



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

INVISIBLE MAN

BY RALPH ELLISON



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ISBN 978-1-60389-251-3

Item No. 301587
Written by Daniel Welch

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Author****Objective:** Research regarding the author**Activity**

Find out as much as you can about the life and times of the author, Ralph Ellison. Focus on the years 1935 to 1955, since these are the ones that formed many of Ellison's attitudes, as well as the time during which *Invisible Man* takes place. You should also include information on how this book was first received by the public. You will want to find out some things about how African Americans were treated during those years socially, legally and educationally as well as how they thought about their own lives and their place in society. You should write at least four paragraphs.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Prologue**Visualization****Objective:** Interpreting the text**Activity**

In the prologue, Ellison refers to the narrator as “an invisible man,” but he also speaks of people’s “*inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality.” (Pg. 3) What does he mean by that? Do you have an “inner eye” that is distinct from your physical presence in the world?

Think about how other people view you. Have you ever felt that someone does not understand you or even notice that you are there? Make a collage, drawing, or painting relating to the two different perspectives of the outer and inner eye and what they see or do not see.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Three

Hyperbole

Objective: Understanding hyperbole

Activity

Hyperbole is often used for comic effect, but it can also be used to make a serious point. In this chapter, the events at the Golden Day can be seen as hyperbole. Is this exaggeration meant only to be comic or is there a serious point as well? Examine the events and conversations in this chapter for signs of exaggeration and analyze how these exaggerations expand or emphasize the effects they have on the narrator. Write a well-developed paragraph or two identifying elements that are hyperbole and explaining why the author may have used this approach in telling his story.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Six

Dialogue

Objective: Understanding how a character's personality and attitudes are revealed by the author's use of dialogue

Activity

In this chapter, the head of the college, Mr. Bledsoe, meets with the narrator after the evening chapel service. Consider what their dialogue reveals about Mr. Bledsoe in terms of the following questions:

- Why has Mr. Bledsoe summoned the narrator to meet with him?
- What is the narrator's attitude toward Bledsoe before this meeting? What has your impression been?
- What is revealed about Bledsoe's attitudes and goals in life? Does the narrator's attitude toward him change?
- What is your opinion of Bledsoe's attitudes toward education, the college, and society? What is the narrator's opinion?

Imagine you are meeting with Bledsoe under similar conditions. Construct a dialogue between the two of you. How would you challenge statements he makes and opinions he expresses? What would he say to you in return? Make sure that the dialogue goes beyond what is said in the text.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Nine

Letter Writing

Objective: Letter writing as a means of conveying the character of the protagonist

Activity

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an important thinker and poet in the mid-Nineteenth Century. We find references to him in this novel. In chapter two, the trustee, Mr. Norton, asks the narrator if he has studied Emerson. He says, "You must learn from him, for he was important to your people." (Pg. 41) In chapter nine, the last chance the narrator has for a job is a letter of introduction to a character named Emerson, leading to an experience that does not turn out well.

In his most famous essay, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius." He also said, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist," and "...the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness, the independence of solitude."

Do you think the narrator would agree with these statements? Write a letter from the narrator to Emerson, the poet, discussing these issues. Would the narrator be angry or sympathetic? Would he tell Emerson that his ideas are flawed? Or would he want to thank Emerson for giving him guidance as Mr. Norton implies?

Try to use the language, tone, style, etc., that you see in *Invisible Man*.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters Twelve-Fifteen**Character Analysis**

Objective: Character analysis, seeing a character from another perspective.

Activity

The narrator meets Miss Mary after he gets out of the hospital. He is wandering on the street. She invites him to come live with her and he accepts. We know how he sees her and what he thinks of her, but what does she think of him? Write a diary entry from her point of view of what her new boarder is like and what she thinks about him.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Twenty-one-Twenty-two

Poetry

Objective: Writing Poetry
Composing a “found poem”

Activity 1

A “found” poem is a poem made up entirely of phrases or quotations found in the text. Go back through these two chapters and make up a found poem of your own. The poem could tell the reader something about the narrator’s emotional state, but this is not necessary; it may be totally unrelated to the action of the story, which is one of the best parts of writing a found poem.

Your poem should be at least 10 lines long. The lines do not need to rhyme, but they certainly may. You can arrange the phrases in any way you like and change the punctuation and the order, but do not deviate from Ellison’s actual words. Give the poem a title, which may or may not come from the book. Below is an example taken entirely from Chapter twenty:

City Nightmare

I had been asleep, dreaming
A madman, a gambler, a laboratory experiment.
Bits of paper whirled up, the patterns of men’s lives,
Like a slow-motion movie:
A dance that was completely detached from the black, mask-like face
I wandered, smiling. I saw one of the dolls:
“There’s a great show coming up.”
What’s wrong with him?
I’m all alone—a city of the dead
A different tension was in the hot night air.
I wasn’t sleeping.

Activity 2

Clifton’s funeral is a time for music and speeches giving meaning to the life of the deceased. Usually these proceedings praise the person who is gone and lament his or her passing. Write a poem that would be suitable to read at this particular funeral. There are some suggestions in the Appendices on how to approach writing poetry.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Twenty-five-Epilogue

Literary Terms

Objective: Identifying and rewriting various instances of figurative language

Activity

In this chapter, Ellison uses various types of figurative imagery to express what is happening. They range from simple similes to more complicated figures of speech like metaphors, juxtaposition, etc. Use the Terms and Definitions page to find definitions of terms.

Your choices:

- Alliteration
- Allusion
- Consonance
- Dialect
- Imagery
- Juxtaposition
- Litotes
- Metaphor
- Onomatopoeia
- Personification
- Pun
- Sarcasm
- Simile

In the chart that follows, identify the items in the columns that are missing. We have supplied you with the page, and *either* the quote or the literary term.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Epilogue**Theme****Objective:** Interpreting the general theme of a novel**Activity**

In the Epilogue the narrator says, "Once I thought my grandfather incapable of thoughts about humanity, but I was wrong." (Pg. 580) Reread his grandfather's dying words on page 16. In what way are his grandfather's words supported by what the narrator has experienced? The narrator feels anxiety when he hears the words as a child, but by the end of the book he seems to understand what his grandfather meant. How have his experiences changed him and how has he changed by the very end of the book? Write an essay discussing this issue in terms of what the narrator has experienced.