

Approved for use in English IV

Summary of the Work:

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is the story of a young African American man, raised in the Jim Crow South and educated about life and identity in New York. The novel is a classic bildungsroman (a novel of formative education), following the unnamed narrator as he searches for his identity in a world that tries to deny his visibility. As he matures, the narrator explores his character in the context of black history, Pan-African nationalism, communism and existentialism, with each having an impact on his ultimate identity.

Rationale:

Invisible Man is ideally suited for 12th grade students because it addresses complex themes about race, identity, the American experience, and existentialism that are alluded to in the American literature curriculum, but can be fully developed at the senior level. Ellison's use of powerful motifs, historical and literary allusion, existentialist philosophy and political ideology demand attentive, close reading, but offer students an unmatched opportunity to read about the African American experience in the United States.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999)

Edith Schor, *Visible Ellison: A Study of Ralph Ellison's Fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993)

Howe, Irving. Review of: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. *The Nation*. 10 May 1952.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- National Book Award, 1953

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 950L
- Readability Level: 7.5

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption:

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Because *Invisible Man* deals with the process of maturation, it does contain a few, contextual scenes of sexuality. The reader will also encounter some scenes of violence, both perpetrated against and by the narrator. The text also contains brief references to drug and alcohol use.

Connection to the Curriculum:

Invisible Man is an ideal text for the culminating literary experience of our students; its frequent allusions to American history, culture, music and literary works offer a powerful capstone to a student's literary experience in high school. Ellison draws on the literature and history that students have experienced in previous years of study.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

Invisible Man is the most commonly cited title on the AP Literature exam. *Invisible Man* lends itself to a study of American jazz and blues.