# SS2 LITERATURE IN ENGLISH SCOND TERM

# Scheme of work

WEEK

1. **Revision**

**Introduction to Non African Prose Native Son by Richard Wright. The plot.**

1. **Reading of chapter one to two of the prose**
2. **Reading of chapter three and four**
3. **Reading of chapter five and six**
4. **Reading of chapter seven and eight**
5. **Mid term test.**
6. **Reading of chapter nine and ten**
7. **The settings of the prose Native Son**
8. **The themes and characterization of the prose Native Son by Richard Wright.**

# WEEK TWO;

**TOPIC: The plot of Native Son by: Richard Wright**

**CONTENT:**

The novel Native Son begins in the Thomas apartment in 1930s Chicago, where Bigger, his sister Vera, his mother (Ma), and brother Buddy all live, in one room, together. Ma and Vera spot a rat, and Bigger kills it with a frying pan, before heading out for the afternoon—a day in which, as his mother and Vera remind him, he has an interview with Mr. Dalton, a rich, white real-estate magnate in the South Side of Chicago. On his way to Doc’s pool hall, Bigger runs into his friend Gus, and the two talk about jobs they might enjoy doing if it weren’t for the fact that they are African American, and therefore essentially barred from many professions. Bigger tells Gus that he would be an aircraft pilot, if it were possible.

Gus and Bigger go into the pool hall and meet up with Jack and G.H. The four plan the robbery of Blum’s deli, with Gus the least willing to perform it, since the gang has never before robbed a white man, and Gus worries about retaliation. Jack and Bigger go to see a movie, in which a newsreel of Mary Dalton, Mr. Dalton’s daughter, and Jan, her Communist boyfriend, is shown. Bigger and Jack go back to Doc’s, and Gus arrives later than the other three; Bigger threatens Gus with a knife, and Gus runs out of the pool hall, putting an end to the group’s robbery plan. Angry, Bigger cuts up a pool table, and Doc kicks them out of the hall.

Bigger goes home for an hour or two, then leaves for his interview at the Daltons’. Mr. Dalton tells Bigger he is to be a chauffeur for the Dalton family; his first job will be to drive Mary to her lecture that evening. Peggy, the Daltons’ maid, welcomes Bigger and tells him his other job is to feed the house’s furnace. Bigger drives Mary that evening, but she instead says she wants to meet with her friend Jan; Jan and Mary have dinner with Bigger, and though they wish to be nice to him, they only embarrass him with their kindness. The three get drunk, and Bigger drives Jan and Mary around the park before dropping off Jan and taking Mary back home.

Bigger carries Mary, who is unconscious, upstairs and puts her to bed; while he is in her room, Mrs. Dalton, who is blind, comes in, smells alcohol, and believes only that Mary is intoxicated once again. Bigger puts a pillow over Mary’s face to keep her from saying that Bigger is in the room, and Bigger realizes, when Mary’s mother is gone, that he has accidentally killed Mary. Bigger takes her body downstairs, burns it in the furnace, and goes home, in a daze, to sleep in his apartment.

The next day, Bigger realizes that he really killed Mary, and goes back to the Dalton house to develop an alibi. Bigger realizes it is most feasible that Jan is the murderer, so Bigger begins to tell Mrs. Dalton, Mr. Dalton, and Peggy, who have realized that Mary is gone, that Jan stayed late at the house the previous night. Mr. Dalton calls Britten, a private investigator, to ask Bigger questions, and Britten also calls over Jan to the Daltons’. Jan denies that he came over the previous night, and wonders what has happened to Mary. When Jan asks Bigger why Bigger is lying, Bigger threatens Jan with a gun downstairs, in the furnace room, and Jan leaves.

Reporters gather at the house, and hear a statement from Mr. Dalton, who says, in the interim, that he has received a ransom note, forged by Bigger (unbeknownst to Mr. Dalton), demanding 10,000 dollars for Mary’s return. Dalton says he intends to pay the ransom. But when Bigger is asked to rake out the furnace, which is full of ash, he spills ash on the floor, and the reporters see Mary’s white bones inside; Bigger sneaks out of the furnace room, but at this point he is a fugitive from justice. Bigger goes to his girlfriend Bessie’s house, tells her he killed Mary, and makes it seem that Bessie can only go along with Bigger’s ransom plan, now, since she is an “accessory” to the crime. Bessie, horrified, leaves with Bigger and goes to an abandoned warehouse, to hide.

Bigger rapes Bessie in the warehouse, then kills her with a brick, to keep her from speaking to police. Bigger then roams around the city, incognito, hoping to avoid the thousands of police officer searching for him. Bigger is eventually found on the roof of another building in the Black Belt, and is shot with a high-powered hose, debilitating him. He is brought into the police station amid shouts from the gathered crowds, who call him, among other things, a “black ape.”

In prison, Bigger meets with Buckley, the State’s Attorney, his family, the Daltons, Jan, and his lawyer, Max, a friend of Jan’s. Bigger also meets with a preacher, who asks Bigger to pray for his own soul. Buckley takes down Bigger’s confession, which Bigger signs, and after Bigger sees a burning cross in Chicago, set up by the Ku Klux Klan, he tells the preacher that he does not believe in his immortal soul, and that Christianity has no use for him.

Max interviews Bigger, asking about the circumstances of his life, and in the ensuing trial, although Buckley demands the death penalty, Max claims that Bigger’s upbringing, and the difficult living conditions of African Americans in Chicago and elsewhere in the country, should persuade the jury to give Bigger only life in prison.

But the jury decides that Bigger will be executed, and Max’s appeal to the Governor of the state fails. The final scene of the novel, between Max and Bigger, shows Bigger thanking Max for listening to him, earlier, although Max is shocked that Bigger is still largely unrepentant for his crimes. Bigger tells Max goodbye, and, as the novel ends, asks Max also to tell Jan “goodbye” from him as well.

**EVALUATION: Discuss the plot of Native Son by Richard Wright.**

**ASSIGNMENT: Give the plot of chapter one.**

**WEEK THREE:**

**TOPIC:** Reading of chapter one and two of the prose

**ASSIGNMEN :** Give the plot summary of chapter one and two of the prose

`**WEEK FOUR**

**TOPIC: Reading of chapter three and four**

**ASSIGNMENT: Discuss the plot of chapter three and four of the prose.**

**WEEK FIVE**

**TOPIC: Reading of chapter five and six of the prose**

**ASSIGNMENT: Write out the story line of chapter five and six**

**`WEEK SIX**

**TOPIC: Reading of chapter seven and eight of the novel**

**`ASSIGNMENT: Explain the plot of seven and eight of the novel**

**`WEEK SEVEN**

**TOPIC: MID TERM TEST.**

**WEEK EIGHT**

**TOPIC: Reading of chapter nine and ten**

**`ASSIGNMENT: Discuss the plot of chapter nine and ten.**

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**WEEK NINE**

**TOPIC: THE SETTING OF NATIVE SON BY RICHARD WRIGHT**

**CONTENT**

Chicago. Illinoi is largest city and the industrial center of the Midwest. Richard Wright’s family was one of thousands of southern black families that migrated to Chicago between 1916 and 1920 and eventually settled in the South Side ghetto, where Wright grew up. His protagonist, Bigger Thomas, has the same Chicago background. Wright’s novel depicts the city as a virtual prison of brick and concrete walls and narrow streets that shut out the light in his corner of the world. The physical limits of Bigger’s world reflect the limited opportunities for black men in the white-controlled world. Bigger feels constricted by his limited space, as though he is on “the outside of the world peeping through a knot-hole in the fence.”

Three major scenes of violence show Bigger’s progressive dehumanization: his killing of a huge rat, his attack on Gus in a poolroom, and his accidental killing of Mary Dalton in her bedroom. Denied space and privacy by being forced to live in one room, Bigger’s entire family is dehumanized. There, the young Bigger corners and kills the huge rat that terrorizes the family. The room is a death trap for both Bigger and the rat, with whom he identifies. He admires the rat’s strength and defiance even as he beats it to death.

After Bigger kills Mary, his view of the city mirrors his inner chaos. Avoiding the police, he heads for his mistress, Bessie’s, place along streets that are but “paths through a dense jungle” of black, empty buildings with “black windows like blind eyes”—a surrealistic landscape over which street lamps cast a ghostly sheen. In Bigger’s eyes, the city is filled with rotting, tumble-down buildings that symbolize his own disintegration into guilt and fear. After involving Bessie in a plot to extort money from the Daltons, he and Bessie drive through a howling blizzard that symbolizes Bigger’s inner tumult. When he realizes that Bessie’s knowledge could send him to prison, he rapes and kills her. Now on the run, he experiences the city as a labyrinth in which the police are closing all means of exit. When the police find him in the ghetto, he is on a water tower on a rooftop, paralyzed by the cold jets of water that the police use to immobilize him.

Chicago’s South Side. Even when the family moves from its one-room apartment to the larger world of Chicago’s South Side, Bigger still feels trapped in his environment. As he struggles to fit in with his black cohorts, he finds himself trapped by fear again. He is afraid to join his street gang in robbing the white-owned grocery but is also afraid to confess his fears to his companions. To cover his fear, he fights with Gus in a poolroom and terrifies him with a knife.

**Dalton home**

Dalton home. Mary Dalton’s family home, located at 4605 Drexel Boulevard. Her home symbolizes the white man’s world that Bigger covets and fears. Her house is surrounded by a black iron picket fence that both constricts and excludes Bigger after he becomes the Daltons’ family chauffeur. When he drives Mary and a friend to Ernie’s Chicken Shack, he is invited to join them. Inebriated by heavy drinking at Ernie’s, Bigger loses his grip on reality. As he drives the girls back home through Washington Park, he becomes increasingly excited and follows Mary through the “dark and silent” house to her bedroom. When Mrs. Dalton enters the room as Bigger is about to make love to Mary, he accidentally smothers Mary while trying to keep her silent. Faced with his fear that he has killed Mary, Bigger loses his grip on reality. He sees the house as haunted, the room filled with hazy blue light, and the whole scene dissolving into a “vast city” of angry whites seeking vengeance.

**Prison**

Prison. Place where Bigger awaits execution after being convicted of his crimes. The prison becomes his place of transformation. Only when he faces the truth that he has built his own traps by his violent acts can he discover his innate sense of humanity and displace his killer instinct with acts of friendship and concern for others.

Also ,one of the major themes of Native Son is the effect of people's environments on their behavior and personality. Thus, setting is especially important in the novel. The story takes place in Chicago in the late 1930s, when the United States had still not recovered from the Great Depression. Jobs are scarce, and Bigger and his pool-hall friends are among the many unemployed. Richard Wright was influenced by the literary school of naturalism, whose adherents tried to observe and record their world, and especially its more unpleasant parts, with scientific accuracy. Wright knew Depression-era Chicago well and drew heavily on his first-hand knowledge. In many respects, the Chicago of Native Son is an accurate representation even in its details. For example, Ernie's Kitchen Shack at Forty-seventh Street and Indiana Avenue was modeled on a real restaurant called The Chicken Shack, located at 4647 Indiana Avenue and owned by a man named Ernie.

Two aspects of Bigger's environment influence him especially strongly-his confinement to Chicago's black South Side ghetto and his glimpses of the dazzling white world, of which he feels he can never be part. Bigger's family shares a rat-infested room, but, when he sees an airplane flying overhead or views the glamorous life portrayed in a movie, he feels teased and tempted by a different, happier world. At the Daltons, Bigger is thrust directly into that freer, white society. The striking contrast between their impressive mansion and the Thomases' one-room "kitchenette" apartment illustrates Bigger's frustrating predicament.

Many readers have pointed out, however, that the courtroom and jailhouse settings of Book Three are less realistic than the settings of Books One and Two, perhaps because Wright himself was less familiar with those environments. And, though few would contest that the hardships of life in Chicago's Black Belt were as oppressive as Wright portrayed them, some readers point out that the urban ghetto was also a place of opportunity for blacks by comparison to the Deep South, from which most of them had migrated. For example, in Chicago, Wright found the respect and encouragement that he had never experienced in rural Mississippi. But in Native Son, Wright doesn't seem to acknowledge that Chicago could hold out any hope at all for a poor black youth. Finally, many whites in Depression-era Chicago lived in poverty too, but because Bigger does not come into contact with them, they do not form part of this novel.

Despite their realism, the settings of Native Son also function symbolically. Wright's Chicago often has a nightmarish intensity in which external locations convey his characters' inner emotions. Bigger's confining apartment mirrors his feeling of being hemmed in in all other aspects of his life too. The rat that he pursues there foreshadows the hunted beast that Bigger himself will become. Likewise, the airplane Bigger sees overhead reminds you of all his frustrated aspirations to soar away from his limited life. At the Daltons', however, Bigger does not soar. Instead they consign him to the symbolic hell of their basement and its fiery furnace, an appropriate background for Bigger's swelling rage. And when Bigger flees the Daltons', the snow of Chicago's wintry streets comes to represent the white enemy that Bigger cannot escape.

**WEEK TEN**

**TOPIC: The themes and characterization of the novel**

**CONTENT**

**THEMES / THEME ANALYSIS**

**The following are themes of Native Son.**

**1. RACISM**

Native Son is an indictment of racism. Racism affects Bigger's life at home, at the Daltons, and in police custody. The Thomases must live in their rat-infested apartment partly because no one will rent to blacks in any other section of town. At the same time, blacks are charged higher rents than whites. When Bigger goes to the movies, one of the films portrays blacks as jungle savages. After his arrest, Bigger finds that the press and the public are using racial stereotypes to portray him as a sex criminal and brutal mass murderer. And despite their best intentions, even the liberal Daltons and the radical Jan and Mary act toward Bigger in a racist manner by failing to recognize him as an individual.

**2. BLACK RAGE**

Bigger Thomas is angry. You first see him in conflict with his mother and sister. Later he turns in fury on one of his best friends, Gus. Jan and Mary also enrage him. He frequently thinks of "blotting out" the people around him. And some of his moments of greatest exhilaration occur when he vents his hostility in violence.

Bigger's anger seems to be closely connected to his sense of racial identity. He is often furious at other blacks for their passive responses to the limitations placed on their lives by whites. And he is frequently enraged at whites for making him feel ashamed and self-conscious. Does Wright share and approve of Bigger's fury or does he present it as a tragedy? Your answer to this question will depend on whose views you think Wright shares. By narrating the novel from Bigger's point of view, Wright draws you into sympathy with Bigger. You can also argue, however, that Wright identifies more with Boris Max, who seems shocked and upset by Bigger's attitude toward violence. What is your response to Bigger's fury?

**3. RELIGION**

Although his mother is religious, Bigger decides that she is blind to the realities of her life. He sees his mother's need for religion as parallel to Bessie's for whiskey. Both, he thinks, are passive, escapist responses to racist conditions. At the end of the novel, Reverend Hammond tries to convince Bigger to pray. But Bigger appears to reject the black church, and presumably all religion, when he throws away the crucifix given him by Reverend Hammond. Bigger identifies the crucifix with the burning cross of the Ku Klux Klan.

Wright seems to be sharply critical of the black religious establishment and its representative, Reverend Hammond, who even objects to Jan's suggestion that Bigger try to fight back and save his life. You might argue, however, that Bigger's rejection of the cross and of religion is not necessarily the author's rejection. Do you find the views of either Reverend Hammond or Mrs. Thomas appealing? Or do you agree with Bigger's repudiation of them?

**4. COMMUNISM AND RADICAL POLITICAL IDEAS**

Jan Erlone is a Communist, Mary Dalton is a Communist sympathizer, and Boris Max is a lawyer who works closely with causes supported by Communists. Even before any of these characters appears in the novel, Bigger has seen a movie that portrays a Communist as a maniacal bomb thrower. Native Son contrasts the media image of Communists with Communist characters who are decent, warm human beings. Some readers think Wright's portrayal of his Communist characters is too idealized. On the other hand, Wright also shows that neither Jan nor Mary understands Bigger and that, despite their professed concern for black people, neither can relate to a black man as an individual human being. As a result, you might maintain that the novel criticizes Communists even while portraying them as victims of unfair stereotyping.

In Book Three, Wright uses Boris Max to present a radical social critique. Max argues before the judge that Bigger's violence is a predictable response to society's racism, which is the real criminal. Max also tells Bigger that young unemployed blacks like him should work with other blacks and with trade unions and radical movements. Many readers think that Max speaks for Wright and that Max's arguments are those of the Communist Party of Wright's time. You might question whether Max ever really understands Bigger, however. If you feel he doesn't, this limitation might be evidence that he isn't a completely reliable spokesman for Wright. Do you agree with any of Max's arguments?

**5. DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM**

Bigger feels happier and freer after he kills Mary. His violence against a white woman gives him a sense of power. At the end of Native Son, he even implies that his killings expressed his deepest self. You could argue that through his violent rebellion, Bigger has transcended or risen above the passivity of the other black characters. From this point of view, Bigger's violence is an assertion of his freedom and a rebellion against society's constraints.

But Bigger's lawyer Boris Max suggests that Bigger is only a passive product of his society. Bigger's violence, he says, is a reflex created by the oppressive conditions of his life. From this viewpoint, Bigger is at least as blind, passive, and self-destructive as the novel's other black characters, and perhaps even more so.

**MINOR THEMES**

The relationship between men and women is another of the themes of Native Son. Bigger's affair with Bessie is affected by the difficult conditions of their lives. Each uses the other as a means of escape, but genuine love between them doesn't seem possible. Bigger is attracted to Mary, and she may be attracted to him, too, but the racial barrier prevents Mary from even understanding Bigger and makes Bigger fear and hate Mary.

Another theme is Wright's critique of the criminal justice system in the U.S. Wright suggests that the court's verdict is predictable and perhaps even that the court is carrying out the will of the mob. Alienation (isolation) is an additional theme of Native Son. Bigger is isolated from whites and blacks alike, and his acts of self-assertion cut him off from humanity even further. Black family life is another of the novel's concerns.

Bigger's father was the victim of a Southern lynch mob. And Bigger's family lives in such crowded conditions that they get on each other's nerves. Finally the novel considers media stereotyping. Both the movies and the newspapers stereotype minorities, Communists, rich people, and criminals.

Characters

**Bigger Thomas** – The novel’s protagonist, Bigger is involved with a gang at the beginning of the novel, but his run-ins with the law, and his illegal activities, are minimal. Nevertheless Bigger is defined by his rage: against his mother, the rest of his family, his friends, and those whom he believes have not given him a chance in life. Bigger is hired to work at the Dalton house—home of a wealthy, white communist-leaning Chicago family—and on the first night of his job, after spending time with Mary Dalton and her friend Jan, Bigger accidentally kills Mary, then begins covering up the crime. This cover-up includes Bigger’s later murder of Bessie, his girlfriend, and leads to his trial and conviction for rape and homicide. Bigger is sentenced to death at the end of the novel, although his interactions with his sympathetic lawyer, Max, cause Bigger to gain some insight into why he chose to kill in the first place.

**Ma Thomas** – Bigger’s mother, Ma does her best to keep the family going—to feed her children, and to encourage them, namely Bigger and Vera, to help provide for the family. Ma Thomas is spiritually crushed by Bigger’s murder, and asks him, while in prison, to pray for his soul.

**Vera Thomas** – Bigger’s only sister, Vera takes classes at the local YWCA in order to become a seamstress. After Bigger’s imprisonment, Vera also tells Bigger he ought to pray for his soul and for redemption in the next life.

**Buddy Thomas** – Bigger’s brother, Buddy tends to take Bigger’s side when Vera and Ma tell Bigger he must find a job. Buddy, younger than Bigger, looks up to his older brother, and, after Bigger’s arrest, Buddy even says he will help Bigger to violently escape the prison, if necessary—although this is, of course, impossible.

**Mr. Dalton** – Father of Mary and Bigger’s employer, Mr. Dalton is a wealthy real-estate magnate in the South Side of Chicago, and his company owns the apartment building in which Bigger and his family live. Mr. Dalton claims that he donates a good deal of money to African American charities, and that he hires black workers in order to help them. But as Max points out in the trial, Mr. Dalton’s help is paternalistic, at best, and serves only to make life marginally better for African Americans while continuing to funnel the meager incomes of the Black Belt toward Dalton’s highly profitable real-estate company.

**Mrs. Dalton** – Mrs. Dalton, like her husband Henry, believes that the Dalton family is helping African Americans in Chicago by offering them jobs and by donating to charities in the Black Belt. Mrs. Dalton’s physical blindness—she has been blind for ten years—is a counterpart to what Bigger and Max consider to be her metaphorical “blindness” toward the plight of African Americans in Chicago.

**Mary Dalton** – Daughter of the Daltons, Mary is driven by Bigger on the night of her murder, and the two of them pick up Jan—although Bigger does not want to socialize with Mary and Jan, because their niceness makes him ashamed of his blackness and lack of familiarity with Communism. Bigger then murders Mary, by accident, while trying to “keep her quiet” while Mrs. Dalton is in Mary’s bedroom later that night. Bigger disposes of Mary’s body by putting her in the Dalton family furnace, thus prompting a city-wide search for Mary, and leading, later, to Bigger’s imprisonment and sentencing to execution for his crimes.

**Jan** – A Communist active in Chicago, and Mary’s boyfriend, Jan meets up with Mary and Bigger the night of the murder, and does all he can to treat Bigger with kindness—although Bigger resents Jan’s attempts. Bigger then implicitly blames Jan for Mary’s murder, hoping that authorities will be fooled, and although some believe that Jan might have “made a pact” with Bigger in order for Mary to be killed, Jan’s name is later cleared. Jan has his friend Max, a lawyer for the Communists, represent Bigger at his trial, and Bigger’s last words to Max, at the novel’s end, are to tell Jan that he says goodbye.

**Max** – Bigger’s defense attorney at his trial, Max is a Jewish-American Communist who believes that the oppressive white majority of Chicago does all it can to “keep down” people of color and members of trade unions. Max sympathizes with Bigger because he, too, is a victim of discrimination, based on his political and religious beliefs. Although Max does not succeed in helping Bigger avoid execution, Bigger is nonetheless grateful to Max for speaking to him as a human being.

**Buckley** – The State’s Attorney and prosecutor of the case against Bigger, Buckley is very much a representative of the city’s ruling white majority—he calls Bigger an “ape” and a “savage,” and makes it seem that Bigger killed out of a generalized blood-lust, directed particularly against white women. Buckley succeeds at trial in getting the judge and jury to agree to Bigger’s execution.

**Bessie** – Bigger’s girlfriend, Bessie tends to go along with what Bigger wants, although when Bigger asks her to help generate a ransom from the supposed “kidnapping” of Mary, Bessie breaks down and worries that her life is ruined. Bigger later rapes and murders Bessie, fearing that she will tell the authorities of Bigger’s guilt; Bessie’s body is found by the police and exhibited at the inquest, causing Bigger to faint.

**Gus** – A member of Bigger’s gang, Gus comes up with the idea to rob Blum’s deli, at least initially, but has hesitations about it later on. Bigger takes out his frustration on Gus, choking and attacking him at Doc’s pool hall. Gus later visits Bigger in prison.

**G.H**. – Another member of Bigger’s gang, G. H. says that he will go along with the robbery of Blum’s deli, but also seems somewhat sympathetic to Gus’s side—feeling, perhaps, afraid that the group will get caught if they rob a white man.

**Jack** – The third member of Bigger’s gang, Jack goes with Bigger to the movies on the supposed day of the Blum robbery, and watches, with Bigger, the news-reel starring Mary Dalton and Jan.

The preacher – An African-American preacher from the Black Belt, the preacher, named Hammond, does all he can to convince Bigger that he will receive salvation for his crimes only in the next life. But after Bigger sees a burning cross, set up by the Ku Klux Klan, in the South Side during his incarceration, Bigger rejects absolutely the preacher’s teaching, believing that God can offer Bigger no support or succor in this life or the next.

**Blum** – Owner of a deli in the South Side, Blum, a white man, is the target of a planned robbery executed by Bigger’s gang. The gang decides against robbing the deli, however, once Bigger attacks Gus and ruins the group’s sense of shared purpose.

**Doc** – Owner of a pool hall in the South Side, Doc seems, at first, to enjoy the company of the gang, but later kicks them all out of his bar after Bigger cuts up the green felt of the pool table with his knife.

**Peggy** – The head maid of the Dalton house, Peggy is kind to Bigger, cooks for him, and shows him how to stoke the furnace. Peggy betrays very little suspicion of Bigger, even after Mary’s disappearance.

**Britten** – A private investigator hired by Mr. Dalton, Britten believes from the start that Bigger might have had something to do with Mary’s disappearance. He is later called by Buckley to appear at Bigger’s trial, and testifies as to his interactions with Bigger immediately after the murders.

**Green** – A former employee of the Daltons’, and also from the Black Belt, Green, as Mrs. Dalton tells it, used some of his time and money during his employment at the Dalton home to get an education at night school.

**Deputy coroner** – The man presiding over the inquest, in front of the grand jury, the deputy coroner insists that Bessie’s body be laid out before Bigger and the remainder of the group assembled. Max objects that this is being done only to incite the mob against Bigger, but the deputy coroner claims Bessie’s body is necessary to establish the fact of her murder.

**ASSIGNMENT: Identify three major themes and characters in the novel.**