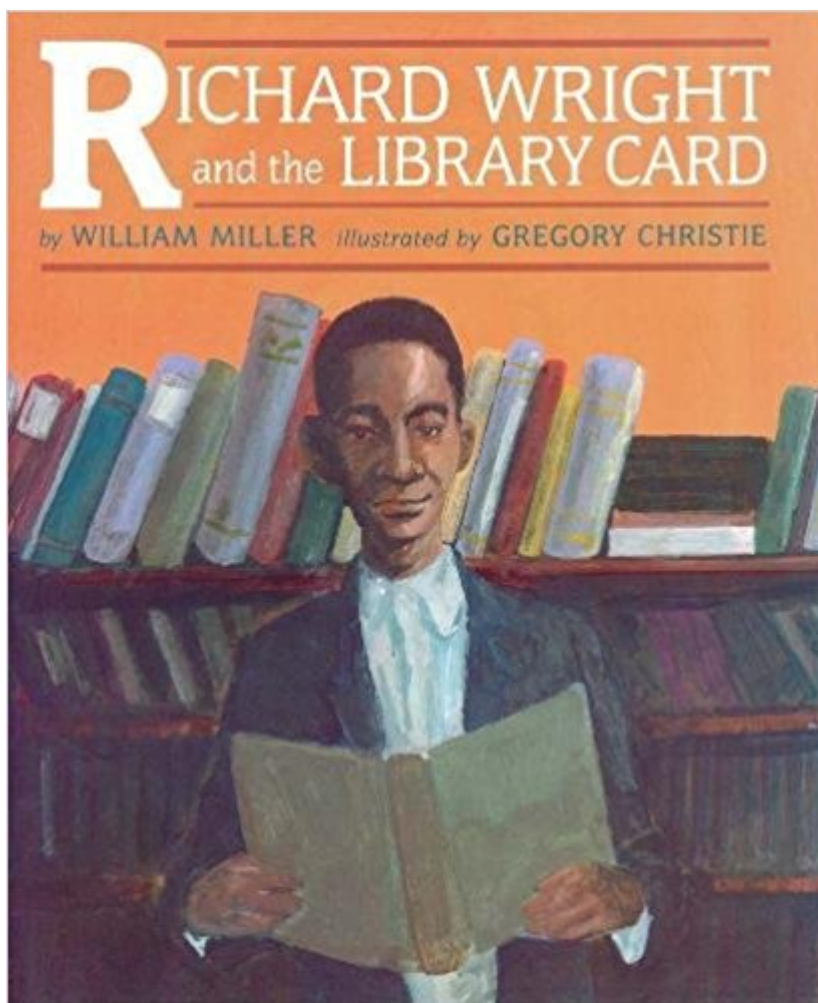


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Richard Wright And The Library Card



Synopsis

As a young black man in the segregated South of the 1920s, Wright was hungry to explore new worlds through books, but was forbidden from borrowing them from the library. This touching account tells of his love of reading, and how his unwavering perseverance, along with the help of a co-worker, came together to make Richard's dream a reality. An inspirational story for children of all backgrounds, *Richard Wright and the Library Card* shares a poignant turning point in the life of a young man who became one of this country's most brilliant writers, the author of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*. This book is the third in a series of biographies by William Miller, including *Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree* and *Frederick Douglass: The Last Day of Slavery*. All focus on important moments in the lives of these prominent African Americans.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 700 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: Lee & Low Books (October 1, 1997)

Language: English

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Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 14 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #198,194 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #127 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > United States](#) #240 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism](#) #270 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Books & Libraries](#)

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Richard Wright, African American author of *Black Boy* and *Native Son*, grew up in the segregated South of the 1920s. His formal education ended after he completed the ninth grade, but gaining access to the public library with the help of a white coworker opened up a new world of books for him, eventually inspiring him to become a writer. *Richard Wright and the Library Card* is a fictionalized account of this powerful story, deftly adapted by William Miller from a scene in *Black*

Boy. Miller--a professor of African American literature and author of the critically acclaimed Frederick Douglass: The Last Day of Slavery, A House by the River, and Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree-- masterfully builds suspense, as readers wonder how the young African American will quench his thirst for books without being busted by the local white librarian. Wright's story is perfectly complemented by the work of Gregory Christie, winner of the 1997 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award for Palm of My Heart. (Ages 5 to 9) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 2-5?In Memphis in the 1920s, public library borrowing privileges did not extend to blacks. Yet, 17-year-old Richard Wright's hunger to read inspires him to take a dangerous risk. He borrows the library card of a white co-worker and goes to the library with a forged note requesting permission to check out books for the man. The librarian treats him with suspicion, until Richard claims to be illiterate. This final act of self-deprecation elicits laughs from the librarian and other patrons. While the author's note acknowledges that this story is based on a scene from Wright's autobiography Black Boy, Miller takes significant liberties with the fictionalization. A comparison with the original shows that although the librarian questioned the note, she did not laugh at Richard. The harsh portrayal is reinforced through Christie's impressionistic illustrations done in acrylic and colored pencil. While this book is written in a straightforward, easily comprehensible manner, titles such as Marie Bradby's More Than Anything Else (Orchard, 1995) and Robert Coles's The Story of Ruby Bridges (Scholastic, 1995) describe a love of learning hindered by racism in a more inspiring way.?Jackie Hechtkopf, Talent House School, Fairfax, VACopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

GREAT WAY TO INTRODUCE CHILDREN IN GRADES 3 - 5 TO THIS RENOWN AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITER. BOOK EMPHASIZES RICHARD WRIGHT'S LOVE FOR READING AND WHAT HE WAS WILLING TO DO TO GET A BOOK IN HIS HANDS. IT ALSO HIGHLIGHTS HOW ONE WHITE MAN SACRIFICED TO ENSURE RICHARD'S ACADEMIC GROWTH AS WELL.

one of my favorite children's books.

Nice addition to my Richard Wright shelf. The amazing part are the illustrations. They are masterpieces I would love to add to my art collection.

This book was read by all my children

With all this obsession over testing in school and phonics, researchers have repeatedly found that access to books and libraries are really the key to literacy for a people. Apparently segregationists understood this and tried to limit the accessibility of books to African-Americans in the South. William Miller's fictional account of Richard Wright's attempt to access a library and books illustrates how reading can change lives and help people to grow. Richard Wright grew into a writer and was able to use words and writing not because he learned phonics or took tests but because he had books to read.

Richard Wright and the Library Card is a fictionalized account of a scene from Wright's life. As a seventeen-year-old black male living in Memphis, Tennessee in the 1920s, Richard Wright did not have access to the same opportunities--such as borrowing books from the library--as his white counterparts. Convinced that education was his ticket to freedom, Wright desperately wanted to gain access, and with the aid of a white co-worker he was able to do just that. Christie's impressionistic illustrations in acrylic and colored pencil enhance Miller's portrayal of this young man's struggle to acquire knowledge in the face of segregation. Even though this depiction is not strictly accurate, it captures the spirit of the encounter. Moreover, this picturebook would pair nicely with Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy*, and the discrepancies can fuel a discussion regarding writer's craft. CHRISTINA E. TAYLOR

Richard Wright grew up in the early 1930s . . . thinking that a library card was the TICKET TO FREEDOM. His mother used 'funny papers' to teach him to read but his formal education went only through 9th grade. A chance for a job took him to Memphis, Tennessee, and there he continued to yearn for books. How difficult it is now to imagine not being allowed a library card because of race. Thousands of books, but only white folks could check them out! At work Richard finally approached one white man who was willing to loan his library card. Bending the truth a bit to use the card, young Richard found a new life spread out before him. This 5 STAR story was drawn from an incident that Richard Wright wrote about in his famous 1945 autobiography. The books he read inspired his own talent. He worked with words all his life to express his beliefs in freedom and equality. Everyone MUST see the portrait of Wright on the cover of "HAIKU, This Other World" and be moved by that handsome face which reflects such great strength of character. Libraries are more than symbols, and books are treasures that never stop 'giving back'. Parents & Teachers: Encourage children to

tell about their first library experiences. REVIEWER mcHAIKU believes fervently that their memories are also treasures.

Richard Wright is an African American author best known for his novel "Native Son" and his autobiographical work "Black Boy." In "Richard Wright and the Library Card" author William Miller fictionalizes a story from the latter work that tells of how Wright was inspired to become a writer. Growing up in the Mississippi of the segregated South of the 1920s, Wright was only allowed to go to school through the 9th grade. His mother had taught him to read by using the newspaper and Richard read everything he could find. At the age of 17 Wright traveled north to Memphis, where he got a job sweeping the floors and doing other jobs in the office of an optician. Wanting to check out books at the local library Wright is told he cannot do so because he is black. The only things he can read are old books and newspapers that he finds in the trash. But then, with the help of a white co-worker, Wright is able to come up with a strategy for circumventing the rules. Miller takes some liberties with Wright's original description of these events in his life, but for the most part these changes simply reinforce the elements of the story; for example, the librarian is suspicious of Richard until he lies and says that he cannot read, at which point the librarian laughs. The detail is not in "Black Boy," but certainly having the librarian laugh reinforces both the irony and the injustice of Wright have to lie in order to gain access to books to read. For that matter the language in the story is made appropriate for young readers, who do not need to hear the epithets in use at the time to understand the prejudice Wright and other African-Americans faced in the segregated South. Miller also does a nice job of setting up the anticipation of young readers who, even if they know nothing of Wright's literary accomplishments, quickly realize that he is going to be able to get to read some books and have to wonder how he is going to do it and beat the oppressive system of segregation. This volume has the advantage of wonderful impressionistic illustrations by Gregory Christie that pointedly capture the contrast between the face that young Richard shows to the suspicious white librarian, and the real face that comes alive when he is able to read books. This book is appropriate for young readers (Grades 2-5 in terms of interest level and Grades 2-3 for reading level) and emphasizes the wrongness of treating people as different in that Wright's co-worker, Jim Falk, is also considered an outside because he is Catholic, although clearly the Jim Crow laws are the implicit target of condemnation in this book. Wright considers every page of each book to be "a ticket to freedom," and when the young Richard leaves Memphis to go to Chicago and a new life, hopefully young readers will look forward to actually reading some of the important books that he wrote. But at this point the main benefit will be the sense of how things were different back

then; I wonder how many young readers could look at the cover and the title of this book and guess correctly the story found inside.

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