

# The comparison of charles chesnutt and ralph elisson related to dunbar's poem

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"We Wear the Mask" The poem "We Wear the Mask" uses literary language to depict the situation of the black people. Dunbar clearly draws a distinction between the personality and skin colour (man and mask). He further explains that the mask-situation "grins and lies" meaning it does not present any reality. The poet expresses agony for this disregard and judgement of the entire population because of their complexion. The poem uses the mask metaphorically in describing the skin colour. "The Wife of His Youth" by Charles Waddell Chesnutt depicts a deeper degree of segregation by the half-castes while Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man" also expresses similar views but with a specific focus on the 'underground' nature of black people.

In 'The Invisible Man', the narrator brings forth the issue of their segregation by pointing out the state of their being, physiologically and physically. He gives a detailed description of their situation and the perception the world abhors against them. The book continues to explain the 'Invisible Man's' story and the many challenges he encounters within his community and among the white people. There seems to be some homely reception among their people but the whites embrace him when they want to use him in accomplishing a specific task. He describes himself as,

"I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe ... I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me" (Chesnutt 1)

In contrast, the main character in "The Wife of His Youth" is a character that portrays alienation from the black race. Mr. Ryder has a special regard for the need to "lighten" up his skin colour by having a white woman, Mrs. Dixon as

his wife to neutralise the effect. The man is depicted as not comfortable with his skin colour. He is on a mission preparing to propose to Mrs Dixon at the ball when he meets Liza Jane, a dark, old toothless woman who has no hint of the whereabouts of her husband. At the ball, he gives an imaginary story related to the story of the old woman. He seeks an answer from the attendance on what such a man should be done, and starting with Mrs Dixon they all shouted that the man should be introduced. Later, he introduces the old woman to the audience as the wife of his youth. He says,

“ Ladies and gentlemen, this is the woman, and I am the Man, whose story I have told you. Permit me to introduce to you the wife of my youth”. (Ellison 520)

A deep focus of the two incidences illustrates varied opinions concerning the skin colour. Ellison's views are focussed on the impact of racism such that the Black are viewed as underdeveloped and uncivilised, the invisible man with his oratory skills tries to move up on several circumstances but his efforts are in futility. This story closes on a very interesting note, after being screened by the police the man is locked in a manhole. This demonstrates author's views on how the blacks ' underground' situation has been difficult to eradicate. On the other hand, Chesnutt presents us with a situation of assimilation, by Mr Ryder, who later embraces his other blacks. Liza is also depicted as a conservative woman upholding her race and origin.

In conclusion, the two stories advocate for the same issue but with different approaches. Chesnutt, captures the aspect of assimilation and compromise in relation to racial disparity while Ellison gives a specific attention to the woes of the black people and demonstrates their desperation.

### Works Cited

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