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 **Prestwick House**
Activity Pack
Literature Made Fun!



Black Boy
BY RICHARD WRIGHT



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Research**

Objective: Learning about the author's literary contemporaries

Activity

Use a reliable source to locate African American authors who were Wright's literary contemporaries. Choose three and write a brief summary of their lives and work.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 1

Newspaper Headlines and Articles

Objectives: Identifying main ideas
Writing newspaper articles

Activity

Pretend you are a newspaper reporter for the *Natchez News*. You have been asked to cover a small house fire at the Wright home. As a reporter, your goal is to sell as many newspapers as possible; clever and catchy headlines will make more people want to read the paper, thereby selling more.

Your editor asks you to provide a **HEADLINE LIST** for your story. After talking to the characters who were present when the curtains caught fire, imagine the different headlines you could create based on the information they might share with you. Make a list of at least four different headlines you could use. Be as creative as you can!

Then, choose one headline and write a news story about the fire for your editor. When writing your short article, remember that newspaper articles follow these rules of writing:

- The first paragraph of the article answers the 5 W's, 1 H: who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Feelings and emotions are omitted.
- Only the facts are provided.
- Information is presented simply and without excess words.
- As in essays, paragraphs are organized into clear paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting details.

I. CURTAINS THE CAUSE OF FAMILY CALAMITY

II.

III.

IV.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 3

Cause and Effect

Objective: Understanding how a crisis affects the characters and forms their views

Activity

Richard's life while living with his Uncle Clark and Aunt Jody is fulfilling and somewhat pleasant. He is able to gain some respect for himself at school and feels calm and full while at home. However, after Richard learns that a young boy died in his bed, in his bedroom, not long before his arrival, the calm and fulfilled feelings he has quickly disappear.

From Richard's perspective, compose a note to his mother, who is recovering from a stroke at Granny's home. Your note should focus on his recent discovery and how it has affected him. It can be as short or as long as you feel necessary and written in any tone that you feel best reflects his feelings. Be prepared to read your note aloud and discuss it with the class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 7

Financial Increase

Objective: Examining how finances have changed

Activity

Wright sees that many of his friends are buying new clothes—"long-pants suits that cost from seventeen to twenty dollars." In 1924, gasoline prices averaged approximately twenty-one cents a gallon and a Ford Model-T car could be bought for approximately \$300. Of course, the average weekly salary in a manufacturing job was \$25, and for a skilled laborer, like a plumber, it was under \$75.

Use the Internet or other resources to fill in the following chart that compares various statistics from 1924 and the present. After you fill in the chart as best as you can, write a short opinion piece for your school paper that explains which era you would prefer living in, based strictly on the facts you have located. We have done one for you as an example.

INCREASE CHART

Item	1924	Present	Increase	% Increase
Cost of a loaf of bread	\$0.19	\$1.98	\$1.79	942%
New house price				
U.S. population				
Hershey Bar				
Life expectancy				
Salary of the president				
Mailing a letter				
Yearly income				
1 lb. of sugar				
1 lb. of bacon				
1 oz. of gold				

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 13

Debate

Objective: Constructing arguments for and participating in a debate

Activity

This chapter raises questions about learning and reading. Wright acquires most of his knowledge through reading whatever he can get his hands on. He has a passion for books and uses his reading of fiction and nonfiction to understand both himself and the world around him more clearly. Many people believe, however, that one has to experience life, not just read about it, to reach the same understanding.

Your team will be assigned one of the following topics and positions to argue in a debate. In constructing an argument, debaters usually research their topic. If you feel you can build a strong enough argument without research by appealing to your audience on an emotional or purely logical level, however, you may also take that approach.

Debates will be conducted in the following format:

Position A gives opening argument. (3 minutes)

Position B gives opening argument. (3 minutes)

Position A makes rebuttal. (2 minutes)

Position B makes rebuttal. (2 minutes)

Position A makes closing statement. (1 minute)

Position B makes closing statement. (1 minute)

At the conclusion of each debate, the audience (your classmates) will vote as to which side argued its position more effectively. NOTE: Do *not* automatically vote for the team whose position you agree with; rather, concentrate on how well teams presented their arguments and responded to those of the opposition.

Topic #1—Reading teaches about life

Position A: Each student should read at least one book a month and write about how the book affected his or her life.

Position B: Students should not be expected to read anything other than textbooks.

Topic #2—Fiction vs. Nonfiction

Position A: Fiction is an appropriate way to learn about life.

Position B: Nonfiction is the only way to learn about life.

Topic #3—Life lessons

Position A: One can learn about life only through experience.

Position B: One can come to understand something he or she has never experienced through merely reading on the subject.