Learning Activity Two

Essential Questions:
1. How is blindness used in Native Son to demonstrate society’s role in creating Bigger.
2. How does the symbolic meaning of blindness affect decisions of the characters in the novel. Explain with examples from the book.

Objectives:
Students will express verbally and in writing their understanding of Wright’s use of symbolism in the novel to support his overall theme. The exercise provides concrete meaning to abstract terms.

North Carolina Standard Course of Study
Goal 1: The learner will demonstrate increasing insight and reflection to print and non-print text through personal expression.
Goal 4: The learner will critically analyze text to gain meaning, develop thematic connections and synthesize ideas.

Materials Needed:
1. Richard Wright’s Native Son
2. Volunteer students
3. Blindfold
4. Paper plates or any flat markers for the creation of an imaginary minefield.
5. Large area where students can spread out and be loud – possibly use of gym or going outside would be preferable to classroom so students will not disrupt other classrooms.

Time Required:
Time varies based on classroom participation. Teachers should allow at least 30 to 45 minutes at the minimum, however.

1. The teacher will create a “minefield” with paper plates that will be placed on a flat ground or floor.
2. The teacher will ask for a volunteer who will be blindfolded.
3. The teacher will instruct students to break up into groups. One group will be providing the “correct” directions that will help the blindfolded volunteer avoid stepping on mines, while other students will provide “bogus” directions in order to coax the student to step on a mine and “blow up.”
4. The teacher will help the blindfolded student find the start of the minefield, but after that, he or she will follow instructions and attempt to safely make her way through the minefield without stepping on a mine.
5. The teacher may allow several students to act as the blindfold victim.
6. Following the exercise the teacher will lead discussion about the exercise and how it relates to the symbolic blindness represented in Native Son.
7. The teacher could allow the blindfolded person to explain how it felt to have to depend on others in order to “survive” the minefield.

Questions for possible discussion:
How does this scenario relate to real life?
How was Bigger being lead around?
How did he know who to listen to?
How were the characters in the novel blind and how did it affect the outcome of the novel?

Students can be directed to write about the experience of the minefield in relation to Bigger following the exercise. Again, this could be a prewriting exercise for a longer assignment.