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Invisible Man
BY RALPH ELLISON



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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: _____

Chapter One**Simile**

Objective: Identifying Similes

Activity

Ellison uses similes to convey the atmosphere and emotions of the “battle royal.” (Pg. 21) List the similes that you find in this scene and, in the second column, identify the similarity between the words he uses and what is being described. In the third column, write your own, different simile that means something similar. List what is described and the meaning of the simile. The first one is done for you.

Simile Chart

SIMILE	YOUR INTERPRETATION	YOUR SIMILE
“like a baby or a drunken man”	a boy stumbling; someone unsure and confused	like a man who was struck by lightning

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 Eighteen

Compare and Contrast

Objective: Using the comparison/contrast technique in regard to symbolic objects

Activity

In this chapter, Brother Tarp gives the narrator a link of chain that kept him prisoner and part of a chain gang for nineteen years. He tells the narrator, "...I think it's got a heap of signifying wrapped up in it and it might help you remember what we're really fighting against." (Pg. 388) The narrator responds, "It was such a link as I had seen on Bledsoe's desk, only while that one had been smooth, Tarp's bore the marks of haste and violence, looking as though it had been attacked and conquered before it stubbornly yielded." (Pg. 389) In chapter six, the book says, "Suddenly he [Bledsoe] reached for something beneath a pile of papers, an old leg shackle from slavery which he proudly called a 'symbol of our progress.'" (Pg. 141)

Clearly these two objects have similarities, but they also have been, or can be, interpreted differently. One way to look for deeper meanings in a work of literature is to compare and contrast objects, events, or characters from the book.

Make a list of the similarities between these two objects and then a second list of differences. Based on these lists write a paragraph comparing them, and then a paragraph contrasting them. Decide then which of these two interpretations adds the most to your understanding of this book and state your decision in at least one clear sentence.