



Richard Wright and the Library Card

By William Miller

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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.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

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)

From School Library Journal

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, VA

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From Kirkus Reviews

An episode from the autobiography of Richard Wright is skillfully fictionalized, resulting in a suspenseful and gratifying story about the power of reading. Growing up in the South in the 1920s, Wright was eager to learn to read, but barred from using libraries because of his race. When he was 17, he went alone to Memphis, where he convinced a white man, Jim Falk, to lend him his library card (so that he could check out books by pretending to get them for Falk). There is a perceptible sense of danger as the librarian (a caricature) quizzes him, and triumph when a whole new world is opened to Wright, who is shown reading all night. While background details are softened and ``colored boy'' is the worst epithet in the book, the book is true to the essence of the events described. Christie's illustrations complement the text; he concentrates on the characters' faces and allows other details to remain less distinct. Readers see Wright's expression change, from when he is alone and most himself, to when he must put on a mask to be safe, to avoid confronting white people. A challenging endeavor, and an accomplished one. (Picture book. 5-9) -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alfred Hoover:

Here thing why this Richard Wright and the Library Card are different and reliable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good however it depends in the content than it which is the content is as scrumptious as food or not. Richard Wright and the Library Card giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any publication out there but there is no book that similar with Richard Wright and the Library Card. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing which happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your method home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the branded book maybe the form of Richard Wright and the Library Card in e-book can be your alternative.

Robert Defazio:

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