

Post colonialism in invisible man

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Postcolonialism deals with the lasting impact of colonization, or simply the aftermath of colonialism. Colonialism is the altering of everything of the colonized, for example, their values, standards, culture, and system, in the form of the colonizers. The ideology of the “civilizing mission” and sense of superiority of the colonizers in which they had for their ways of living and in their system was the reason behind this alteration. The colonizers considered and thought of the natives as inferior and “savages”, or “niggers” and their ways of living and their system short of any worth or value.

They used the power of colonial oppression and force to impose their ideals onto the natives. Invisible Man explicitly represents various aspects of colonial oppression by symbolizing racism as an obstacle to individual identity. “All my life I had been looking for something, and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was (258).” This quote from the narrator in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* reveals the problematics of post-colonial identity, including the relationship between personal and cultural identity and such issues as double consciousness and hybridity. Throughout the story the narrator struggles to arrive at a conception of his own identity, he finds his efforts complicated by the fact that he is a black man living in a racist American society. Through the postcolonial lens it is understood that a character’s self image is damaged and they are felt as othered or strangered by a dominant culture. Ellison’s portrayal of the narrator displays a character that struggles to accept the subservient role that has been placed on him by dominant society. The narrator’s depicts a feeling of invisibility, in the sense that the world is filled with blind people who cannot and will not see his real nature. When the grandfather says, “I have been a traitor all my

born days, a spy in the enemy's country," the narrator is haunted by his grandparents slave history. (258). When he accomplishes anything in the white man's society he does not know how to feel. He feels as though he does not fit in with his African American community because of this subservient role that has been placed on him but, at the same time it is clear that he is not part of the dominant society either. With this displacement, Ellison shows the way many African American's felt during his time.

They didn't know whether to accept the damaged self image that was being forced on them and live a peaceful life, or fight for equality. Due to the narrator's feeling of being lost, he accepts what he thinks is his best option, that being his place with the dominant culture. Throughout the story the narrator is an example of a person that is described and treated with racial discrimination and prejudice. In the beginning of the story the narrator says that he was told that he took after his grandfather; it is that similarity that gets him to a place where he can confront racism, exploitation, and abuse to define his individuality. When he is given the scholarship to a black college it is another form of the dominant group identifying and labeling him as "other" or stranger. It is basically saying that although he should go to college he is not good enough to go to a white college because, the scholarship was to the state college for negroes. Ironically, it is the scholarship that opens the narrator's eyes to the racial injustices he was put through. If it wasn't for the scholarship, he would not have understood that his grandfather was telling him that by pretending to be submissive he would be opened doors that would contribute in the defeat of the discrimination and racism they faced. He no longer accepts the broken image that society tried to force on him.