

Racism and stereotypes in invisible man

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison follows a college-educated black man who is struggling to survive and succeed because society refuses to see him as a human being. The story is told from a first-person point of view and shows how his awareness changes and grows as the story progresses. Author Ellison is able to use different writing techniques to develop the theme of racism and stereotype by using imagery, tone, and diction.

In the book, Invisible Man, author Ellison uses black and white imagery to show/portray white dominance and their control over black people in American society. An example of this is at the very beginning of the book when the invisible is forced into a boxing match and the black boys are blindfolded by a white cloth. This symbolizes how white people have dominance over society. Another use of imagery in the book is in chapter 11 when the invisible man wakes up in the hospital and notices how he is sitting in a white chair with white overalls. In this chapter, the invisible man quotes, “ In the vast whiteness in which I myself was lost” (Ellison 238). The use of imagery is a metaphor for how white dictates everything and how the invisible man is getting lost and swallowed by white supremacy. A use of black imagery is in chapter 21 when “ two black pigeons rising above a skull-white barn to tumble and rise through the still, blue air” (Ellison 452). This symbolizes how even though the whites have control over society and everything, the black people are slowly progressing and moving forward.

Ellison was also able to use tone to develop the themes in Invisible Man. The overall tone of the book is devastation, hopefulness, and acceptance. In the book, the invisible man goes through a series of events that affect the tone of the story and also the character’s outlook on society. The invisible man

goes to college and is kicked out by his role model, Dr. Bledsoe. He also joins a communist organization in order to bring meaning into his life but is ultimately betrayed. The invisible man is also betrayed by Tod Clifton who he thought was a friend. The invisible man accepts himself as being invisible. He accepts the society he lives in and accepts himself as being a black person. He accepts how the racist white society is always going to be making racist comments and there isn't anything he can do about it. Even as this is all going around him, he still has hope. He is constantly trying to make the most out of his situation and trying to make things better. After getting kicked out of the university he still had some hope of coming back. But when he knew that wasn't going to happen, he decided to get a job and move on. Instead of being consumed by this white society, he is always trying to rebuild himself and move forward.

Ellison employs diction throughout *Invisible Man* that is straight forward. The sentence structure provided informs the reader of the invisible man. Ellison also breaks the stereotype of black people being dumb by showing how well-educated the invisible man is. An example of diction from the book is in chapter 2 when the invisible man is driving and notices, " The buildings were old and covered with vines and the roads gracefully winding, lined with hedges and wild roses that dazzled the eyes in the summer sun" (Ellison 27). The invisible man is witnessing a new place while driving around the white male and the college is a sacred place for him because it represents intelligence and learning. Ellison is able to employ diction to describe what the invisible man is seeing and experiencing on a daily basis.

Ellison was able to apply different writing techniques to develop the theme of racism and stereotypes in Invisible Man. The book addresses many issues and problems that African Americans faced. Ellison didn't just write this book to address the problems that black people faced but it's about everybody and the struggles that we may go through. We all have to struggle and push past obstacles in order to find our own identity or else we would be lost forever.