<p>side with the most humanity and the most men. That's why . . . y-you've got to believe in yourself, Bigger. . . ."</p>
436	<p>But later on Bigger No. 3 was killed during the days of Prohibition: while delivering liquor to a customer he was shot through the back by a white cop.</p> <p>...Ofttimes I'd find him reading a book; he would stop and in a joking, wistful, and cynical manner ape the antics of the white folks.</p> <p>...I remember one morning his getting into a streetcar (all streetcars in Dixie are divided into two sections: one section is for whites and is labeled—FOR WHITES; the other section is for Negroes and is labeled—FOR COLORED) and sitting in the white section. The conductor went to him and said: "Come on, nigger. Move over where you belong. Can't you read?" Bigger answered: "Naw, I can't read."</p>
437	<p>But before I use Bigger Thomas as a springboard for the examination of milder types, I'd better indicate more precisely the nature of the environment that produced these men, or the reader will be left with the impression that they were essentially and organically bad.</p> <p>In Dixie there are two worlds, the white world and the black world, and they are physically separated. There are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white businesses and black businesses, white graveyards and black graveyards, and, for all I know, a white God and a black God. . . .</p> <p>This separation was accomplished after the Civil War by the terror of the Klu Klux Klan, which swept the newly freed Negro through arson, pillage, and death out of the United States Senate, the House of Representatives, the many state legislatures, and out of the public, social, and economic life of the South. The motive for this assault was simple and urgent. The imperialistic tug of history had torn the Negro from his African home and had placed him ironically upon the most fertile plantation areas of the South; and, when the Negro was freed, he outnumbered the whites in many of these fertile areas. Hence, a fierce and bitter struggle took place to keep the ballot from the Negro, for had he had a chance to vote, he would have automatically controlled the richest lands of the South and with them the social, political, and economic destiny of a third of the Republic. Though the South is politically a part of America, the problem that faced her was peculiar and the struggle between the whites and the blacks after the Civil War was in essence a struggle for power, ranging over thirteen states and involving the lives of tens of millions of people.</p> <p>But keeping the ballot from the Negro was not enough to hold him in check; disfranchisement had to be supplemented by a whole panoply of rules, taboos, and penalties designed not only to insure peace (complete submission), but to guarantee that no real threat would ever arise. Had the Negro lived upon a common territory, separate from the bulk of the white population, this program of oppression might not have assumed such a brutal and violent form. But this war took place between people who were neighbors, whose homes adjoined, whose farms had common boundaries. Guns and disfranchisement, therefore, were not enough to make the black neighbor keep his distance. The white neighbor decided to limit the amount of education his black neighbor could receive; decided to keep him off the police force and out of the local national guards; to segregate him residentially; to Jim Crow him in public places; to restrict</p>

Page	Content
	<p>his participation in the professions and jobs; and to build up a vast, dense ideology of racial superiority that would justify any act of violence taken against him to defend white dominance; and further, to condition him to hope for little and to receive that little without rebelling.</p> <p>But, because the blacks were so close to the very civilization which sought to keep them out, because they could not help but react in some way to its incentives and prizes, and because the very tissue of their consciousness received its tone and timbre from the strivings of that dominant civilization, oppression spawned among them a myriad variety of reactions, reaching from outright blind rebellion to a sweet, other-worldly submissiveness.</p> <p>In the main, this delicately balanced state of affairs has not greatly altered since the Civil War, save in those parts of the South which have been industrialized or urbanized. So volatile and tense are these relations that if a Negro rebels against rule and taboo, he is lynched and the reason for the lynching is usually called "rape," that catchword which has garnered such vile connotations that it can raise a mob anywhere in the South pretty quickly, even today.</p>
446	<p>From these items I drew my first political conclusions about Bigger: I felt that Bigger, an American product, a native son of this land, carried within him the potentialities of either Communism or Fascism. I don't mean to say that the Negro boy I depicted in <i>Native Son</i> is either a Communist or a Fascist. He is not either. But he is product of a dislocated society; he is a dispossessed and disinherited man; he is all of this, and he lives amid the greatest possible plenty on earth and he is looking and feeling for a way out.</p>
448	<p>Like Bigger himself, I felt a mental censor—product of the fears which a Negro feels from living in America—standing over me, draped in white, warning me not to write. This censor's warnings were translated into my own thought processes thus: "What will white people think if I draw the picture of such a Negro boy? Will they not at once say: 'See, didn't we tell you all along that niggers are like that? Now, look, one of their own kind come along and drawn the picture for us!'" I felt that if I drew the picture of Bigger truthfully, there would be many reactionary whites who would try to make of him something I did not intend. And yet, and this was what made it difficult, I knew that I could not write of Bigger convincingly if I did not depict him as he was: that is, resentful toward whites, sullen, angry, ignorant, emotionally unstable, depressed and unaccountably elated at times, and unable even, because of his own lack of inner organization which American oppression has fostered in him, to unite with the members of his own race. And would not whites misread Bigger and, doubting his authenticity, say: "This man is preaching hate against the whole white race"?</p>
450	<p>Their attitude toward life and art can be summed up in a single paragraph: "But, Mr. Wright, there are so many of us who are not like Bigger! Why don't you portray in your fiction the best traits of our race, something that will show the white people what we have done in spite of oppression? Don't represent anger and bitterness. Smile when a white person comes to you. Never let him feel that you are so small that what he has done to crush you has made you hate him! Oh, above all, save your pride!"</p>

Page	Content
451	Of this dual aspect of Bigger’s social consciousness, I placed the nationalistic side first, not because I agreed with Bigger’s wild and intense hatred of white people, but because his hate had placed him, like a wild animal at bay, in a position where he was most symbolic and explainable.
452	I had also to show what oppression had done to Bigger’s relationships with his own people, how it had split him off from them, how it had baffled him; how oppression seems to hinder and stifle in the victim those very qualities of character which are so essential for an effective struggle against the oppressor.
461	The lawyer, Max, was placed in Bigger’s cell at the end of the novel to register the moral—or what felt was the moral—horror of Negro life in the United States. ...True, we have no great church in America; our national traditions are still of such a sort that we are not wont to brag of them; and we have no army that’s above the level of mercenary fighters; we have no group acceptable to the whole of our country upholding certain humane values; we have no rich symbols, no colorful rituals. We have only a money-grubbing, industrial civilization.

Profanity/Derogatory Terms	Count
Bitch	11
Goddamn	43
Nigger	27
Piss	1