

Text Dependent Questions

Text Example

Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison

Excerpt from prologue

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.

Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you're constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It's when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back. And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful.

<p>NON TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS</p> <p>RELIES ON STUDENT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCES UNRELATED TO THE TEXT</p>	<p>TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS</p> <p>REQUIRE STUDENTS TO RELY ON AND REFERENCE THE TEXT</p>	<p>TEXT CONNECTOR QUESTIONS</p> <p>ASK STUDENTS TO CONNECT THE TEXT’S CONTENT AND MEANING TO THEIR OWN LIVES AND WORLD</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is Edgar Allan Poe? • The narrator compares his experience to a circus sideshow. Have you ever been to a circus? • The author writes, “It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen.” Have you ever wished you were invisible? • Does racism mean not seeing other people for who they are? • What kinds of things make a person feel invisible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edgar Allan Poe wrote dark and mysterious horror stories. Why does the narrator reference Poe here? • Re-read the last two sentences of the first paragraph. The narrator uses the imagery of a circus sideshow to describe his experience. What does it mean to be “distorted” and how does the “distorting glass” affect the narrator’s experience? • What does the narrator mean by the “inner eyes” of those with whom he comes into contact? Who are those with “poor vision”? • In your own words, summarize Ellison’s central argument about the search for Black identity in American society. • Re-read the text. Underline those parts where the author uses figurative language such as analogy and metaphor. How does he use this figurative language to drive his central idea? How do these phrases impact the tone? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are your inner eyes when it comes to seeing people who are different than you? • What does it feel like when other people view you with the kind of “poor vision” Ellison is talking about? Tell about a time when you have felt that way. • Ellison wrote this from the perspective of a black man in 1952. Talk about how the phenomenon of invisibility might relate to another group of people today. • Toward the end of this excerpt Ellison describes feelings of anger and rage. Tell about a time when you have felt that way, connecting your experience to Ellison’s with reference to the text.