

**Springfield High School Required Summer Reading and Writing 2022  
Honors ELA 12  
*Native Son*- Richard Wright Assignments 1 and 2**

**Reading Assignment:** Please purchase and read Richard Wright's *Native Son* and type analytical notes to aid you in the writing work. We will be referencing specific portions of the text during the opening weeks of the course and the more specific your notes the more prepared you will be to respond to discussion questions. These notes will be collected and are critical for weaving textual evidence into your written assignment. They can also be used for class discussion and reading quizzes. In the opening weeks of school, you will be asked questions about specific excerpts from the text and having detailed notes will enable you to respond intelligently. You will submit your notes via Canvas in August.

Our readings, discussions, and reflections will inspire us to probe deeply into not only characters, but also the manner in which the author creates that character to embody very human and often universal character traits. Authorial choice is the awareness that authors make deliberate choices with intended consequences. In your notes and essays, you will need to analyze the choices authors make and how they impact the reading experience. For example, the name of a character, the setting, key images, the narrative style, the symbols – every single diction choice in the book is an authorial choice you can analyze.

**Two Writing Assignments: You will craft ONE analytical essay and ONE reflective essay in response to Richard Wright's *Native Son***

**Assignment 1 - Analytical Writing - Select ONE of the following choice essays:**

**Choice 1-Writing Assignment 1 (2-3 pages)**

In a novel by William Styron, a father tells his son that life "is a search for justice." Use Richard Wright's *Native Son* to consider a character who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the character's understanding of justice, the degree to which the character's search for justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole. You must identify and explain three ways that your chosen character understands justice or injustice, argue how each of those understandings is successful or unsuccessful, and explain how this contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole (MOWAW). Do not merely summarize the plot. You must explicitly

name what you believe the meaning of the work as a whole to be. You must conclude your argument by claiming what would be missing from the meaning of the work as a whole without the character's understanding of justice or injustice. AVOID PLOT SUMMARY ENTIRELY. Be sure to include a minimum of 5-7 properly cited textual excerpts in your analysis. A Works Cited is required. Title your essay in a way that indicates your argument. We will submit this essay electronically by **August 22<sup>nd</sup> via Canvas.**

### **Choice 2-Writing Assignment 1 (2-3 pages)**

In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: "It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That's where the mischief starts. That's where everything starts unraveling." Use Richard Wright's *Native Son* to analyze a character who holds an "ideal view of the world." Then write an essay in which you analyze the character's idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how Wright's portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole (MOWAW). To craft an effective argument, you must clearly and specifically name and identify at least three facets of the idealism your chosen character holds and how those views cause positive or negative consequences. You must conclude your essay by claiming what would have been missing from the meaning of the work as a whole if Wright had not had the character hold these idealistic views. AVOID PLOT SUMMARY ENTIRELY. Be sure to include a minimum of 5-7 properly cited textual excerpts in your analysis. A Works Cited is required. Title your essay in a way that indicates your argument. We will submit this essay electronically by **August 22<sup>nd</sup> via Canvas.**

### **Assignment 2 - Reflective Writing (3-4 pages)**

Select the three most pivotal passages in *Native Son* and reflect on how they impacted you as a reader. Your excerpt can be as brief as a word, phrase or sentence or as lengthy as an entire passage on a page. Type out each excerpt and then include your reflective analysis on the author's choices in the passage and how they made you think and feel. How does the passage connect to your learning in other disciplines? Can you make an intertextual connection to a song, film, or other media experience? Why do you think this is such a key passage? What would be missing from the author's message without this passage? You can arrange this piece of writing however you like. It will most likely not be a traditional essay format. You will probably introduce the excerpt and then write your reflective analysis. Then introduce the next excerpt, and so on... We will submit this essay electronically via Canvas by **August 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

**Both assignments (Analytical Choice Essay and Reflective Writing Piece) are to be submitted via Canvas by August 22<sup>nd</sup>.** These will be the first grades of the semester so be sure to submit your best work as it will set the tone for the course. Writing must be MLA formatted and supported by properly documented in-text citations. Do include a Works Cited for the text you are referencing.

I think you will find the FAQs answer any questions you might have.

## **FAQs**

### **Do I need a physical copy of the books?**

Yes, you need to bring *Native Son* to class in August. We will be using the book for in-class writing tasks, discussions, interactive learning tasks, etc.

### **How many typed double entry notes do I need for the book?**

Think about the notes as an opportunity to practice analyzing author's choices and as a place to practice crafting thesis statements and as a place to generate questions to ask members of the classroom community. You should pause periodically to type out an excerpt of the text and to do some analytical work with the excerpt. These notes are for you and your learning. You will be able to use them for reading quizzes, presentations, interactive learning tasks, essay revisions, etc.

Feel your power to take control of your learning and view the notes not as an external task, but as an internal opportunity to do some deep thought-work. Some of your peers may submit 20 pages of notes, others may submit five. I am not counting the number of notes you take. I am reading them to get a sense of your ability to analyze the author's choices. The most dominant word in each set of notes should be the author's last name – I should be seeing phrases like Richard Wright argues, Wright's use of x symbol suggests, Wright's choice to do x can be interpreted as y, etc. These notes aren't really about whether you liked the book in the same way that we don't focus too much on whether we like a concept in Calculus or Physics. Our focus here is to analyze and explore each author's choices and how those choices contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole.

### **Do I have what it takes to be successful in Honors Lit?**

Yes – absolutely! As long as you are willing to read and write and think and learn this will be an amazing class for you. The first step is enjoying the time to read a challenging and provocative. I love teaching this class and I am

excited to prepare you for university-level thinking. The readings, notes, and essays are your entry ticket into this college-level course.

### **How long should I take to write each essay?**

I suggest about an hour for your analytical essay and an hour for your reflective essay. Set a timer and type an analytical essay that responds directly to the prompt that you have chosen. You do not need to restate the prompt or summarize the novel – you need to offer a decisive provocative argument in response to the prompt. This is where your double-entry notes can help you generate your argument, weave in an illuminating excerpt, etc. After you've typed your first draft of the essay, I would take some time away from it and then revisit it and read it aloud and see where you can be more analytical, more assertive, and more clear. You should delete any summary of the novel and focus instead on inserting composition moves that analyze the author's choices and how those choices contribute to the MOWAW. For your reflective essay you can likely generate it directly from your double-entry notes. Be as creative as you like with this essay.

### **So what do I need to do before the first day of class?**

Use this checklist:

- Read and take notes on Richard Wright's *Native Son*
- Type up and submit notes on Richard Wright's *Native Son*
- Type up and submit an analytical essay on Richard Wright's *Native Son*
- Type up and submit a reflective essay on Richard Wright's *Native Son*
- Get excited for a legendary class that will prepare you for college

Enjoy your summer and the opportunities to read, write, think, and argue. You are lucky to be able to read such an important text by an author like Richard Wright and to get to engage in discussion with your peers about the ideas explored in each text. I can't wait to start the class and see what you think in August.

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