

CHAPTER IV

THE ELEMENTS OF FICTION IN BLACK BOY

This chapter is made as the additional complement in looking thoroughly on the whole aspects that we are found in Black Boy. The purpose is mainly to support the analysis of the distinctive character of Richard, as the theme of the thesis I present.

There are five important elements of fiction that I feel should be discussed in this novel. They are : Theme, Character, Point of View, Plot, and Setting. The sources I took are from William Kerney (How To Analyze Fiction), Graham Little (Approach To Literature) and X.J.Kennedy (Literature, An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama), which I consider sufficient as the leading theory of literature.

1. Theme

When discussing about the theme of Black Boy, we are in fact talking about many things concerning the life of black people in the time when it has been " legalized " to shun them merely because they are colored people.

Before we go on further, we should know first what a theme is. According to X.J.Kennedy a theme in literature is :

" The theme of a story is whatever general idea or insight the entire story reveals. In literary fiction, a theme is seldom so obvious. That is, a theme need not be a moral or a message; it may be what the happenings add up to, what the story is about. " (page 103)

This story is obviously about black people and their life; not merely because the author is a black man, but mostly because this story reveals a description the childhood of a boy who was born as black in the American South and grew up there until he finds a chance to change his life and fulfill his dream. To understand this, the readers should look at the definition given by William Kerney in concerning the theme of a story :

" Theme is meaning, but it is not "hidden", and it is not illustrated. Theme is the meaning the story discovers. Theme in fiction is what the author is able to make of the total experience rendered. " (p:91)

Through Black Boy, it seems that the author would like to give an illustration of the situation at that time through the life of the main character, Richard. When writing this novel, the author tried to apply the situation of the depressed black people in the South at the time of World War II when black people had legally undergone cruel and inhuman treatments.

Blacks had served as slaves, porters, and maids in the white's families since the early 17th century. Although it can not be considered as a reflection of the situation of that time, at least the reader will be able to observe a description of the suffering black people at that period. As an illustration of this situation, I have quoted a paragraph from Black Boy :

" He's always beating by hunger, deep hunger that makes him hates the situation, restless, his temper flare to forget the feeling of deep hunger, sometimes he drank water as much as possible to make his stomach full for a moment..." (p : 115)

From this excerpt, we learn then that the blacks are always in hunger, for they can not make a good and decent living. The whites have intentionally limited all the chances and opportunities for blacks to improve their living standard. The restriction is not only applied the case of job opportunities, but almost in all activities and facilities controlled by the white man. The blacks can no longer stand the brutality of the whites. The reason for their intolerance is based on the facts that the blacks and other minorities in the U.S.A have an inferior status compare to the whites. Particularl for blacks, their human rights are often disregarded and ignored.

The following paragraphs have clarified the actual conditions of blacks :

" He learns many things after that. He saw that what had been taken for their emotional strength was their negative confusions, their flights, our fears, our frenzy under pressure. It seems that the whites like to see them like that. " (Black Boy p:45).

.....

" He likes to make anything possible in his imagination because his environment was bore and bleak, he endowed it with unlimited potentialities, redeemed it for the sake of his own hungry and cloudy yearning. A dread of white people now become exist in his feelings and imagination. He became sensitive regarding conflicts between the races. Nothing challenged the totality of his personality so much as the pressure of hates and threat that come from the white. " (Black Boy p:82).

Richard has suffered even more due to bigotry of his family, especially his grandmother. They are too fanatic in their religion. His family's bigotry includes the obligation to pray everyday and go to church every Saturday and Monday. Meat, cheese, egg and bread are never consumed in their daily meals, for it is considered a sin to prepare them in their dish.

But Richard was different from the other black boys. He can not accept sufferings and them all for granted. According to him there is no difference between he and the white man. They are born equal, despite their colors.

Those humiliation and violation treatments from the whites to his people always fill his mind with

questions such as : Why his people should accept these treatments. These questions always bother him and so his curiosity grows deeper. When finally he's able to leave his bigot family and makes a living in an other town where the treatment from the white people are not so rigid, his curiosity is answered.

Through the books he read, he knows and learns much. He is even able to recognize many things not only concerning blacks and whites, but also the white's way of thinking, the new world, men's behavior, etc. Richard realizes that the most important thing is to understand, and with the growth of understanding of what is happening around him, he is able to judge the situation and then able to decide what's the best thing to do. Richard' determination o his future is stated clearly by his journey to the North :

" ... He headed North, full of hazy notions, and hope, that live could be lived with dignity, that the personalities of others should not be violated, that men should be able to confront other man without fear or shame, and that if men were lucky in their living on earth they might win some redeeming meaning for their having struggled and suffered here beneath the stars.... " (page : 45)

This story presents such scenes. The suffering of blacks as the result of race discrimination is a real fact which has to be undergone by almost all of the black people living in the South. At the time the

story was written. They are abandoned, insulted, humiliated, tortured, hung, lynched by the whites.

Blacks are treated unfairly, mercilessly, and more than that they are considered as " animals " that can be milked as pleased. Sad, though it may be, the black parents have imitated the white's cruelty in treating and educating their children ; as if the rule of the whites are right and legal, so that they should obey and apply it blindly. Their children are not allowed to think and talk anything else but religion, because it is the only decent thing allowed to be thought and talked.

They brutalize their children, act violently to them as if to avoid their children's curiosity and questions that might come up about the issues of unfair law enacted by the whites or the reason of the Jim Crow law , that is : separate but equal.

Through his readings, Richard the main character in this story have read books, which are written by many famous intellectual writers, containing knowledge about the world and the people that live in it with their own different characters . Through those books, he gets a new understanding and perspective about what happen around him.

This is one of the reasons that the theme of this story rises from the character of Richard, for the novel is mostly about Richard as the narrator and the main character.

I can also assume the theme of this story that : The best education can be obtained by learning from books. By so doing, one's education will include his soul as well as his mind, which will result the opening of the heart and mind to be aware of and learned as well as understand the problems of the world.

2. Character

A character is an imagined person who inhabits a story which is usually bears human personalities that familiar to the real life and real people. They are mostly created by the author to act as what the author wants them to do to bring the important message to the readers.

In How to Analyze Fiction, William Kerney stated that :

" Any discussion of character in fiction, then, must attend to the relationship between character and the other elements of the story, and between character and the other as a whole. That is, character must be considered as part of the story's internal structure. So we may refer character to the real human beings who inhabit that world. Essentially, we refer the fictional characters to ourselves. "

Character is one of the most important part of an analysis of a story (short story, fiction, novel or drama as well) beside theme. plot, setting, etc. Kerney further mentions that characters enliven a story. They build a certain impression of the story. They make a special effect which affect its reader. Moreover if the author is the one who is expert to make the story as alive as the real life.

" Even in fantasy and caricature, an essential element is truth to life. However original and fantastic the author's approach, he will fail if his readers do not feel that his characters are real, believable, based on possible variations of human nature. " (Graham Little p: 92).

E.M.Forster has divided character into two form :

Flat (Simple) and Round (complex) characters.

1. Round/Complex/Depth character.

By depth of characterization is meant the degree of richness or completeness of presentation of character. One of the most important features of deep character portrayal is the presentation of development and change especially as a result of the changing personal relationships with which the story has dealt.

2. Flat/Simple/Type character.

Type characterization is the simplification of character down to one or two qualities.

Since Richard is the main character in the story, I will focus my attention on him through his point of view as the narrator. We have learned about his hard

and harsh time when living a town in Southern state; where blacks are living under the pressure of the whites. Both implicitly and explicitly, the readers have given a clear picture to, that blacks do not have the basic right as human beings. They do not even have the right for deciding anything for themselves, even to decide their own fate.

Richard, as the central attention in this story, not only represents those humiliation, but more than that, Richard has his own way to face this situation. He is not the kind of man who is content with accepting the situation no matter how bad it is. He is neither the kind of man who is able to judge other man's fate or underestimate people merely because of their color.

Richard is more than those. He is smart, never feels satisfied with everything he got in school. He is always eager for books. And reading is his prime hobby.

A paragraph is taken to show Richard's enthusiasm of learning :

" Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. And it was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world
 ***** " (1975)

For him, books can open one's mind, so that one will not walk blindly in the darkness of one's life. One will see everything clearly with open mind and open heart. Thus one will know what to do in facing a certain situation. He or she will not only accept what the whites do to him or her. Richard sees that the other black people are always scared of the cruel treatment of the whites. They have decided not to take any risk by even showing just a slight dislike look in their face.

So frightened are they with the whites, that they are willing enough to brutalize their children, "cut their mind" into pieces, ruin their life by "killing" their wish, and many other uncalled things which resulting from deep sense that they as blacks deserve to get such treatment.

However, this does not happen to Richard. I observe that this is one of Richard's distinctive character. His curiosity has never ended, although with this "stubborn" character, he is often got into troubles, either from his family, his friends, or mostly from the white people. Richard is tough. This is understandable since his childhood he has never received love and affection from his family and environment.

As one example of his toughness, I will show the reader when Richard was blamed by his aunt for something

people merely because they have different color: or to brutalize the children just for the sake of the whites's please. Richard can be regarded as a mutineer.

Following E.M.Forster's criteria on character Richard can be categorized as a round character. He does not belong to the stock character since he is not a "made" character. Richard always gives the reader new surprises, various kinds of ideas and action. His way of thinking is simple but wide. He sees something from many different angles. He is able to judge something or someone from the points that he likes, but it still judged in its proportion. This considers the kind of treatment should not continue and it is wrong to let it be so.

He is a round character, because from the beginning of the story till the end, Richard has showed a dynamic way of thinking, broad view point, despite his stubbornness and toughness as human being.

3. Point Of View

It is rare in modern fiction for the "real life" author to try to step out from behind his typewriter and tell the story. Real persons can tell the stories, but when such a story is written, the result is usually nonfiction: a memoir, an account of travels, or an autobiography. To identify

the narrator of a story, describing the part he plays in the events and the limits placed upon his knowledge, is to identify the story's point of view. In a short story, it is usual for the writer to maintain one point of view from the beginning to the end, but there is nothing to stop him from introducing other point of view as well. (X.J.Kennedy p:19).

A narrator who says "I" might conceivably be involved in events to a much greater or a much lesser degree: as the protagonist, as some other major character, as some minor character, as a mere passive spectator, or even as a character who arrives late upon the scene and then tries to piece together what happened.

A story can be divided into two kinds of characters. As stated by X.J.Kennedy :

Narrator a participant (writing in the first person) :

1. A Major character

- A character who brings the most important role in the story.

2. A Minor character

- A character less in presentation, just to support the existence of the major character.

When the narrator is cast as a participant in the events of the story, he or she is a dramatized character who says "I". Such a narrator may be the protagonist such as in Huck Finn or may be an observer of a minor character standing a little to one side, watching a story unfold that mainly concerns someone else. A narrator who remains a nonparticipant does not appear in the story as a character.

If a character acts as a narrator, the author must make sure that the character possess or can obtain enough information to tell the story adequately.

William Kerney emphasizes this point by starting that:

" In fiction, however, something like a Godlike view of things can be available. For the author's relation to the world he creates in fiction is, after all, similar to God's relation to His created universe. That is the author is the ultimate source of being of every person, place, thing, and even in his work and knows all there is to know this creatures of his imagination. "

Kerney also mentions that the story may be told, for instance, by the protagonist or main character. In that case, it is told from his point of view. We see only what he sees, and we see it only as he sees it.

(p : 51)

Black Boy is obviously told from the first person through the main character for this is a kind of autobiography. We can also see from the title itself

which is : Black Boy A Record of Childhood and Youth.

This is a record of childhood and youth of Richard Wright, the author himself as a black boy who has lived in the Southern State of the U.S.A (1908-1960), the novel itself was written in 1945, which was the critical time when the problem of racism became the major attention and interest of the world; for in the South, the whites were allowed to treat the blacks cruelly.

There is no law against such violence upon the black people. They are not even considered as human beings merely because of their color .

The using of "I" in presenting the narrator is indicating that the story is written using the first person point of view. We see how things go on, how they happen, for the "I" is Richard's eyes. We know the situation of the society including his family as well as his friends from Richard's witnessing.

We also know that it is an autobiographical work since most of the things told here are concentrated on Richard's life, including all his experiences during childhood fraught with humiliation and beatings, a home which is devoid of understanding and affection.

Under the Jim Crow law, Blacks must " in order to acculturate themselves, deny their own honesty and

passion and have to brutalize their own children,". Stated by John Reilly, from the State University of New York at Albany in his afterword on Richard Wright's Black Boy .

This also occurs in author's life himself, Richard Wright who was born near Natchez, Mississippi. When he was five, his father abandoned the family. Richard, his younger brother, and his mother - and for the next ten years Richard was raised by a series of relatives in Mississippi. By 1925, when he went to Memphis on his own, he had moved twenty times. Extreme poverty, a constantly interrupted education that never went beyond junior high school, and the religious fundamentalism of his grandmother along with the constant experience of humiliation and hatred in a racially segregated South : all these contributed to Wright's growing sense that the hidden anger of black people was justified and that only acknowledging and expressing it could they move beyond it. (The Norton Anthology of American Literature, pp.1751-1762)

Some names or events might not exactly be the same with the author's life, but the racism was real as well as the tyrannical colonialism of the white people toward the blacks. And Richard Wright, the author, has actually undergone it. Thereby, when he told and described the events and all his feelings which are

presented through Richard's eyes or "I", those are his true feelings, ideas, and minds that occupy him validly.

In short, Black Boy is written by using the narrator as a participant; and since the writing is in the first person who is also the major character, or Richard, or "I" in the story.

4. Plot

From the opening sentence of the tale, we watch the unfolding of a dramatic situation : a person is involved in some conflict. Drama in fiction occurs in any clash of wills, desires, or power whether it be a conflict of character against character, character against society, character against some natural force, or character against some natural super natural entity.

The tale begins with an exposition : the opening portion that sets the scene (is any), introduces the main characters, tells us what happened before the story opened, and provides any other background information that we need in order to understand and care about the events to follow. The middle section of the story introduces a new conflicts (a complication), the suspense, the pleasurable, anxiety we feel that high

tense our attention to the story, inherence in our wondering it will all turn out.

Such a structure of events rising out of a conflict may be called the plot of the story. Like many terms use in literary discussion, terms use in literary discussion, plot is blessed with several meanings. Sometimes it refers simply to the events in the story.

In Black Boy book, plot will mean the artistic arrangement of those events. Different arrangements of the same material are possible. A writer might decide to tell the events in chronological order, beginning with the earliest, or he might open history with the last event, then tell what led up to it.

To have a plot, a story does not need an intense, sustain conflict find in "Godfather Dead". A tale especially economical in its structure of crisis, climax, and conclusion. (X.J.Kennedy p:25)

According to Sequel, Richard C.Guches Ed.D in A Handbook Of The Critical Analysis Of Literature,

a plot is :

" On its simplest level, plot may be only a sequence of events or actions that embodies some sort of conflict, one force opposing another. The plot's action is composed of the changing balance of forces in the story's events. " (pp.63-64)

Seeing the definition of plot mentioned above, it is rather difficult to analyze, whether Black Boy can be

selected into the sequence of events which is surely just the important events presented, involving the steps of crisis, suspense, climax, and denouement. Since this novel is a kind of autobiography's work, from the first page till the last, we see that there is no certain division in the story to keep or to maintain the sequence of events into it's steps.

As stated previously, each step has its own function to take the reader's interest and to make him or her keep reading. But if we look at Black Boy, there, the author presents his story as the way it is, meaning that he describes everything exactly as he sees or undergoes the experience. For this matter alone, Black Boy does not fit with the definition stated by either Kennedy or Kerney concerning plot, since Richard does not specifically undergo the sequences of events that are required in a plot.

Based on this fact, I would like to present the plot of Black Boy in general, considering the important points of Richard's life which have great influence his character building as well as his personality. Black Boy, is a story of the life of Richard Wright, black boy who was born in Natchez, Mississippi. He lived with his parents, an uncle, and his grandparents. He has one brother, and they live all together in the same house. Then his father wants to move to make their

own living. It is very hard for Richard to be attached to his father, for he never pays attention to his son. Until one day, he left the family to live with another woman.

Life begins to play a rough game to him after that. He and his mother often suffer from hunger. His mother has to work to support the family, and Richard has to stay home to take care of his brother and the house. That is the beginning of his awareness of life in his surrounding, for he is often left at home alone. He begins to recognize the saloon's life, get drunk, learn to use filthy words, roam the streets, and beg pennies from passers by. At the same time, he recognizes that there is something wrong about the relationship between black people and white people.

Blacks are often treated unfairly and brutally by the whites. Blacks always afraid of whites, since whites are free to beat the blacks. Richard does not understand this fact yet, for he has not yet seen the difference between blacks and whites. But when he asks about this matter to his mother, he can't and never get a satisfactory answer from his her. Sometime later, he found out that his mother has tried an allowance for them from his father, but she was lost the case in court.

Since then they are being neglected. When finally they could no longer pay the rent for the flat, mother looks for an orphan home for Richard and his brother to live.

One day mother picked them up and took them to Jackson, where Granny lives. There, Richard meets Ella, a colored school teacher. He began to take interest in Ella's books. His curiosity to know what the book is all about has increased. They do not stay long in Jackson and move to Arkansas. There, they live in Aunt Maggie's house. They have enough food there, for Aunt Maggie's provides for the blacks working in the sawmills. Till one day, he heard that Uncle Hoskins was dead, he is shot by a white man in a fight in the saloon. Frightened by the brutality of the whites, they and Aunt Maggie, have gone back to Granny's house.

Richard was nine years old at that time. Not long after they live there, mother couldn't stand the strict religious routine life in Granny's home. She takes Richard and his brother to West Helena.

Aunt Maggie gets a new husband there. His name is Professor Mathews. They plan to leave West Helena soon to go to the North, because Professor Mathews is one of the partisans. Meanwhile, mother gets a job, and Richard is able to go to school. When his mother is taken ill, his responsibility increases and he gets his

first job in a roundhouse as a launch carrier to support his family.

After that they often move from one apartment to another. When they move to a new place, Richard always takes a job regardless of the kinds of work he gets. In spite of the money he earns, he is always suffering from hunger.

His mother's health failing rapidly. She has a stroke and becomes paralyzed. Richard wrote letters to his grandmother, aunts, and uncles telling them about his mother's condition. He can't stand to watch his mother's suffering. He and his uncle road to Jackson to put his mother in the big hospital there. Aunt Maggie took his brother with her in Northand to be taken care of, while Richard decides to stay with Uncle Clark in Greenwood.

He goes to school and began to feel uncomfortable with the atmosphere that is too formal there. He goes back to Jackson not long after that, for he can not stay away from his mother too long. Uncle Edward is there and takes his mother to Clarskdale for the operation and brought her home after that.

By the time, Richard reaches twelve, he begins to realize his surroundings. He has to undergo the torturing life in Granny's house which is full of

strict religious atmosphere. He has no freedom to do anything he pleases, except to pray and join the church activities. He is even not allowed to enter public school. He is forced to enter religious school with Aunt Addie as the teacher. However, it does not last long. He is always blamed and accused as a sinner and never got a right treatment in what he did. Basically, he was considered a bad boy, because he always reacts hard to whatever they think and tell.

Richard enters Jim Hill public school but Granny refused to support his expenses such as : books, clothes, and tuition fee . She thinks the best school is a church school and not an ordinary school. He only spend two weeks in the 5th grade in the summer,, and is promoted to the 6th grade. He then decides to work as an insurance agent , and earn much money from the job. He supports Granny's family with his salary. When passes his 7th grade, Grandpa becomes very sick, and died after suffering from a long period of sickness. long sick.

Day by day, he used to support himself. He earns money in order to buy his own clothes, pants, books, and even food by working from one job to another. He gets many experiences from that. He also learns many things including life's game those that he will never had at home with his grandmother and aunt's hate

since " wordly life " is condemned by his grandmother and aunt.

The only thing that made him happy and which always keep his struggle for life is his mother's attention and affection. Fortunately enough she recovered rapidly. Life seems never give him a longlife happiness. His mother got a bad stroke again; and at the same time, Granny and Aunt Addie need money badly for the house rent .

To minimize the economy burden, they decide to share the house with Uncle Tom and his family, by letting them live under the same roof together. But as a result, Richard felt more uncomfortable and depressed with the coming of uncle Tom who has interfere to much in his life. Richard is very upset and feels that no one can understand him.

In the year 1924, a year that Richard is in his boring point, living in a house where people neither pay attention to him, nor love him, except to be silence, and filled their time by praying. Working, is the only way to forget them for a while. When the school year begins, he workes in the morning and evening, only to avoid staying at home longer. His earnest curiosity about the difference between the whites and blacks have never fades in his heart. But he has never got an

answer for that. It seems to him that not only his family, but also the people around him such as friends and teachers avoids discussing those questions which keeps pumping in his mind.

He is in the 8th grade now. He has decided to become a writer, for he likes reading and writing, a skill which is considered strange by his friends. Before the graduation day, the principal wants Richard to read the principal's . Richard refuses that. Because he wants to read his own speech . He is not scared although the principal has threatened that Richard will not be permitted to graduate. Richard does not like to be dictated, to be stopped in speaking out of his ideas, for it indicates that his lose of freedom as a human being.

He begins to realize that the education system in the South has been rigged to stifle. He has realize that the Jim Crow Laws has been drafted and passed to keep out the blacks consciousness as human beings.

Richard grows tense day by day, since he gets no affection and warmth at home as well as outside. He feels he is left alone and neglected. The only person who is close to him is his mother who is always giving attention and love, and speak to him. His wanting to leave home and the town is settled. He decides to leave after he passes his ninth grade.

In 1925, he is graduated from school. He is 17 years old. He works hard and takes all kinds of jobs. The important thing is that he learns how to behave and speak properly to the whites. He has learned not to say no to them let them decides what to do to the blacks. The environment has made him realize of his status as a black, and therefore teach him how to place himself in the right position as blacks should do. He saw many shocking scenes concerning the white people's attitude upon blacks. Still he can not accept that.

He can never understand why people should be treated in a different way basically because of color differences. If his friends can accept it, he can not, moreover after his experience in his work, at the optic trade company. His boss told him that he will taught everything concerning optic trade busiess, but as a matter of fact, since he is a black, the white people there has never let him touch or let him learn anything. He finds himself standing alone in the alien world which he can not do anything to change the law of life.

Finally, after he has earned enough money, he packs and leaves Jackson to Memphis. He wishes he can find another world which is different from the one he knows. He arrived in Memphis on a cold November morning.

There he looks for a rent house and meets a landlady Mrs. Moss, who lives with her daughter, Bess. Richard is surprised when he finds that Mrs. Moss and her daughter's way of thinking that are so much different from those people in Jackson. Their mind are simple, for example, to them, money is important but they does not strive too hard to get it. They has no tensions or unappeasable longings, and no desire to do something to redeem themselves. They believes and trusts him as an honest, educated young man. They respects him and warmly accepts him to live as a member of their family.

Richard is touched by their kindness, a human attitude that has never happened at his own home.

Richard worked in an optical company. And he finds that it is easier to work in Memphis together with the white man in the same building, although he still feels the hatred toward. His hobby of reading grows stronger, for now he had enough time to read many kinds of books he likes such as : Harper's Magazine, the Atlantic Monthly, the American Mercury, etc. And more particularly, are the ones which adds his knowledge about the world, and his understanding of the white and black life.

He begins to understand the reason his friends in his hometown behaves as they do, why they does not

dare to speak, why his boss becomes the chief who is legalized to do or think this or that way. Then, a deep understanding of what he has undergone and suffered during his life in Jackson comes up and fills his mind as a new consciousness. He does not hate the bleakness of the life there or regret about the ill treatments he gets from his family, as a result of the Jim Crow law.

He has an attempt to understand it as a warning that life can not be violated, and that man should be able to confront other man without fear or shame.

Truly, the books and magazines he reads are playing an important role in Richard's life, for after reading those books, his view become broader, his mind opens, his consciousness and understanding grows deeper about the world and what its surroundings. He does not hate it. In the end of this novel, we learn that Richard has taken his mother, brother, and Aunt Maggie after her husband's death, with him, to live in his own house that is bought by his own money in the North.

5. Setting

We see that Black Boy takes place on the towns in the South America. The place exactly is never settled on one or certain place, but it is always change from one place to another along with the movement of the

main character, Richard, as the central character in this story.

According to Sequel, setting should fulfill certain criteria :

" The setting in fiction is the place where the events occur and the time or age of the action. But more than that, the setting establishes the atmosphere which helps create the mood. Setting may also reveal to the readers something about the fictional characters in a story. The details of setting can reveal their personality traits, their personal habits, their social status, and their interests. "
(page: 68)

The first chapter of the novel is emphasized on Richard's hometown where he was born. It was in Natchez, Mississippi, South America. A small town where, like any other towns in the South, where the black's life are dominated and was under the control of the white man. It is autumn, and Richard can see the water of the Mississippi River from the verdant bluffs of Natchez. The house where he lives is placed near the hickory wood in a small country with its richness of the beautiful scenery where Richard used to spend his time watching it. The setting reveals from the author's description about cats, dogs, woods, sunshine, moss clad oaks, grass, etc.

Then the place of the setting changes when the family decides to move to Memphis. They are living in a one story brick tenement. The stone buildings and the

concrete pavements looks bleak and hostile. The absence of green, growing things make the city seem dead. From the description above, Memphis is a town, smaller than Natchez. Richard is a little bit afraid of living there, for the people also showing unfriendliness to him. However, he begins to be familiar with city's atmosphere there, like the saloon and its bleak influence, the drunk people, gambling, filthy words, etc.

After his father leave the family, mother puts him and his brother in an orphan home, another place that is new to him. What he sees is a large, tall, and gloomy building with its pale people. Richard never likes the place.

Then , again, they move to another town. They visit granny's house in Jackson. It is a two story frame structure with seven rooms. Richard and his brother used to play hide and seek in the long narrow hallways, and on and under the stairs. Granny's son, Uncle Clark, has bought her that home. The house has white plastered walls, its front and back porches, round columns and banisters. Seeing this house makes him feels that there is certainly no finer house in all the round world . (Black Boy p:46).

It is no wonder that Richard likes the house very much. There is wide green field outside the house; and the timid children as his neighbours. In Jackson, Richard has found the similar atmosphere, as his hometown, in Natchez. Some of the sceneries that indicating the country's atmosphere are : the green grass swaying in the wind and sun, a boll of cotton whose cup had split over, a yellow black bee hovering nervously above a white rose, sawmill, etc. It is dry hot summer when Richard describes the place.

After that, they move again. Now visiting Aunt Maggie's house in Arkansas. She lives in a bungalow that has a fence around it. It looks like home. A wide dusty road ran past the house and on each side of the road wild flowers grows. It is summer and the smell of clay dust is everywhere day and night. Richard will get up early in the morning to wade his bare feet through the dust of the road, reveling in the strange mixture of the cold dew wet crust on top of the road and the warm, sun baked dust beneath.

The great Mississippi River also passes this town. Not long after they live there, the murder of Uncle Hoskins, Aunt Maggie's husband, has forced them, and Aunt Maggie, to move to West Helena, a town near Elaine, Arkansas. Being frightened of the brutality of

the white people, they decided to stay in Ganny's house in Jackson. Again, after a period of time, Richard's mother announced that they are going back to West Helena. She has tired of the strict religious routine life in Ganny's home and many "rigid" rules that everybody has to obey regarding the church activities and rituals.

They rent one half of a double corner house in front of which ran a stagnant ditch carrying sewage. The neighborhood swarm with rats, cats, dogs, fortunetellers, cripples, blind men, whores, salesman, rent collectors, and children. In front of their flat is a huge roundhouse where locomotives are cleaned and repaired. There is an eternal hissing of steam, the deep grunting of steel engines, and the tolling of bells. Smoke obscures the vision and cinders drifts into their bed, into their kitchen, into their food : and a tart like smell was always in the air.

That is the description of Richard's situation in West Helena. They move often, due to the problems of rent. They move to the other town twice, and then near the centre of the town, and to the outskirts of the town near the wide stretch of railroad tracks.

Richard's mother's health is falling rapidly and becomes worse each day. Till one day she collapsed. Considering the situation, Richard's uncles and aunts

has decided to take each boy to be taken care of. Aunt Maggie takes Richard's brother to live with her in Detroit, while Richard decides to stay with Uncle Clark in Greenwood, for in his consideration this town is nearest to Jackson, where his mother lives.

Richard does not feel at home there, for the situation is too formal, and because Uncle Clark's wife, Aunt Joddie is a quiet woman. She baffles him with her serious, reserved manner. As a result, Richard makes his mind to go back to Jackson, to his mother.

Summer was. We see another scenery or background of the place, when Richard gets a job, joins a janitor who is decided to change his profession and becomes an insurance agency. They make trips into the delta plantation area to do the job. They go from shack to shack, plantation to plantation. There live a bare, bleak pool of black life, farmyard, etc.

Autumn came when Richard's intention to leave South became stronger. He arrives in Memphis on a cold November Sunday morning in 1925. It is bright winter morning. Here, Richard begins to settle himself to reach a certain position in the job. And for the first time, he gets his freedom to decide everything, by himself. He stands by his own will, and he tries hard to make his dream come true. He starts his life from

scratch and plans to gather his family back with him; leaving South to make a better living in the North where people are able to live with dignity.

We have already seen the real place as the background of the story, or exactly where the story takes place, but we also have to know the atmosphere of the story. Sequel further comments that :

" Setting may also reveal to readers something about the atmosphere which helps create the mood. " (page : 68)

Thus, it is also a very important thing to take a look at the atmosphere of Black Boy.

From the very beginning till the end of the story, the atmosphere is generally bleak, gloomy and full of sadness, for this story is about the life of a black boy which is full of torture, poverty, the ignorance, helplessness, pain, baffling, hunger-ridden for days and hours, the restless moving, the futile seeking, uncertainty, fear, dread, meaningless pain and endless sufferings. This is the life of a black boy, Richard, who lives under the pressure of the white people, and under their brutal, cruel and inhuman treatments .

The atmosphere of the story has never change much from sadness and gloom. When seeing all the events through Richard, as the main character in this story, we can feel that by and by he has become a sensitive

person. He is always tense, full of distrust in everything as well as in everybody. He is rebellious, an expression of his feeling of unsatisfactory to the situation around him.

In short, we can conclude that the atmosphere of this novel, is gloomy.

CHAPTER V
THE ANALYSIS OF RICHARD,
THE MAIN CHARACTER
IN BLACK BOY