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The Impact of Racism on the Individual Psyche: Inner Conflict in

Richard Wright's Native Son

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

In "Native Son", Richard Wright writes about the harmful effects of racism and how it deeply impacts African Americans. Racism's psychological impact is a key area of study in literature and psychology because of how it affects people's mental and social well-being. This dissertation examines the history of racism in America, focusing on important periods like the Jim Crow laws, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement. These historical contexts help us understand the racial dynamics in Wright's novel. Using Critical Race Theory, this dissertation examines how systemic racism shapes the lives and identities of the characters, especially the main character, Bigger Thomas. Additionally, a psychoanalysis is used to explore Bigger's psychological responses to racism, using Freud's ideas about defense mechanisms. This combination of theories helps uncover the inner conflicts and coping methods that arise from racial oppression. Richard Wright's personal experiences with racism and the struggles of the protagonist in *Native Son* highlight the ongoing impact of racial discrimination on the individual psyche. A detailed analysis of the text reveals the complex racial issues and psychological trauma faced by African Americans, providing a deeper understanding of the lasting effects of racism.

Keywords: Bigger Thomas, Critical Race Theory, Defense mechanisms, Native Son, Psychoanalysis, Richard Wright.

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General Introduction

Introduction

Richard Wright's "Native Son," written in 1940, is a significant book in American literature that shows the racial tensions and unfairness of that time. It is set in a period when racism and segregation were widespread. The story reveals African Americans' societal limitations and biases without holding back. Through the character Bigger Thomas, Wright not only tells a personal story of fighting against a racially biased society but also criticizes America's racial issues as a whole. This research looks at the different aspects of racism shown in "Native Son" and how Wright's portrayal of Bigger Thomas challenges readers to face the harsh truths of racial unfairness. By studying the book's historical background, character growth, and main themes, this investigation aims to highlight the lasting importance of Wright's work in understanding the complexities of race relations in America.

Background of the Study

The mid-20th century marked a pivotal period in American literature, witnessing the emergence of powerful voices challenging societal norms. Among these influential figures was Richard Wright, who penned "Native Son," a novel that vividly captures the harsh realities of racial injustice in America. Wright's narrative is set against a backdrop of systemic racism, segregation, and inequality. The 1930s and 1940s were characterized by deeply rooted racial

prejudices and discriminatory practices, particularly against African Americans. While Jim Crow laws enforced segregation in the South, the North faced its manifestations of racism, creating a nationwide climate of racial tension.

Wright's protagonist, Bigger Thomas, navigates a challenging urban landscape that mirrors the widespread racism of the time. As the Great Migration brought African Americans to Northern cities, they encountered not only economic challenges but also the harsh reality of racial tension and discrimination. "Native Son" emerges as a literary response to this troubled social and political atmosphere, offering a raw portrayal of how racism affects individual lives. Wright delves into the mind of Bigger Thomas, a young African American caught in the oppressive structures of a racially divided society. The exploration of racism in "Native Son" goes beyond mere depiction; it serves as a critique of a nation grappling with its prejudices. Wright's novel becomes a literary battleground where the complexities of racial dynamics are revealed, challenging readers to confront uncomfortable truths (Ayan).

Statement of the Problem:

Despite being set in the 1930s, the themes of racial inequality and discrimination addressed in the novel are still relevant today. This study specifically explores how racism shapes the psyche of Bigger Thomas, delving into the internal conflicts arising from societal pressures and prejudice. In addition to examining these aspects, this research investigates the consequences of this conflict on Bigger's life and the broader implications for individuals facing racism.

Research Questions

Building upon the previously discussed research contextualization, this study

delves into the following primary question:

- What is the impact of racism on American society and how is it represented in Native Son novel?

This primary question shall be investigated through the following questions:

- What impact does systemic racism have on the psyche of Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of "Native Son"?
- In what ways does Richard Wright challenge or reinforce societal perceptions of race through the protagonist in the novel?

Research Aims

This research aims to carefully study the main ideas in Richard Wright's book Native Son. We want to see how Wright's way of telling the story shows and reacts to the racial problems in America during the mid-1900s. By closely looking at how Wright tells his story and the themes he picks, we hope to understand the deeper meanings in the text. This will help us better understand how racism affects people and communities.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives are to:

- Discuss the historical context of racism in America as portrayed in Native Son.
- Analyze systemic racism in the novel using Critical Race Theory.
- Explore the protagonist's psychological responses to racism using psychoanalytic theory.
- Examine how Richard Wright's personal experiences with racism influenced the novel.

- Provide a comprehensive analysis of racial dynamics and psychological trauma in Native Son.

Methodology

This study looks at Richard Wright's novel "Native Son" using two main theories Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine how the book portrays race and power and Neo-Historicism to understand how the story is influenced by the social and political events of the 1930s when it was written. The research also adds a third perspective from Freud's psychoanalytic theory. This helps explain the characters' inner thoughts and feelings. It shows how the main character's actions are shaped not just by society and history, but also by his unconscious desires and traumas .By combining these three approaches - CRT, Neo-Historicism, and Freudian psychology - the study provides a rich, multi-layered analysis of how "Native Son" deals with themes of race and history.

Chapter one

Racism in America: Historical

Background

1.1 Introduction

The history of racism in America is deep and complex. From the Great Migration of African Americans to the Jim Crow laws, and the civil rights movement to the Harlem Renaissance, these important events show the prejudice and discrimination that Black people have faced. It is in this context that the famous book "Native Son" by Richard Wright is set. The book explores how racism can affect a person's inner life, through the story of the main character, Bigger Thomas. As we read about Bigger, we see how racism has a profound impact on an individual, and how it is part of the larger struggle against injustice in America.

1.2 The impact of Jim Crow laws on African American

After 1876, Jim Crow laws started in the South and some other states. These laws said that black people and white people had to be separated in public places like schools, hotels, water fountains, restaurants, libraries, buses, and trains. The laws also made it hard for black people to vote by putting up legal barriers ("Jim Crow Laws - New World Encyclopedia").

The term "Jim Crow" comes from a song and dance routine called "Jump Jim Crow." It was performed by a white entertainer named Thomas D. Rice in the 19th century, the first person to popularize blackface performance, and a white English immigrant to the United States. This routine featured Rice portraying a character named Jim Crow, a caricature of an African American man that perpetuated racist stereotypes. Over time, the term "Jim Crow" became associated with the laws and practices that enforced racial segregation in the United

States(Urofsky). Before the implementation of Jim Crow laws, regulations known as slave codes governed the treatment of Black individuals as property before the abolition of slavery. The 13th Amendment officially ended slavery in December 1865, Whites still see African Americans as much less valuable, even though society has evolved (Hayes).

1.2.1 The Black Codes

Jim Crow laws had their origins in the Black Codes. enforced following the 13th Amendment,After the Civil War, there were strict local and state laws in the South that controlled how formerly enslaved Black people could work. These laws were used to keep Black people in a form of forced servitude, limit their rights, and even exploit their children for labor (Onion).

After the Civil War, "black codes" were made to control African Americans. One of these laws said that Black people need to have a job and a permanent place to live. If they didn't, they could be fined or arrested. If they couldn't pay the fine, they had to work for cheap to pay it off.Another black code law said that African Americans had to have work contracts with white landowners. These laws limited the freedom and opportunities of Black people after the war ended.The black codes were a way for white people to keep control over African Americans even after slavery ended. The laws made it hard for Black people to be free and have good lives. They had to work for white people and couldn't make their own choices about jobs and where to live (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica).

The black codes didn't disappear; instead, they evolved into Jim Crow laws. While the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment provided African Americans with increased freedoms, these liberties were very limited by rules created by white supremacists. During that time the Democratic Party, President Andrew Johnson, and local governments in the South made it hard for Black people to enjoy their rights and gain more. The general public

showed a lot of hate towards Black individuals, which resulted in a lot of violence in the South. This violence included damaging Black schools and the heartbreaking lynching of Black men and women.

1.2.2 Plessy vs. Ferguson

The Plessy vs. Ferguson case was ruled by the U.S. and state Supreme Courts after Reconstruction. This case supported and enforced Jim Crow segregation laws in the Southern states, bringing back white superiority over blacks, which the 13th Amendment had ended after the Civil War. Plessy vs. Ferguson was the peak of efforts to undo the progress made during Reconstruction, from 1867 to 1877 when the Union worked to rebuild the South after the war. During Reconstruction, African Americans saw positive changes, like more Black children going to school and more Black people voting in elections (Onion).

The federal soldiers left the Southern states in 1887 at the end of Reconstruction. This wasn't good for black people living there. Even though the 15th Amendment in 1870 gave black people the right to vote, there were still many obstacles like special rules and taxes that made it hard for them actually to vote. The Ku Klux Klan also started causing racial violence. Between 1882 and 1968, over 4,700 black people were lynched. This is a horrible thing. White people in the South wanted to feel superior again. So they made segregation stronger. Segregation means separating people by race. Black people tried to get justice in the courts, but their attempts were rejected, as seen in the 1878 Supreme Court ruling that segregation on common carriers, like railway cars and buses, could not be prohibited by state legislatures. In 1890, the Court further validated segregation by deeming Mississippi's requirement of segregation on common carriers lawful. ("Plessy v. Ferguson: Separate but Equal Doctrine")

The Louisiana legislature passed a bill in 1890 affirming the legality of "separate but equal" areas for black and white train passengers, leading to the case of Homer Plessy. Plessy, a

young shoemaker of one-eighth black and seven-eighths white ancestry, challenged the segregation by sitting in the "White Only" rail car on June 7, 1892. Despite legal support from groups fighting racism, including the black newspaper *The Crusader*, Plessy's case was decided against him at different court levels. The 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* resulted in a decision favoring Judge Ferguson and Louisiana, allowing state-enforced segregation laws. This ruling had long-lasting negative effects, empowering Southern states to further erode racial equality and establish discriminatory Jim Crow laws.

The Supreme Court said that separate but equal facilities were okay, but true equality was never really the goal in the South. The idea that laws allowing racial separation don't mean one race is inferior is wrong. Prejudice can't be fixed just by passing laws. The claim that blacks can only get equal rights by being forced to mix with whites is rejected. True social equality should come naturally from people liking each other, appreciating each other, and choosing to be together. Expecting two races to be socially equal is impossible when they are kept apart in every part of life, from trains to schools. In 1872, Frederick Douglass wrote in a newspaper that having mixed schools would stop a system that makes one group better and the other worse. His main point was that a person's worth and abilities, not their race and color, should decide if they are a real man (*Plessy Vs. Ferguson: Separate Isn't Equal - Other Jim Crow Information - Jim Crow Museum*).

Jim Crow segregation laws persisted for almost 60 years until a new panel of U.S. Supreme Court justices declared segregation unconstitutional. The landmark decision came on May 17, 1954, in the case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, where the Court ruled that segregation in schools demonstrated inferiority toward minority children and declared separate educational facilities inherently unequal. Although the ruling specifically addressed racial separation in public schools, it marked a broader stance against segregation of any kind.

Enforcing these decisions required significant efforts, as many white Southerners resisted the idea of losing their perceived superiority with racially mixed public spaces. The Civil Rights Movement, characterized by the collaboration of thousands of blacks and whites, played a crucial role in dismantling segregation and inequality in the South, federal troops had to intervene to ensure compliance with court rulings and prevent violence. While desegregation was an ongoing process, *Brown vs. Board of Education* shifted the trajectory, signaling the U.S. government's intolerance for racial separation (*Plessy Vs. Ferguson: Separate Isn't Equal* - Other Jim Crow Information - Jim Crow Museum).

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, societal structures changed with the introduction of Jim Crow laws, which hurt the progress of Reconstruction and made racial divides worse. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision against segregation, saying it broke the 14th Amendment, made people change how they acted. The Civil Rights Movement also played a big part in stopping unfair practices, even though it faced a lot of opposition and violence. Over more than sixty years of legal separation, the U.S. became very divided, which caused lasting racial differences that affected society. This shows how important it is for people to work together to challenge unfair laws and support fairness and justice .

1.2.3 The Ku Klux Klan

The enforcement of Jim Crow culture involved local police, but more severe violence often came from unorganized mobs and organized terror groups. The Ku Klux Klan was a big racist group back in the Jim Crow days. It started as a club that was like a college fraternity, but it turned into a huge group that scared people all over. A Confederate general named Nathan Bedford Forrest was the main boss. He told the whole group to stop in 1869, but the local groups kept going on their own. Founded in 1866, the KKK expanded across the South by 1870, serving as a tool for white Southern resistance against the Republican Party's Reconstruction policies.

The organization targeted white and Black Republican leaders through threats and violence.

Despite Congressional efforts to limit Klan terrorism, it achieved its primary goal of reinstating white supremacy through Democratic victories in Southern state legislatures during the 1870s (Onion).

Although the Ku Klux Klan was initially weakened in the 1870s and faded during the Reconstruction era, it made a strong comeback in 1915 after the release of the movie "Birth of a Nation" by D.W. Griffith. This revival saw the Klan targeting not just African Americans but also Roman Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and labor unions, growing to over four million members by the 1920s. The Klan's power declined during the Great Depression, leading to its dissolution in 1944. It resurfaced again during the civil rights movement in the 1950s, engaging in violent acts like murders and bombings. However, these actions backfired, turning public opinion against the discriminatory Jim Crow laws. Despite persisting in smaller numbers, the Klan never regained the widespread influence it had in the 1920s, with only a few thousand members scattered across the country (Onion).

1.3. The Great Migration

The Great Migration was a significant movement of African Americans from the Southern United States to the North from 1916 to 1970, seeking better opportunities and escaping racial discrimination and segregation. This mass migration reshaped the demographic and cultural landscape of America, contributing to the growth of urban centers and the Civil Rights Movement. It was a pivotal moment in history, highlighting the impact of racism on the lives and choices of millions of African Americans seeking a better future.

1.3.1 General Background

The Great Migration stands as one of the most substantial population movements in the history of the United States. The Great Migration of African Americans from the South was caused by racism, violence, and lack of jobs pushing them out, while the North and West pulled them with the promise of more opportunities and freedom from oppression (National Archives). In the early 20th century, the South underwent significant demographic and social changes, influencing the Great Migration. African Americans encountered severe racial oppression and limited opportunities for progress after the abolition of slavery, perpetuating a cycle of poverty through sharecropping and tenant agricultural systems. Jim Crow laws reinforced segregation, denying equal rights. (“The Great Migration 1910-1970”)

The North promised better economic and living conditions, attracting African Americans with industrialization-related job opportunities in factories and urban areas. The growth of the war industry during World War I increased the demand for labor. Even though the North was different from the South, it still had issues with racism and separating people based on their race. African Americans faced housing discrimination, fewer job opportunities, and lower earnings compared to their white counterparts. Despite these challenges, the economic prospects in the North were often seen as a pathway to greater independence and growth.

1.3.2 Causes of The Great Migration

The migration of Southern African Americans was primarily driven by a combination of oppressive conditions in the South, such as segregation, indentured servitude, convict leasing, the prevalence of racist ideologies, and the alarming rate of lynching incidents. These factors, coupled with limited social and economic prospects, prompted many to seek better opportunities elsewhere. In contrast, the North presented a more promising landscape, with labor shortages

during World War I creating a demand for workers in industries like steel mills, railroads, meatpacking plants, and automobile manufacturing. The active recruitment by northern businessmen through labor agents offering incentives like free transportation and affordable housing further enticed Black workers to make the move northward, where they could find improved prospects and escape the harsh realities of the South.

The circumstances during World War I, marked by a decline in European immigrants and the enlistment of workers into the military, resulted in a diminished workforce for Northern factories. This created an opportunity for African Americans, as Northern industries sought a new labor supply from the South. Northern jobs presented numerous advantages over their Southern counterparts, offering wages that could be double or more. The Southern challenges, including the sharecropping system, agricultural depression, cotton boll weevil infestation, and flooding, prompted African Americans to seek better opportunities in Northern cities. Additionally, the South's systemic exclusion of African Americans from political power, lack of representation, and limited social opportunities within a Jim Crow-regulated culture were further incentives for the migration Northward.(Hamilton)

1.3.3 The First Wave of Great Migration (1910 -1940)

The first wave of the Great Migration, which took place between 1910 and 1940, was a really important time in American history. It was when millions of African Americans left the rural South and moved to the urban North in search of better job opportunities and to escape racial discrimination and segregation. There were a lot of reasons that made African Americans want to leave the South. Unfair laws, limited job options, and widespread racism and violence pushed them to start fresh in the North. They were drawn to cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New

York because they promised industrial jobs and a chance for a better future. The impact of the first wave of the Great Migration was huge and had a lasting effect. African Americans brought their rich culture, traditions, and talents to the urban North, which had a major influence on the social, cultural, and political scene of the United States (Hayes).

Economically, this migration brought about significant changes. African Americans found work in industries like manufacturing and the service sector, which paid better and offered more opportunities. This economic stability allowed many families to escape poverty. The Great Migration also played a big role in the advancement of the Civil Rights Movement. The concentrated population of African Americans in urban centers created a sense of community and unity, leading to the formation of civil rights organizations and the mobilization of activists. The shared experiences of discrimination and segregation in the North fueled the fight for racial equality and justice. Of course, the Great Migration had its challenges too. African Americans faced racial tensions and discrimination in the North as well. They had to deal with things like housing segregation, unequal access to education and healthcare, and limited job opportunities. But despite all that, African Americans made significant contributions to their new communities (“The Great Migration - Causes, History, Timeline & Impacts”).

1.3.4 The Second Wave of the Great Migration

The Second Great Migration happened from the 1940s to the 1970s. During the 1930s Great Depression, migration slowed down due to fewer opportunities. However, it picked up again during World War II and the postwar economic boom, especially with more Black Americans leaving the South in the 1960s. Because of unfair housing rules trying to keep Black families out of new suburbs, this migration often led to crowded cities. In both Great Migrations,

people from the South mainly moved to big cities. In the first wave, most went to eight big cities like New York and Chicago, followed by Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Kansas City, Denver, St. Louis, and Indianapolis .

The Second Great Migration not only increased the population of these cities but also brought more people to new places like the Western states. Many African Americans moved in large numbers to Western cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Portland. Different migration patterns connected certain southern states and cities to similar places in the north and west. In the first Great Migration, about half of those leaving Mississippi ended up in Chicago, while people from Virginia often settled in Philadelphia. These patterns were mostly based on geography, with people moving to the closest cities. People's social connections also played a role in migration. Black Americans often moved to northern areas where other Black Americans had already gone. A 2021 study found that when one Black person moved from a Southern town to a new county, on average, 1.9 other Black people made the same move (Hamilton).

1.4 Harlem Renaissance

Between the end of World War, I (1917) the start of the Great Depression, and the years leading up to World War II (the 1930s), African Americans experienced a thriving period of artistic and cultural activity known as the Harlem Renaissance. Artists connected to the movement expressed pride in black identity and life, a growing awareness of injustice and discrimination, and curiosity in the quickly evolving modern world. Many of them were also first-time users of artistic freedom(Harlem Renaissance).

“I believe that the [African American’s] advantages and opportunities are greater in Harlem than in any other place in the country and that Harlem will become the intellectual, the cultural, and

the financial center for Negroes of the United States and will exert a vital influence upon all Negro peoples.” —James Weldon Johnson, “Harlem: The Culture Capital,” 1925. In 1925 James Weldon Johnson was one of the many Black migrants who were waiting at train stations in the deep South, to travel northward to get better lives. Johnson, a Florida native, was headed towards Harlem, the destination of many others like him (Blakemore).

When it comes to giving my perspective on Johnson's statement, I believe that James Weldon Johnson was very hopeful and positive about the future of African American communities, especially Harlem, during that period. He believed Harlem could become a center for black people to have great ideas, make amazing art and culture, and be successful financially. This shows Johnson had a lot of faith in the strength and talent of his community to overcome challenges and achieve great things. Johnson's optimistic view reflects his confidence in the creativity of black people in Harlem and across America.

1.4.1 The Birth of Harlem's Cultural Renaissance

In the early 1900s, a lot of Black people moved from the South to cities in the North, like Harlem in New York. They left the South to get away from unfair laws and find better jobs. Harlem used to be mostly white, but when property prices dropped, more Black people moved in. This change attracted Black people from the South and the Caribbean who were struggling financially. In Harlem, people from different backgrounds could come together in a lively community supported by Black churches and businesses. This mix of cultures in Harlem encouraged a positive view of Black success and creativity, which was different from what was commonly believed at the time. The Harlem Renaissance, which came from this mix, was a special time in American history known for its vibrant culture and social scene (Blakemore).

1.4.2 Pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance

the Harlem Renaissance, famous for its writers and performers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Duke Ellington, and Ma Rainey, there were also sculptors, painters, and printmakers who were essential. These visual artists were part of a groundbreaking black artistic movement that greatly influenced the first modern Afrocentric cultural wave (National Gallery of Art).

The Great Migration was a pivotal moment in shaping new African American creative communities. Driven by the pursuit of better opportunities and the desire to escape racial constraints, this mass movement of people from the South to the North and West had a profound impact on the artistic landscape. While the Great Depression temporarily dampened the artistic energy, the Harlem Renaissance left a lasting legacy. Visual artists found new avenues to express themselves through initiatives like the Federal Art Project and the Harlem Community Art Center (HCAC). The HCAC became the basic, offering support and training to black artists, allowing them to hone their skills and showcase their talents. The legacy of the Harlem Renaissance continued to inspire subsequent generations of artists. This artistic and cultural renaissance not only left a lasting impact on the creative community but also contributed to the broader civil rights movement and the Black Arts Movement that followed (Harlem Renaissance).

1.5 Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement was a significant social and political movement in the United States that aimed to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. It took place from the late 1940s to the 1960s, and during this time, remarkable progress was made in the quest for equal rights and opportunities. The movement also sought to address the social and economic injustices faced by African Americans (Carson).

1.5.1 The Emergence of the Civil Rights Movement

The fight for civil rights for Black Americans has been going on for a long time. It started way back in the 1700s when some people were already trying to end slavery and racism. During the American Revolution, there were people called abolitionists who were working to get rid of slavery. The push for change kept going during the Civil War in the 1860s. President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation which was a big deal. Then the 13th Amendment made slavery illegal for real. After the Civil War, the 14th and 15th Amendments gave Black people more political rights and equality. But in the South, a new system called Jim Crow kept Black people poor and treated unfairly, even though they had these new laws on their side. So the civil rights movement has really deep roots going back hundreds of years. It's been a long, hard fight to try to make things fair for Black Americans, even after slavery ended. The work is still going on today (“The Civil Rights Movement: An Introduction (Article) | Khan Academy”).

The Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century started because of the promises made during emancipation were not kept. It was influenced by the experiences of black soldiers in World War II. These soldiers served in a segregated military and saw US propaganda promoting freedom, fairness, and equal rights. When they came back home, many of them were committed to ensuring they had all the rights and benefits of being full citizens. The movement used different methods like legal challenges, peaceful protests, and black empowerment to tackle the ongoing struggles African Americans faced in their fight for fairness and equality (“The Civil Rights Movement: An Introduction (Article) | Khan Academy”).

1.5.2 Civil Rights and the Courts: Struggles, Triumphs, and Nonviolent Movements

In the early days of the civil rights movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) used the courts to try to change the laws that kept

Black and white people separate in the South. They filed lawsuits to challenge the laws that allowed this separation, called Jim Crow laws. The most important case was *Brown v. Board of Education*, where the Supreme Court said that having separate schools for blacks and whites was not fair and was against the Constitution. Even though the Supreme Court said this, a lot of white people in the South were really mad and didn't want to desegregate. They fought hard against it. Southern politicians even wrote a paper called the "Southern Manifesto" where they said the Supreme Court was wrong and they wouldn't follow the law. In the end, the federal government had to step in and make sure the schools were desegregated because the Southern states refused to do it on their own. It was a big fight, but the NAACP and the civil rights movement used the courts to try to change the laws and make things more fair for Black people in the South ("The Civil Rights Movement: An Introduction (Article) | Khan Academy").

As a reaction to the strong opposition to desegregation, certain Civil Rights Movement leaders changed their approach to direct action and peaceful civil disobedience. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, which began in 1955 after Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat, was a key moment in the modern Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. became a notable leader during this time, and the boycott became a model for activists across the country.

Different groups, including religious organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, student groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and labor unions such as the American Federation of Labor, engaged in massive protests. These efforts aimed to raise awareness for federal civil rights legislation. The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the largest civil rights protest in U.S. history, played a crucial role in successfully passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Mass direct action proved highly effective, gaining widespread media coverage that showcased nonviolent protesters

facing harassment and physical violence from law enforcement officers (“The Civil Rights Movement: An Introduction (Article) | Khan Academy”).

1.6 Conclusion

Racism has been around in America for a long time. It started with slavery and then some laws kept black people separated from white people. Even after slavery ended, black people still faced a lot of unfair treatment. The government and society made it hard for them to have the same rights as white people. Learning about this history helps us understand why racism is still a big problem today. This background information sets the stage for looking at how racism has affected America today, including in books and stories.

Chapter two

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

"Native Son" is a story about a guy named Bigger Thomas. It shows how racism can deeply impact your mind and make you feel all messed up inside. The book follows Bigger and how racism affects him as a person. It also shows how racism hurts a lot of people in America and how they fight against it. The analysis of the book uses two different ways of looking at things. One is called critical race theory (CRT) and the other is called psychoanalytical theory. These two ways of thinking are used to understand how racism works and how it makes Bigger feel inside. This chapter will explain these two theories and how they help us understand the book better.

2.2 Unveiling Racism and Inner Conflict through Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Richard Wright's "Native Son" shows how deeply racism and personal struggles impact the life of Bigger Thomas. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) helps us see how society's racial biases shape Bigger's choices and experiences. This approach highlights the harsh realities of racism and the inner conflicts it causes. Wright's story emphasizes the connections between race, power, and individual actions, offering a powerful look at the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.

2.2.1 Definition of CRT

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a field of study that looks at how white dominance influences laws, culture, and politics, especially in the U.S. While CRT emerges from a rich tradition of race and racism studies, including the works of influential figures like W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and others, it

distinguishes itself by originating within legal studies. CRT not only builds upon but also critiques and responds to critical legal studies (Rollock and Dixson, “Critical Race Theory”).

Furthermore, Critical Race Theory (CRT) aims to drive social and political change by challenging and breaking down oppressive systems. It's interdisciplinary, which goes beyond traditional academic fields and can be applied in many areas, especially education. In some cases, CRT is almost the same as the broader study of race and racism, showing its significant impact and importance in today's discussions (Rollock and Dixson, “Critical Race Theory”).

2.2.2 Origins of CRT

In the 1970s Critical Race Theory started because lawyers, activists, and scholars noticed that the progress from the civil rights movement of the 1960s was slowing down and even reversing. To tackle the new, more subtle forms of racism that were emerging, early leaders like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado began developing new ideas and methods. Soon, more people with similar views joined their efforts (Mambrol).

Early leaders like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado were key figures in this movement. They organized the first workshop in the summer of 1989 at a convent near Madison, Wisconsin, which officially started Critical Race Theory (CRT). Following this, more conferences and meetings were held, some open to the public and some private. These events offered a space for deep discussions and debates, helping to address internal issues and sharpen CRT's main ideas. They brought together scholars, students, and activists from different fields, creating a vibrant mix of ideas and viewpoints (Mambrol).

2.2.3 Overview of Key Concepts

Despite the wide range of opinions among the movement's supporters, legal scholars Richard Delgado—one of the movement's founders—and Jean Stefancic assert that there are a few general claims about race and racism that many critical race theorists would agree with. These claims make up the "fundamental tenets" of CRT (“Critical Race Theory (CRT) | Definition, Principles, and Facts”).

2.2.3.1 Interest Convergence

According to Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars, the idea of "interest convergence" or "material determinism" means that legal changes for people of color often happen when they also benefit white people. This implies that improvements in the legal status of marginalized groups might not actually challenge the racial hierarchy in the U.S. and could even strengthen it. Derrick Bell, an early CRT thinker and the first Black tenured law professor at Harvard argued that the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ended the "separate but equal" rule from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), was due to a shared interest between white and Black people at that time.

Bell suggested that elite whites were worried about possible unrest from Black soldiers returning from World War II and the Korean War. They also feared that the U.S. might look racist to the world, which could hurt its position in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Although this view was initially ignored, later research-backed Bell's idea. It showed that the U.S. Department of Justice's decision to support desegregation was influenced by secret messages from the U.S. State Department, which wanted to improve the country's international image. This concept of interest convergence has been applied to other legal cases involving the rights of people of color (“Critical Race Theory (CRT) | Definition, Principles, and Facts”).

2.2.3.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is “the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (Bridges, 233). About thirty years ago, Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality," and it has since become popular in progressive and liberal groups. Today, those who don't support "intersectionality" are often seen as morally exclusive and behind in social science. However, despite its progressive appearance, intersectionality has a concerning racist and colonialist background that is just beginning to be acknowledged (Anderson)

Crenshaw originally developed the theory of intersectionality in two legal papers. In the first paper from 1989, she aimed to address a specific legal issue: the exclusion of "Black women" as a protected class under anti-discrimination law. She observed that the courts dismissed claims of discrimination by Black women unless they could prove they were victims of discrimination against "women" in general (including white women) or against "Blacks" in general (including Black men). Crenshaw's solution was to recognize that Black women faced discrimination as a distinct group and should be protected accordingly. This approach was clever and aligned with Crenshaw's overall liberal philosophy (Anderson)

In her 1991 paper, Crenshaw tried to broaden intersectionality into a more comprehensive social theory. She claimed that previous theories like feminism, Critical Race Theory, and Marxism only tackled one form of oppression at a time. Intersectionality, she suggested, combines these theories to address multiple oppressions at once. However, her approach did not resolve key contradictions among these theories and ignored the racist and colonialist roots of

intersectionality. By relying on second-wave feminist theories, especially Catherine MacKinnon's ideas, Crenshaw reinforced racist views about Black masculinity. MacKinnon's theory, based on white feminist ideology, downplayed racial power issues. Thus, Crenshaw's intersectionality, built on these flawed ideas, fails to provide a truly progressive or liberating framework. (Anderson).

2.2.3.3 Structural Racism

Structural racism is a system made up of actions, attitudes, and behaviors that keep discrimination going through unintentional bias, ignorance, carelessness, and racial stereotypes. These practices harm minority ethnic groups and need to be actively confronted to achieve real equality and fairness (Lander). Critical race theorists see racism as a deep-rooted and widespread problem in our society, not just about individual prejudices or actions. This implies that no white person in society can be considered completely innocent (Delgado and Stefancic, 89).

Structural racism in the U.S. means that many aspects of society are set up in a way that benefits white people while harming people of color. This happens because of historical, cultural, institutional, and personal reasons. It's like an invisible force that affects everything from laws to how people interact. Structural racism can cause a lot of damage, especially to the mental health of African Americans. They face many challenges and are often mistreated because of their race. These unfair treatments have been happening for a long time, since the days of slavery. As a result, African Americans may struggle with mental health issues more than white people do. They may not get the help they need, and sometimes they're treated badly by mental health professionals (Scott-Jones and Kamara).

Dr. Joy DeGruy's theory of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) explains how slavery's effects still impact African American communities today. PTSS is passed down through generations and causes negative self-esteem, a marked propensity for anger and violence, and internalized racism. These behaviors affect relationships and self-perception in society (Scott-Jones and Kamara).

2.2.4 Relationship to Early Movements

Critical race theory (CRT) draws from many past movements and thinkers. It is influenced by critical legal studies, radical feminism, European philosophers like Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, and American figures such as Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, César Chávez, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Black Power and Chicano movements. From critical legal studies, CRT takes the idea of legal indeterminacy, meaning not all legal cases have a clear outcome. It learns about the link between power and social roles and how domination is constructed through patterns and habits. CRT adopts the concern for historical injustices and the belief that legal and social theories should lead to practical changes from traditional civil rights thought. It also values community and group empowerment. From ethnic studies, CRT incorporates ideas like cultural nationalism, group unity, and the importance of developing concepts focused on each group's unique situation (Nasrullah Mambrol).

2.3 Exploring Racism Through a Psychoanalytical Lens

The psychoanalytic lens, which is based on the ideas of Sigmund Freud, is a useful tool for understanding the behavior of characters in stories. In the novel "Native Son," where racism is a major theme, Freud's ideas are particularly relevant because they explain how our unconscious

thoughts and feelings influence our actions. Throughout the book, the characters grapple with racism in ways that they may not even be aware of. This study aims to use Freud's ideas to delve deeper into how racism affects the characters in "Native Son," allowing us to gain a better understanding of the impact of racism on the human psyche.

2.3.1 Overview of Freudian Theory

Sigmund Freud, born in 1856 and passing away in 1939, founded the school of psychology known as psychoanalysis. His work and the subsequent studies have shown that much of our behavior is driven by psychological forces that we don't fully understand or control. Freud, an Austrian physician, was inspired to develop psychoanalytic theory when he encountered a patient whose symptoms couldn't be explained by physical illness. Using techniques like free association, exploring fantasies, and analyzing dreams, Freud delved into the unconscious motivations behind behavior. His theory suggests that many of our actions are influenced by experiences from childhood that we may not even remember (McLeod).

Freud's approach emphasizes the significance of unconscious processes in shaping our behavior. He proposed that our minds are driven by desires and motivations that exist beyond our conscious awareness. These hidden forces often stem from childhood experiences and can influence our thoughts, feelings, and actions. According to Freud, our fantasies and dreams provide signs of these unconscious desires, serving as outlets for wishes that may be unacceptable or forbidden in reality (McLeod).

2.3.2 Unveiling the Psyche: Exploring Freud's Id, Ego, and Superego

This piece examines Sigmund Freud's ideas about the mind. He described it as having three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. These parts interact to shape thoughts and behaviors. Discover what each part does and how they influence human actions and personality.

2.3.2.1 The Id

Freud's theory regarding the id explores the core aspects of human personality, attributing it to the foundation of the mind and the origin of instinctual desires. According to Freud, the id encompasses both innate urges and inherited instincts that propel our actions. For instance, a newborn's instinctual need for nourishment serves as a prime example of a natural, instinctual impulse. Freud simplifies this theory by dividing personality into two main sections, likening the id to an untamed horse and the superego to the rider attempting to control it. This analogy persists even in modern discussions, indicating the ongoing relevance of Freud's ideas in comprehending human behavior (McLeod).

compared to other psychological theories, the id is a force we can't control, filled with instinctual desires that often clash with society's rules. These desires range from basic needs like hunger to more complex urges like aggression. As people grow, their behavior often shows the influence of the id, driven by these instinctive impulses. Even though we try to manage or control these urges, the id remains a primal force that continuously shapes our thoughts and actions. (McLeod).

2.3.2.1.1 Exploring the Characteristics of the Id

According to Freud, the id is our personality's basic and instinctual part. It's found in the unconscious mind and holds all our urges and desires, including sexual energy that influences

many of our behaviors. The id works on instinct and impulse, using what Freud called "primary process thinking," which is primitive, illogical, and wishful. Unlike the ego and superego, which develop later, the id is like the personality of a newborn baby, without rationality or concern for social rules. The id operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate satisfaction of its desires without regard for the consequences. When its needs are satisfied, we feel pleasure; when they aren't, we feel tension or discomfort. The id is driven by two main instincts: Eros, the life instinct, which includes activities like eating and sex, and Thanatos, the death instinct, which includes aggressive behaviors. These instincts shape our behavior and influence our thoughts and actions at a basic, unconscious level (MSEd).

2.3.2.2 The Ego

According to Freud, the ego is the part of our personality that deals with reality. It comes from the id and works to manage the id's urges in a way that society finds acceptable. The ego follows the reality principle, meaning it tries to satisfy the id's desires in realistic and sensible ways, using methods like rational thinking. This rational thinking, known as secondary process thinking, helps us solve problems and control ourselves, making sure our actions fit in with social rules (Vinney).

Freud first thought of the ego as just our sense of self. Later, he added that it also includes functions like judgment and regulation. The ego acts as a mediator between the id, which wants immediate pleasure, and the superego, which follows moral rules. It tries to balance these needs while keeping reality in mind. The ego mostly works at conscious and preconscious levels, thinking about reality and sometimes pushing down forbidden desires. Its main job is to find a balance between fulfilling the id's urges and making sure we survive in the real world.

Each decision the ego makes involves weighing the pros and cons in terms of pleasure and pain, showing its role in managing our basic desires and societal expectations (Vinney).

2.3.2.3 The Superego

The superego, in Freud's theory, is like the part of our mind that's all about being good and following rules. Like the voice in our head that tells us right from wrong, based on what we've learned from our parents and society. It develops around 3 to 5 years old and is responsible for making sure we behave morally and follow society's rules. This part of our mind operates on what Freud called the morality principle, which means it motivates us to do the right thing and behave responsibly. Think of it as our internal referee, rewarding us with feelings of pride when we do something good and making us feel guilty when we do something wrong (McLeod).

The superego has two main parts: the conscience and the ego-ideal. The conscience is like the inner voice that tells us when we've done something bad and makes us feel guilty about it. The ego ideal, on the other hand, is like an imaginary picture of how we should be, based on what's important to us and our parents. When we live up to this ideal, we feel proud of ourselves, but if we fall short, we can feel like failures. Both the conscience and the ego ideal come from what we've learned from our parents and how they've reacted to our behavior. Sometimes, though, the superego can be even stricter than our parents were, leading us to feel guilty even when we haven't done anything wrong.

2.3.3 Exploring Freud's Defense Mechanisms

Freud's defense mechanisms are ways our mind protects itself from stress and anxiety. These are unconscious strategies the ego uses to manage difficult emotions and keep us mentally

balanced. By understanding these mechanisms, we can learn how people cope with inner conflicts and stressful situations. In this exploration, we'll look at different defense mechanisms, such as repression, denial, and projection.

2.3.3.1 Denial

According to Anna Freud, denial is a mental strategy we use to shield ourselves from things we can't handle. It's like putting up a mental barrier to keep out harsh realities when they become too much. Instead of confronting difficult situations or truths, people might act like they don't exist or tell themselves that everything is fine. While denial can provide a short break from uncomfortable emotions, it doesn't solve the actual problems. Ignoring reality can make things worse over time. Denial often works alongside other mental tricks to avoid facing tough issues. For example, someone might ignore signs that their partner is cheating or pretend they're prepared for an important test when they're not. These are just some ways people use denial to deal with situations or feelings they'd rather avoid (“Defense Mechanisms in Psychology Explained (+ Examples),” par.denial).

2.3.3.1.1 The Interplay of Denial and Racism

When it comes to racism, denying it can be a huge problem. Take apartheid in South Africa, for example. Many white students ignored the harsh realities black people faced, even though it was obvious. They felt friendly towards black people but grew up believing they were inferior. This denial made it easier for them to deal with their mixed feelings. Racism isn't just about individuals; it's woven into how societies operate. For instance, after losing a war or being humiliated, people might worry about their status. To avoid feeling bad, they might blame others, like those of different races. This denial lets them dodge responsibility for their actions. Denial

and racism are closely connected. Denial makes people feel better when they're faced with uncomfortable truths. But ignoring reality can be harmful and hinder personal growth.

Recognizing and addressing denial is key to tackling racism and creating a fairer, more inclusive world (Denial of Structural Racism Linked to Anti-Black Prejudice, 2022).

2.3.3.2 Projection

Projection is a psychological defense mechanism where people blame others for their unwanted traits or impulses, instead of admitting these flaws in themselves. It's like wearing blinders that help us ignore our shortcomings while noticing those in others. This idea comes from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which suggests that projection protects the ego from guilt or anxiety. As children grow and develop a sense of right and wrong, they start using projection to deny the unpleasant parts of themselves, especially during adolescence. Even though it's a basic defense, projection can continue into adulthood, affecting how people see and interact with the world (C. Vinney PhD).

In "Native Son," the main character Bigger Thomas often blames others for his actions instead of admitting his mistakes. This helps him avoid feeling guilty and figure out who he is in a society where race is a big deal. Sometimes, people also blame others for being racist while ignoring their prejudices. This can cause problems and keep us from understanding ourselves and each other. Even though blaming others might make us feel better temporarily, it can hurt our relationships and stop us from growing. But if we can recognize when we're doing it and try to change, we can learn more about ourselves and make the world a fairer place for everyone (C. Vinney PhD).

2.3.3.3 Rationalization

Rationalization is a psychological defense mechanism where people change the truth to feel better about a situation or impulse. This means they restate unacceptable actions or events more acceptably, often deceiving both themselves and others. Unlike intellectualization, which avoids uncomfortable feelings, rationalization focuses on maintaining a certain self-image instead of facing harsh realities. A study by Moore in 1953 found that white people often used rationalization to minimize their racist attitudes, showing an unwillingness to confront uncomfortable truths about themselves. This indicates that despite some progress in racial attitudes, rationalization still hinders genuine self-awareness (Mcleod).

2.3.3.3.1 Symbolic Racism and Rationalization

A more complex manifestation of rationalization concerning racism is 'symbolic racism,' coined by Sears and McConahay in 1973. This form of rationalization involves individuals justifying their actions as morally upright while denying any racial biases. Instead of openly expressing hostility towards people of other races, they may oppose certain political principles advocated by minority groups, believing they are defending American values (Shackelford, 2020, pp. 4825–4830).

Rationalization plays a key role in racism by making discriminatory behavior seem reasonable. It lets people explain their behavior with logical-sounding reasons, hiding their true prejudices. For instance, an employer might not hire someone because of their race but claim it's because they wouldn't fit in with the company culture. Likewise, some people might argue against affirmative action by saying it harms their racial group instead of admitting their own biases. Recognizing and addressing rationalization is crucial for building self-awareness and

creating a fairer society, as it helps people face their prejudices and work on changing harmful attitudes and behaviors. (Zeigler-Hill & Shackelford, 2020, pp. 4825–4830).

2.3.3.4 Displacement

Displacement, a psychological defense mechanism, is a fascinating aspect of human behavior that plays a significant role in managing our emotions. In simple terms, displacement involves redirecting our negative feelings from their source to a less threatening target. This mechanism operates unconsciously, serving as a protective shield against overwhelming emotions. It allows us to cope with anxiety and restore emotional balance without even realizing it. Defense mechanisms, including displacement, are like hidden tools in our mental toolbox. They operate beneath our conscious awareness, helping us cope with unacceptable feelings and maintain our psychological well-being. Unlike conscious coping strategies we use to manage daily stress, defense mechanisms function on an entirely unconscious level. They are our mind's way of navigating threatening people, situations, or emotions (Cherry).

Displacement, in particular, serves as a safeguard against facing emotions that might be too risky to confront directly. When we feel that expressing our feelings to the source could be unacceptable or dangerous, our mind automatically seeks out a safer outlet. This could involve directing our anger, frustration, or other negative emotions toward someone or something less threatening.

The concept of displacement in psychology dates back to Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna Freud. Initially, she didn't list displacement as a defense mechanism, but later researchers saw its importance in understanding how we behave. Displacement is now seen as a key way our ego protects us, helping to manage anxiety and emotional stress. Recognizing the signs and

factors influencing displacement is vital to understanding its effect on us. Things like age, emotional intensity, and how often we use displacement influence how it shows up. For instance, children might show their feelings more openly, while adults might redirect their emotions to others because of societal norms or personal limits. Displacement can show up in different ways, like taking out anger on a safer target or turning unacceptable urges into productive activities. Each type of displacement helps us handle complex emotions and keep our mental balance (Cherry).

Real-life examples show how displacement happens in everyday life. Displacement is a normal part of human behavior. It can be seen in actions like snapping at a loved one after a tough day at work or suddenly getting interested in something related to a forbidden desire. While displacement can give temporary relief, it often has negative side effects. It can lead to inappropriate emotional outbursts, strained relationships, prejudice, and scapegoating. Studies on its usefulness are mixed, indicating that while it can help people cope, it can also cause problems if used too much.

2.4 Conclusion

Using two different approaches, Critical Race Theory and Psychoanalytical perspectives provide a better understanding of racism. Critical Race Theory highlights how racism is embedded in societal rules and practices, while Psychoanalytical perspectives reveal how racism impacts thoughts and emotions. Combining these approaches offers a clearer view of racism's operation both in society and in individual minds.

This combination shows that racism involves more than individual actions; it also concerns societal structures. It is not only about people's behavior but also their thoughts and feelings. Understanding both aspects aids in creating a fairer society and combating racism.

Chapter three

Textual Analysis of Native

Son

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Richard Wright's background and how his life experiences shaped his writing of "Native Son." Born in the early 20th century, Wright faced racial oppression and discrimination throughout his life. Growing up in the racially segregated South, he witnessed the injustices inflicted upon African Americans. These experiences influenced his worldview and provided the foundation for his exploration of racism in "Native Son". The focus then shifts to the novel's protagonist, Bigger Thomas, and his encounters with racism, analyzed through a Freudian lens. This approach examines Bigger's subconscious motivations and fears, revealing how societal racism shapes his actions and psyche. Additionally, critical race theory is employed to examine the racial dynamics within the novel. This framework helps us understand how power structures and societal norms perpetuate racial inequality. Applying this theory to "Native Son" provides insight into the complex relationships between race, power, and oppression depicted in the novel.

3.2 Overview of Native Son

In 1940, Richard Wright wrote the important novel "Native Son," a year after winning the Springarn Medal for "Uncle Tom's Children." This book shows Wright's skill in tackling racial oppression and portraying African Americans as complex people with their hopes, fears, and challenges. "Native Son" follows Bigger Thomas, a young Black man in 1930s Chicago, who struggles with poverty, discrimination, and societal limits. Living in a small South Side apartment, he deals with the harsh realities of systemic racism. Bigger's life changes when he accidentally kills Mary Dalton, the daughter of his rich white employer while trying to hide his presence in her room. This act leads him into a cycle of fear, desperation, and violence. As the story progresses, Wright reveals the many sides of Bigger's character and the emotions driving his actions ("Native Son", Analysis of the Novel by Richard Wright | LitHelper").

In "Native Son," Bigger is shown as a complex person shaped by his tough surroundings, despite his bad actions. Wright uses Bigger's story to reveal hard truths about race, power, and privilege in America.

Bigger's life shows the deep unfairness faced by marginalized people, making readers think about their role in a flawed system. Even though there are efforts to show his humanity and seek mercy, Bigger ends up being sentenced to death for his crimes. After his death, his story remains a strong symbol of ongoing racism and inequality in America. "Native Son" is more than just a story; it's a strong criticism of a society full of bias and unfairness. Through Bigger's journey, Wright challenges readers to face the tough realities of race and power and encourages them to work towards a fairer and more inclusive future ("Native Son", Analysis of the Novel by Richard Wright | LitHelper").

3.3 Richard Wright and Native Son: A Shared Experience with Racism

Richard Wright was born in an outhouse in Mississippi in 1908. His father left when he was six, and the family split up. He moved around but stayed passionate about reading and writing. The background of Wright's life influenced his writing of *Native Son*. Wright was a member of the Communist Party when he wrote the book and was earning an insufficient salary. Bigger Thomas, the protagonist, is based on a combination of Wright's experiences and inspirations. Through Bigger's character, Wright wanted to portray the realities of a hopeless and desperate black American life. Richard Wright had a very difficult life from the start. As a child, he was poor and faced racism. His father left the family and his mother struggled to provide for them. They moved around a lot, seeing discrimination in places like Mississippi, and Tennessee. Witnessing violence and humiliation against black people by white people made a big impression on Wright and influenced his views on race and society. As an adult, Wright fought against the oppressive systems that controlled his life. When his mother got sick, he had to work hard to support his family. He stood up to white people in positions of power. In Memphis, he refused to accept the way things were and eventually moved north to get away from the racism in the South (Warnes).

Wright's experiences with racism and oppression shaped his writing, especially in his famous book "Native Son." The story uses characters like Bigger Thomas to explore racial injustice and the struggle for self-expression in a white-dominated society. Wright's time with the Communist Party also influenced his

views as he looked for solutions to the problems faced by black communities. "Native Son" shows the tensions between black and white people and the class issues in society. Drawing from his own life, Wright's characters face rejection, anger, and the search for identity. The novel highlights Wright's lasting impact, bringing attention to the issues of race and power that still matter today (Warnes).

3.3.1 Childhood in the Jim Crow South

In 1908, on a cotton plantation in Mississippi, Wright wrote his autobiography called "Black Boy." This book talks about the tough times he faced because of the Jim Crow Laws in Mississippi and his brave move to Chicago. Wright wrote about how he escaped to Memphis, thinking it would save him from his family's struggles. He believed that Memphis was very dangerous for black people because of the strong racial tensions and harsh treatment they faced, which made him decide to move to Chicago. In his book "Native Son," a similar story happens. The main character, Bigger, moves from the South to the North, hoping for a better life, just like Wright did in real life. Wright left his family and went to another state when he was just 15 years old. This real-life event is reflected in "Native Son," where a character also leaves home and moves to a new place to survive (Rowley).

In 1927, Richard Wright moved to Chicago with his aunt Maggie, hoping for a fresh start and a place where he could express himself freely. Many African Americans, like Wright, left the South to escape the harsh racial discrimination there. However, when they arrived in the North, they found that racism was still present, just in different forms.

In Richard Wright's novel "Native Son," the main character, Bigger Thomas, shows the difficulties that African Americans faced in the northern cities. Bigger gets a job as a chauffeur for the wealthy Dalton family. At first, he thinks his job is just to drive them around. But soon, he realizes that the job also means he has to obey and submit to the Daltons' control and authority. This makes him very angry and frustrated. His anger and desperation lead him to make a terrible decision, and he ends up murdered in a desperate attempt to escape his difficult situation ("Encyclopedia of Arkansas").

Wright's story of Bigger highlights the racial injustice and oppression he saw. Using clear scenes and emotional language, Wright shows the systemic biases that marginalized communities faced in both the South and the North. By including these themes in his novel, Wright reveals how widespread racism impacts people's lives. Despite initial rejection, Wright found success with "Uncle Tom's Children" and "Native Son." His focus on racial issues connected with readers and critics, earning praise for his insightful views on society. Wright's connection with the Communist Party also gave him a platform to push for equality and social change. In his autobiography "Black Boy," Wright describes his childhood in Arkansas, facing harsh racial violence. The death of his uncle had a deep impact, creating fear and helplessness against white supremacy. Wright's personal and societal experiences shaped his writing, helping him capture the complexities of race relations in America with great depth and understanding ("Encyclopedia of Arkansas").

3.3.2 Richard Wright's Portrayal in 'Native Son'

"Native Son" shows how racism was a big problem in America when Richard Wright was writing. He uses Bigger Thomas, the main character, to show how African Americans were treated unfairly because of their race. Instead of just being a story about a young Black man making mistakes and facing the consequences, it's about how racism controlled Bigger's life and led to his downfall. Bigger is a victim of a society that discriminates against him, and Wright uses powerful language to make readers feel sorry for him. For example, when Bigger tries to get a job but doesn't have nice clothes, he ends up stealing and getting caught. The store clerk unfairly accuses him of stealing a knife, even though it would've been impossible for him to buy it. Bigger feels like he has to act a certain way to please white people. This shows how stereotypes about race can be hurtful and untrue. Bigger wants a better life, but he faces discrimination and ends up feeling hopeless. It's not surprising that Wright had problems with white employers, and these experiences influenced his writing (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Bigger Thomas | Fictional Character")

3.4 A Freudian Take on the Protagonist's Experience with Racism

In "Native Son", the main character deals with many problems because of racism. Freudian analysis helps explain his thoughts and actions by showing how racism affects him. This method uncovers the hidden reasons for his behavior and reveals how racism messes with his mind. It's like putting on special glasses to see the hidden struggles caused by racism.

3.4.1 The Id, Ego, and Superego in Bigger Thomas

In Richard Wright's "Native Son," Bigger Thomas acts on his raw, instinctive desires, similar to Freud's concept of the Id. He often seeks immediate satisfaction and focuses on his own needs. After accidentally killing Mary Dalton, his actions are driven by a strong urge for self-preservation. The book describes, "He felt a sudden violence explode inside of him, fierce rioting, killing rage. He could feel his body surge with an energy that he had never known before. He clenched his fists and fought for breath, and for a moment he nearly blacked out from the sheer force of this energy that poured and coursed through his muscles" (Wright, 117). This quote shows how Bigger's instincts are powerful and uncontrollable (Peter Robbins).

Bigger acted without thinking when he decided to burn Mary's body in the furnace. He only cared about his safety and didn't consider the consequences. There's a quote that says, "He was going to kill her. He had killed her. He was in the act of killing her now. He had never lived before like this. But each time he made a move he felt a surge of power that surprised him" (Wright, 118). This shows how Bigger felt powerful and free during the act, despite the risks. It highlights how his actions were driven by basic instincts, pushing the story forward.

In "Native Son," Bigger Thomas doesn't just act on instinct. He also shows he can think and plan, similar to Freud's idea of the Ego. For instance, Bigger carefully plans to frame Mary's boyfriend, Jan, for her disappearance. This shows he's smart and adaptable. The quote says, "He could feel a calculating mind in him, cool, detached, figuring, planning... He was thinking ahead now, a cold, clearheaded calculation of chances" (Wright, 127). It reveals Bigger's ability to think logically and plan, even in tough situations.

Additionally, Bigger reflects on his actions and their impact on him. He struggles with guilt and the morality of his actions. The quote says, "His head was alive with thoughts... He was the center of a whirling storm of thoughts, thoughts that colored and gave significance to every action, every movement, every breath that he took" (Wright, 173). This highlights Bigger's struggle with his thoughts and efforts to make sense of his actions. Throughout the story, his character changes as he confronts these internal conflicts, revealing the complexity of individuals when faced with tough decisions (Peter Robbins).

In "Native Son," Bigger Thomas faces a conflict about right and wrong, much like Freud's idea of the Superego. His guilt comes from societal pressure. The quote shows Bigger's fear and guilt, highlighting the struggle to escape these feelings, and the strong impact of society's rules on him. "He stood before the furnace, his body numbed, his mind stark with an inner terror that he could neither escape nor understand. He was saturated with fear, and with it, he felt a deep sense of guilt" (Wright, 191). This passage shows Bigger's overwhelming guilt and fear, stressing the influence of societal expectations on him (Akingbe and Adeniyi).

3.4.2 Defence Mechanisms and the Exploration of Racism through the Protagonist

This analysis explores how a protagonist's defense mechanisms can be used to uncover and confront the complex issue of racism. Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that individuals use to deal with stress, anxiety, or other uncomfortable emotions. Examining how a protagonist employs these mechanisms, we can understand how they respond to racist experiences. This exploration can help us better understand the psychological and emotional impacts of racism and how it can be addressed through personal growth and self-reflection.

3.4.2.1 Denial

In Richard Wright's novel "Native Son," the protagonist Bigger Thomas struggles with his actions and the pressures around him by denying the truth. Denial is a coping mechanism where one refuses to confess something wrong they've done. Instead of owning up to his mistakes, Bigger blames racism for his

problems. Despite feeling guilty, he refuses to admit it. For instance, he says, "What I killed for I am." (Wright, 191), trying to justify his actions based on the injustices he faces. Additionally, he acts like he's not scared to work for the Daltons, even though he is. This shows how he struggles with his identity and the racism he faces. Bigger's denial plays a significant role in the story because it influences how he deals with his problems. However, his behavior around white people and the choices he makes reveal that he's really scared and angry inside. For example, he joins a robbery because he wants to feel strong. This decision leads to the accidental death of Mary Dalton. Through Bigger, Wright illustrates how denial prevents him from facing the truth about himself and the world around him. Bigger's denial isn't limited to his struggles; it also reflects society's refusal to confront racism (Cox).

Wright uses Bigger to discuss race, power, and how black people are treated in society. Bigger's struggle to admit the truth about racism highlights how difficult it is for people to confront such uncomfortable realities. This is why "Native Son" is such an important story, focusing on the challenges of addressing racism in society. Bigger's denial is a powerful theme in the novel, as it shows how people can struggle to confront the harsh realities of racism. Wright's portrayal of Bigger's denial serves as a commentary on the societal issues that contribute to racial tensions and the difficulties people face in addressing these issues. The novel's exploration of denial and its consequences serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of acknowledging and addressing racism in society (Cox).

3.4.2.2 Projection

In psychology, projection is when people push their flaws onto others, blaming them instead. It's like pointing fingers at someone else for what you've done wrong. Richard Wright's "Native Son" shows this well with Bigger Thomas. He does violent things but can't admit he's at fault. When he accidentally kills Mary Dalton, he tries to say it wasn't on purpose. Even though others try to excuse him, like Bessie saying he didn't understand, he knows what he meant but can't admit it. He always looks for excuses, avoiding taking

responsibility, something common in a society where people don't like admitting their mistakes (Ctsang, "Native Son Lit Essay Revised").

Bigger's life is a struggle between his desires and actions, complicated by feelings of powerlessness and fear due to his race. Seeing a communist meeting makes him think about his life and feel unhappy. He's afraid of losing his family and job, so he gets angry but later realizes he hurts his mother and that his anger is fear. The idea of projection also shows how white people can be racist. A character says they feel scared watching a gorilla movie because they're "attractive from the fear of whites." This shows how people often blame others for their fears and insecurities. Unfortunately, this leads to unfair treatment of minorities and makes social problems worse (Ctsang, "Native Son Lit Essay Revised").

3.4.2.3 Rationalization

In "Native Son," Bigger Thomas often finds ways to justify his actions, protecting himself from the harsh truths around him. This rationalization means creating valid reasons for what he does, even if they're not entirely truthful. For instance, when his mom wants him to find work and he doesn't, he blames the "white store owners" for not hiring black people. This lets him avoid admitting he's just procrastinating. Similarly, when Bigger and his friends plan to rob a store, he argues they're doing it out of boredom. But deep down, it's about his frustration with society. Despite knowing it's morally wrong, he chooses the easy way out to fix his troubles. (Kimura).

When Bigger accidentally kills Mary Dalton, he tries to convince himself it wasn't his fault: "He had killed her. But it was not murder. It was a terrible, horrible accident! He had not meant to do it. He had not wanted to do it. He had not planned it. It just happened. And now he was caught in a terrible web of circumstances that he had not foreseen and could not unravel." (Wright 431) Even though he knows that he is responsible, he tells himself it was not his fault, that it was just events beyond his control. This helps him avoid feeling guilty and scared about what he's done. Throughout the book, Bigger uses rationalization to protect himself from the hard truths of his life. By making up reasons for his actions, he doesn't have to face

the reality of who he is or what he did. It's like a shield that helps him feel like he is still in control, even when everything feels out of control (Kimura).

3.4.2.4 Displacement

In "Native Son," Bigger Thomas relies on displacement as a way to handle his emotions, shifting them from one target to another. At the beginning of the story, Bigger often lashes out at his family members, especially his little brother and sister. When he accidentally kills a rat, he ends up taking his anger out on his sister, and he has disturbing thoughts about hurting her friend. These thoughts show how he displaces his anger onto other people. Even his daydreams about a black cat represent this displacement—he doesn't get mad at the cat, but it becomes a symbol of his deeper feelings.

But things change when Bigger meets his girlfriend, Bessie. Suddenly, he stops hitting his siblings, and he decides not to hurt Mary, the daughter of the family he works for. Instead, he just wants to scare her. Bessie becomes a substitute for the violence he used to direct toward his sister. And when Bessie dies, Bigger's anger and frustration come pouring out, leading him to kill Mary. Like he can't hurt his sister anymore, so he hurt Bessie instead. Bigger also has thoughts about hurting or killing women. These thoughts are most clear when he thinks about his sister's friend and the rat and are often mixed with sexual feelings, and they show how Bigger believes violence can give him power and freedom. He feels like he is in control when hurting someone else. But this feeling didn't last long. Even when he kills Mary, he realizes that it didn't solve his problems. He is still trapped by the same fears and frustrations.

One example is when he kills the rat. Bigger knows he wanted to kill it, even though it was an accident. The rat was in the wrong place at the wrong time, similar to what happened with Bessie and Mary. Bigger didn't plan to kill them, but his anger made them targets. Another example is when Bigger talks about being afraid. He's always been scared, even as a child. He doesn't know why, but he's always running from something. This fear comes from his tough life, family troubles, and the violence he's experienced. When he

starts his new job as a servant for a rich white family, he's terrified of failing. This fear leads to the accident with Mary because he's so worried about making a mistake.

3.5 Racial Dynamics in the Novel through CRT

"Native Son" by Richard Wright explores the intersection of race and power in old Chicago. This analysis uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) to understand the connection between race and power and how it leads to unfair treatment. The focus is on the main character, Bigger Thomas, to show how race affects his life. CRT is used to dig deeper into the story, revealing how racism, resistance, and control are portrayed. Bigger's experiences illustrate that racism is not just about individuals but also about larger systems. Studying Bigger's story helps to understand broader issues of racism in society, showing how race and power create unfair treatment within systems and structures.

3.5.1 Systematic Racism

In "Native Son," the protagonist Bigger faces institutional discrimination from the start of his education. He observes, "They teach you to fear, to obey, and to run" (Wright, 10). This quote shows how the education system keeps Black students in a cycle of fear and obedience, supporting societal norms that uphold racial inequality. Additionally, Bigger's limited access to quality education restricts his chances for progress, revealing the systemic obstacles Black individuals encounter ("Native Son: Important Quotes Explained | SparkNotes").

Bigger's arrest and trial show racial unfairness in the legal system. Even without strong proof, he is quickly found guilty of murder. This shows how Black people often face discrimination and are not treated fairly by the law. Discrimination is also seen in housing policies that force racial segregation. Bigger's family has to live in poor and crowded conditions because Black families have limited options. Bigger's mother complains about their situation, saying, "If we had some money, we could live in a house like white folks and have things" (Wright, 16). This shows how housing discrimination keeps Black families from better

living conditions and increases economic inequality (“Native Son: Important Quotes Explained | SparkNotes”).

In "Native Son," Bigger is a chauffeur for the rich Dalton family, showing the power whites have over Blacks. He is obedient to the Daltons, which highlights this control. Mr. Dalton's charity efforts reveal how these power imbalances continue, favoring white people over Black people. Bigger feels powerless and resentful towards the white elite. The racial hierarchies around him shape how he sees himself and his place in society, deciding his fate in the story. Also, when Bigger faces the criminal justice system, it shows the racial biases that favor whites. Even without strong evidence, he is quickly convicted, revealing how the legal system devalues Black lives (Onuorah).

3.5.2 Intersectionality in "Native Son":

In Richard Wright's "Native Son," Bigger Thomas faces challenges because of his race, class, and gender. These shape his life and show how racism affects people. Bigger struggles to find a good job and support his family due to his race and low status. He can't move up in society because unfair systems hold back poor Black people (Hephzibah and Samuel).

The legal system treats Bigger unfairly because of his race and class. He is quickly judged guilty of a crime he didn't commit, which happens a lot to Black people. Bigger feels trapped and hopeless, saying, "They don't let you do anything... I didn't do nothing and they want to kill me." (Wright, 208) His relationships with women show how race and gender mix. His girlfriend Bessie faces violence from him, showing how society's idea of manliness affects him as a Black man. When Bigger interacts with Mary Dalton, his boss's daughter, her attempts to be friendly seem patronizing and show how race and gender affect power. Even though Mary seems open-minded about race, she still reinforces racial divisions in her interactions with Bigger (Hephzibah and Samuel).

3.6 Conclusion

Native Son is a powerful book that makes readers think about racism and its effects. Richard Wright, the author, used his own life experiences to create the character Bigger Thomas. Bigger suffers a lot

because of racism and how society treats him. The book shows how racism can mess with someone's mind and lead to bad choices. By looking closely at the story and using psychology and race theory, it's clear that racism is everywhere in the book. It's not just about one person, but a whole messed-up system. *Native Son* is a wake-up call to face racism and work for a fairer world where everyone is treated equally. The book stays with you long after you finish it. It is a classic that everyone should read to better understand racial dynamics in American society.

General Conclusion

America has always been diverse, with African Americans playing a key role in shaping the country despite facing segregation and discrimination. Their history is deeply connected to slavery and oppression, which still affects their social and cultural lives. The Great Migration, where many African Americans moved from the rural South to urban areas in the North, changed their lifestyles and cultures. This migration brought economic challenges and created a sense of community and identity, often expressed through a unique language.

By analyzing Richard Wright's "Native Son," this study shows how Wright uses his characters to highlight the racial injustices of his time. The main character, Bigger Thomas, represents the struggles of African Americans trying to survive in a society that dehumanizes them. Through Bigger's experiences, Wright shows the psychological and emotional impact of systemic racism, revealing how a racially divided society shapes individual identities and fates.

Understanding the historical context of "Native Son" is crucial. Set in the 1930s and 1940s, a time of severe racial discrimination and segregation, the novel portrays the harsh realities African Americans faced in Chicago's South Side, including economic hardships and racial tensions from the Great Migration. Wright uses these conditions to critique society and challenge readers to confront racism.

The study also shows how "Native Son" critiques American society. Wright exposes biases in the legal system and media that perpetuate racial stereotypes and injustices. Bigger's unfair trial reflects the broader societal prejudices against African Americans. Wright calls for a more just and equitable society through these depictions.

"Native Son" also explores themes of identity and self-awareness. Bigger's struggle to understand himself in a society that denies his humanity adds psychological depth to the novel. Wright delves into Bigger's fears, desires, and internalized racism, making his character a complex representation of the African American experience.

The issues "Native Son" addresses, like racial profiling, economic inequality, and the dehumanization of marginalized communities, are still relevant today. The novel's themes continue to spark discussions about race, justice, and human rights, emphasizing the need for empathy and social change.

In conclusion, Richard Wright's "Native Son" is a crucial work that critiques racial injustice in America. Through Bigger Thomas, Wright reveals the systemic forces shaping individual destinies and challenges readers to face uncomfortable truths about race relations. This study explores the novel's historical context, themes, narrative style, and social critique, demonstrating its lasting impact and relevance. "Native Son" reflects its time's racial dynamics and serves as a timeless reminder of the need for empathy, justice, and social reform.

The findings of this study can help researchers and students explore the intersection of literature and social issues, especially those focusing on language variations within specific ethnic communities. The insights gained can also help educators understand language differences in multicultural settings, promoting a more inclusive and empathetic approach to teaching and learning.

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ملخص

يكتب ريتشارد رايت في الإبن الأصلي عن الآثار الضارة للعنصرية وكيف تؤثر بعمق على الأمريكيين الأفارقة ، والآثار التي لا تزال موجودة حتى اليوم. التأثير النفسي للعنصرية هو مجال رئيسي للدراسة في الأدب و علم النفس بسبب كيفية تأثيره على الرفاه العقلي والاجتماعي للناس. تبحث هذه الأطروحة في تاريخ العنصرية في أمريكا ، مع التركيز على فترات مهمة مثل قوانين جيم كرو ، والهجرة الكبرى ، ونهضة هارلم ، وحركة الحقوق المدنية. تساعدنا هذه السياقات التاريخية على فهم الديناميكيات العرقية في رواية رايت. باستخدام نظرية العرق النقدية ، تدرس هذه الرسالة كيف تشكل العنصرية النظامية حياة وهويات الشخصيات ، وخاصة الشخصية الرئيسية ، توماس الأكبر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، يتم استخدام نهج التحليل النفسي لاستكشاف استجابات أكبر النفسية للعنصرية ، باستخدام أفكار فرويد حول آليات الدفاع. يساعد هذا المزيج من النظريات في الكشف عن الصراعات الداخلية وأساليب التأقلم التي تنشأ من الاضطهاد العنصري. تسلط تجارب ريتشارد رايت الشخصية مع العنصرية ونضالات بطل رواية الإبن الأصلي الضوء على التأثير المستمر للتمييز العنصري على النفس الفردية. يكشف تحليل مفصل للنص عن القضايا العرقية المعقدة والصدمات النفسية التي يواجهها الأمريكيون الأفارقة ، مما يوفر فهمًا أعمق للآثار الدائمة للعنصرية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: العنصرية ، الابن الأصلي ، ريتشارد رايت ، توماس الأكبر ، نظرية العرق النقدي ، التحليل النفسي ، قوانين جيم كرو ، الهجرة الكبرى ، نهضة هارلم ، حركة الحقوق المدنية ، آليات الدفاع ، الهوية ، القمع المنهج.