

# A comparative study of ralph ellison's battle royal and prologue with excerpts fr...

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



Is it possible for a man to be invisible? Did African Americans go through racial torment even after the placement of the Thirteenth Amendment? In the novel *The Invisible Man*, the narrator guides readers through how it feels to be unseen by the world around them and the racial experiences he faced as a black man in the 1940-1950s. In Ralph Ellison's "Prologue" and "Battle Royal" excerpts from *The Invisible Man* Ellison helps create a clear understanding of how he experienced racism and racial cruelty, how it is to be figuratively invisible and how being invisible affected him.

In the chapter "Battle Royal" the narrator experiences racial cruelty and constructs a vivid picture through words of his experiences to help readers understand exactly what he was going through. Before the fight at the Battle Royal the narrator is blindfolded. While waiting he hears white men yelling racial slurs and threats involving him and the other black man around him such as "I want to get at that ginger-colored nigger [and] tear him limb from limb," and "let me at those black sonsabitches" (Ellison 17). The narrator faces this cruelty again after the fight when the other men and he are awarded money and riches on an electrical rug. Before being signaled to grab the money he hears a white man make another racist comment, hearing "these niggers look like they're about to pray;" then, after being given the okay the narrator jumps for the first gold coins he sees and suddenly "A hot, violent force tore through [his] body, [causing him to] shake like a wet rat, [to his surprise] the rug was electrified" (Ellison 21). The white men sternly insisted they should get the money yelling "pick it up, goddamnit, pick it up" before trying to force and push them onto the rug

(Ellison 21). The white men continued to behave this way for a long time before they decided stop.

Eventually many years later the narrator falls victim to becoming figuratively invisible and explains how it is to readers in the “ Prologue” by generating an understandable concept. He describes to readers that he’s not physically invisible yet people refuse to acknowledge his existence “ only [seeing his] surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination” (Ellison 3). The narrator tells of how its can be an advantage when wanting to passively “ fight against [the sleepwalkers] (the men) without them realizing it” and how he’s “ been carrying on a fight with Monopolated Light & Power for some time now, using their services and paying them nothing at all, and they don’t know it” (Ellison 4-5). He also goes over how being invisible has its disadvantages as well because of the way “[it’s] often rather wearing on the nerves,” and how it causes a man too “ often [question] and doubt if [they] really exist” (Ellison 3-4). The narrator explains that ever since he became invisible he feels alive and believes life otherwise is death.

As a final point in the “ Prologue” the narrator goes through a situation where he’s invisibility effectively causes him to snap and nearly almost kill a man. He explains how “ he began to bump people back” due to the resentment produced from doubting your existences which comes along with being invisible; therefore, causing a altercation one night when he accidentally bumps into a white man (Ellison 3-4). The white man called him an insulting name and cursed at him when he asks for an apologie. The words finally get to the narrator and he begins to beat him senselessly

"[kicking] him repeatedly, in a frenzy because he still uttered insults though his lips... [than] in his outrage got out a knife and prepared to slit his throat" (Ellison 4). He then remembers how he is invisible to the white man and his attack was just nightmare in the eyes of the white man so he leaves him alone and continues on.

In Ralph Ellison's " Battle Royal" and " Prologue" from The Invisible Man the unnamed narrator helps form an understandable concept of how it is to be figuratively invisible and how being invisible affected him, racism, and racial cruelty. As a young man the narrator is put into a fight at the Battle Royal where he experiences racism, being surrounded by racial comments and threats. He also experience racial cruelty when him and other black man are forcefully pushed on to a electrical carpet for amusement. The narrator then explains to readers how its is being invisible and how it has its ups and downs; on one hand you can use it as an advantage while on another it can drive a man insane. Lasty The narrator tells how being invisible effects him mentality and how that gets him caught up in a physical altercation with a white man; he beat the white man to near death and briefly decides to kill him and later releases and the eyes of him he is invisible so he lets the white man live and leaves. To conclude the narrator shows that being a black man in the 1940's-1950's is tough but being a unseen black man is a challenge of its own.