

Invisible Man: Prologue and Chapter One

1. Explain how the narrator views history, as expressed in the Prologue.
2. What does it mean to be a “thinker-tinker”?
3. Explain the following quote: “Responsibility rests upon recognition and recognition is a form of agreement.”
4. What is the grandfather’s curse and how is it ironic?
5. Chapter One, originally published before the rest of the novel as a short story called “Battle Royal,” can be seen as both a rite of passage and as an initiation. Explain.
6. Relate the following quote from Ellison’s essay, “Richard Wright’s Blues,” to the story told in Chapter One:

“The Blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of brutal experience alive in one’s aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy, but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism.”

Invisible Man: Chapter Two – Seven

1. Identify each of the following people:
Burnside
Kate
Homer Barbee
the Founder
2. What is Dr. Bledsoe’s personal philosophy?
3. Explain why the Invisible Man’s confrontation with Dr. Bledsoe is so devastating for him.
4. Trace one of the image strands and explain the significance of each item.

Invisible Man: Prologue - Chapter Seven Makeup

1. Identify each of the following:
Greenwood
Burnside
Matty Lou
Homer Barbee
the Founder
Crenshaw
Norton
Trueblood
the Golden Day
Tatlock
2. What is Dr. Bledsoe’s personal philosophy?
3. Explain why the Invisible Man’s confrontation with Dr. Bledsoe is so devastating for him.
4. Chapter Seven is generally considered a transitional chapter. Explain.
5. Explore the possible meanings of Trueblood’s narrative -- as an inversion of sexual taboos, “puttin’ on the massa” slave tale, racial purity symbolism, pure sexual titillation, truth, lie told to please, etc.
6. Below, trace one image strand and explain the significance of each entry.

Invisible Man: Chapter Eight - Twelve

1. How do the Crazy vet's advice and Bledsoe's letters echo the grandfather's curse?
2. What is really happening in the scene between young Emerson and the Invisible Man?
3. How is Brockway like Bledsoe?
4. In what ways does the Invisible Man's hospital experience resemble death and rebirth?
5. What reminders of home occur in these four chapters?

Invisible Man: Chapter Eight - Twelve Makeup

1. Identify each of the following:
Peter Wheatstraw
Men's House
Emerson, Jr.
Mr. Kimbro
Mary Rambo
2. How do the Crazy vet's advice and Bledsoe's letters echo the grandfather's curse?
3. What is ironic about the Liberty Paint Company and the Invisible Man's job there?
4. How is Brockway like Bledsoe?
5. What is Finkism?
6. In what ways does the Invisible Man's hospital experience resemble death and rebirth?

Invisible Man: Chapters Thirteen - Fifteen

1. In Chapter 13, the central chapter of the novel, the narrator's search for himself reaches a turning point. The Invisible Man discovers what he truly values, finds a calling, and begins to shape a new identity for himself. Explain.
2. The narrator never tells Mary Rambo why he has to move from her apartment. Write a letter to her, either on his behalf from a member of the Brotherhood or from the narrator himself, explaining his disappearance. (Use the back of this page.)

Invisible Man: Chapters Sixteen-Nineteen

1. Explain the subjects of the Invisible Man's first official speech for the Brotherhood. How is he transformed by this speech?
2. How do Brother Tarp and the gifts (Douglass poster & leg chain) he gives the Invisible Man echo the grandfather's curse?
3. Compare and contrast Ras the Exhorter and Tod Clifton to each other and to the narrator.

Invisible Man: Chapters Twenty-Twenty-two

1. How does the Sambo doll and Clifton's sales pitch echo earlier events?
2. Who are the Zoot Suiters and what do they represent for the narrator?
3. The Invisible Man's funeral oration employs techniques also used by Mark Anthony in his funeral oration for Caesar. Explain.
4. How does Brother Jack reveal his true nature to IM? How does this confrontation echo earlier ones with Bledsoe and Brockway?
5. What does Ellison say about History in these chapters? Quote appropriately.
6. As Chapter 22 ends, the narrator concludes, "After tonight I wouldn't ever look the same, or feel the same." What has happened in this chapter to make the narrator so self-aware.

Invisible Man: Chapters Sixteen - Twenty-two

1. Explain the subjects of the Invisible Man's first official speech for the Brotherhood. How is he transformed by this speech?
2. How do Brother Tarp and the gifts (Douglass poster & leg chain) he gives the Invisible Man echo the grandfather's curse?
3. IM's encounter with the "scarlet woman" in Chapter 19 offers much satire and yet may make a serious point as well. Explain what Ellison is making fun of and what purpose this chapter serves.
4. The Invisible Man's funeral oration employs techniques also used by Mark Anthony in his funeral oration for Caesar. Explain.
5. Relate the following lines to the book thus far:
Perhaps the sense of magic lay in the unexpected transformations. You start Saul, and end up Paul," my grandfather had often said. "When you're a youngun, you Saul, but let life whup your head a bit and you starts to trying to be Paul -- though you still Sauls around on the side." (p. 381)
6. As Chapter 22 ends, the narrator concludes, "After tonight I wouldn't ever look the same, or feel the same." What has happened in this chapter to make the narrator so self-aware.

Invisible Man: Chapters Sixteen- Twenty-two Makeup

1. How do Brother Tarp's gifts to Invisible Man parallel his college experiences with Dr. Bledsoe?
2. What do the Zoot Suiters represent for the narrator?
3. IM's encounter with the "scarlet woman" in Chapter 19 offers much satire and yet may make a serious point as well. Explain what Ellison is making fun of and what purpose this chapter serves.
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