

Sample Book Review: **Fiction**

The subject of Andrea Facey's book review is the novel *Native Son* by Richard Wright. (This review originally appeared in *New Youth Connections: The Magazine Written By and For New York Youth*.)

Trapped Between Two Worlds

The first part of the review "sets the scene" for readers.

— Set in Chicago during the Depression of the 1930s, Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* is the story of one young black man's struggle to survive in a racist society.

The main character, Bigger Thomas, is the man of the house, and his family expects him to provide for them. But Bigger only cares about whether he has food to eat, a roof over his head, and clothes on his own back.

Bigger hates white people. He curses and mocks them behind their backs. In one conversation with his friend Gus, he describes how blacks and whites live in two different worlds: "We live here and they live there," he says. "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 knot-hole in the fence."

Throughout the book, Bigger tries to escape that feeling of being trapped. He gets a taste of life on the other side of the fence when he starts working as a chauffeur for Mr. Dalton, a white millionaire. The day he arrives at the Dalton's is supposed to be the day his troubles end; instead, it is the beginning of a chain of events that will destroy his life.

One key event in the book is described in great detail.

— In one scene, Bigger meets Mr. Dalton's daughter, Mary, and her friend Jan. They treat him like a person, not like a servant. They ask him to call them by their first names, and they even invite Bigger to sit down to dinner with them.

But Bigger is afraid they are trying to trick him. By the end of the evening, Mary is drunk and cannot get up the stairs to her room so Bigger carries her. The next thing he knows, he is trapped in the white girl's bedroom. The things he does to try to escape only get him into more trouble.

The book's value is discussed in the final paragraph.

— This book shows how prejudice affects people, the way segregation has a way of closing in on them, and what some people will do to find a way out. Everyone who wants to better understand racism in this society should read this book. ■