

Good example of essay on battle royal and birthmark

War



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Battle Royal is the first chapter in Ralph Ellison's novel; *Invisible Man*. Battle Royal first published in the 1948 *Magazine of the Year*. The full novel was first published in 1952. The story could be set in the 1940s or in the previous decade. The narrator and protagonist is a young black man making the transition from high school to college. Although he is an intellectual and his class valedictorian, his color sets him aside from the educated white society of his time. The story relates to an incident that took place in the time between when he delivered his high school speech and when he entered college in which he was first humiliated, and then rewarded with a scholarship.

In the telling of his story, the narrator relates back to his grandfather's deathbed advice to be meek and when dealing with white folk, "agree 'em to death and destruction." The grandfather also admits to feeling that he was a traitor for living this type of life. In keeping with the "invisible" theme, we never learn the name of the young man narrating the story although it is his own life. The first person narrative style adds to the power of the story because it enable him to directly present emotions and thoughts that would lose their force if dispassionately presented by a third party.

Nathaniel first published *The Birthmark* in 1887 although it also appears in many anthologies published since that time. It is set in the same era and told from a third person point of view reflects themes and settings contemporary with that time. The young wife Georgiana is the idealized bride of the time. She cared only for her husband's love and was ready to risk anything to please him. Her husband Aylmer is a scientist who has lost his humanity in the pursuit of scientific truth and perfection. His assistant Aminadab is a physically strong yet unattractive man, he is more appreciative of Georgina
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than her husband appears to be. Georgiana has a small birthmark shaped as a tiny fairy sized handprint on her cheek. Although it can only be visible sometimes when she is pale, its removal becomes an obsession with her husband.

Both stories use strong symbolism: In Battle Royal the battle itself symbolizes the way white society forces young black men to compete against each other; the naked blonde with the flag is the American Dream that they can see, but cannot touch. The following events for the coins and small bills scattered on the floor by the wealthy white men enforce that theme. The young man's dream at the end of the story reflects how, even though he got the scholarship white society's unspoken conspiracy would always "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running."

Before her marriage, Georgina's birthmark was something unique, almost magical and in no way the disfiguring flaw that she would risk her life to shed. Aylmer sees it as a fatal flaw in his otherwise perfect wife. The observation that if she were less perfect in every other way that one flaw would not stand out so glaringly. Alchemy represents the scientific force that can either clarify or destroy.

Both the narrator in Battle Royal and Georgina in The Birthmark face situations that others would find terrifying, but they are so focused upon their goals that this fear in no way dissuades them from their attempts to reach their goals. Although both stories address physical appearance, specifically one's skin they treatment the individuals receive is vastly different. In Georgina's case, society considers her beautiful and only her husband, views it extreme disgust by her husband. In Battle Royal, society discriminates because of external characteristics they deem inferior.

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