

# Ralph ellison's own personal journey

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



Ralph Ellison's own personal journey through life was spent trying to figure out who he was as a person, and is displayed in his writing by revealing the adventure in life of becoming an man that one would be proud of. This is done with the understanding that the world is not perfect, and will never be completely fair for everyone in it. In Ellison's novels he alludes to the reader of the impacts that changed his life through the words in the book.

In *Invisible Man*, the narrator of the novel is an unnamed black man who gets kicked out of college in the south, and subsequently is sent to the north for a job. He ends up getting involved with a political group known as the Brotherhood, and starts to question his individuality, as well as his own identity. Ellison himself was influenced by many things at a young age, such as poverty, the city of New York which changed his life, and finally the influences of racism and how he overcame prejudice. These key ingredients of Ellison's cake of life helped him to form novels around the characters in his books, which he largely bases on himself.

Ralph Ellison's experience of having little to no hope to become anything more than who he already was as a kid is seen through the narrator's thoughts about himself and his own life. As a child, Ellison remembered working it out this way: there was a world in which you wore your everyday clothes on Sunday, and there was a world in which you wore your Sunday clothes every day (Ellison 6). Ralph Ellison's world was the world in which a person wore their everyday clothes on Sunday, one where they had no choice otherwise, due to external limitations.

Much like the author of *Invisible Man*, the narrator in the novel resembled the life of being unable to have the posh things in life, the expensive stuff so to say.. The narrator recalls being not being able to purchase his wants over his needs, which is demonstrated in the excerpt: as he undressed he saw his outworn clothes (Ellison 315). The process of becoming someone better in life does not just happen to people on a whim. It is something that humans themselves have to work and strive for if they are to earn it. For Ellison himself, this concept was difficult to understand, but after a short time he realized that it was true. For the narrator of *Invisible Man*, however, it was a more complicated story.

The narrator in *Invisible Man* has a hard time grasping the fact that he is supposed to make choices to help his own life and not everyone else's. He thinks that everyone seemed to have some plan for him, and beneath that some more secret plan (Ellison 194). Without the agency to make choices for himself he would have never been able to try to find his purpose in life. Although Ellison had a similar struggle of deciding how he should live his life, it came to him a little easier. He found the mysterious idea of fate and destiny to be the American theme, as he put it in his book. Ellison knew that he had to go out in the world and discover on his own who he was, we all must do. He went and made himself the man he wanted to be. He took control of his life. Ellison took his understanding of his experiences in which he achieved those things, and incorporated them into the narrator's journey to accomplish that same goal of truly finding out who he is.

Moving to New York was an indirect reason for the way that Ellison's life ended up the way it did. New York gave him the unique opportunities that helped him turn his life in a new direction, and become the man that he was meant to become. Ellison relates this to the narrator's life in New York by giving him the option to embrace things that he never knew he desired, which in turn also helps him find his identity, just like in Ellison's life. When the narrator of Invisible Man heard that Bledsoe, the president of his college, was sending him to New York he got slightly excited. Deep down he was thinking about the freedom he has heard about up north, and he never thought for a minute that he could possibly ever have the chance to go north and have hope for that freedom (Ellison 152). The moral of the story of the narrator's life is very similar to that of the person that wrote it. Ellison's life led him to New York, as well as his narrator's. While Ellison was there his dreams changed.

When Ellison went to New York He came up during his junior year hoping to work and learn a little about sculpture. And although he did study a bit, he didn't get the job through which he hoped to earn enough money for his school expenses, so he remained in New York (Ellison 14). Ellison's life in New York is what gave him the opportunity to find his true self and discover what he loved to do. Ellison shares the same experience with what the narrator is experiencing. While in New York the narrator quickly found that he was once again falling into doing whatever people told him to.

Going through that experience gave him the ability to discover who he was and what he agreed and disagreed with. Although his dream of going to the

north eventually led him to a group of political radicals named The Brotherhood, it also essentially led him to discovering that he can be in control of his own life and do things that he wanted to do. Ellison resembles the outcome of his life due to New York to the same outcome in the narrator's life in New York. And that outcome is the completion of the adventure of knowing and being content with who he is and what he stands for. Overall New York was the reason that Ralph Ellison learned of his true self as well as the reason that the narrator of Invisible Man learned of his true self. Throughout all the experiences of both the narrator's and Ellison's lives, good or bad, each of their experiences in New York enlightened and taught them many things about the reality of life. It helped them realize, that although they may have their own opinions about something now, that may not always be the case in the future.

As a young child Ellison met a white boy and they became friends (Ellison 4). Ellison spent a few years wondering why he had such a different life than some of the other kids who, just so happened to be white. He had found that although some things are just not fair, it doesn't matter, and that everyone still serves a purpose on this earth. He incorporates that idea into the narrator's life in Invisible Man through his mental breakdown about how society can just put you down and trample all over you. Ellison believes that true novels, even when most pessimistic and bitter, arise out of an impulse to celebrate human life and therefore are ritualistic and ceremonial at their core (Ellison 114). Ellison knows that he has to play his own role in society and he believes that his writing can change the world, as well as affect all people, regardless of race, religion, or gender.

The narrator of *Invisible Man* realizes with time that he is living in a world where blacks are not viewed equally with whites, something that Ralph Ellison himself had come to realize growing up. At the time of his life that was not something that could be changed for a lot of people. Although both ethnicities may have had the same rights they still were not viewed the same. At the end of *Invisible Man*, when the narrator disappears from the world, Ralph Ellison hides that same knowledge of a human's purpose in between the lines of *Invisible Man* by incorporating his own thoughts into the narrator's head to make him realize that he has overstayed his hibernation, since there's a possibility that even an Invisible Man has a socially responsible role to play (Ellison 581).

In *Invisible Man* the narrator's life of being invisible is the one thing he wanted desperately to change, but he finally understands that the capability to seem invisible is just as much a part of his identity than his physical appearance. It is who he is. The narrator finally thinks that one's personal reality is something that can be changed alone. Society cannot hide from the bad and we cannot pretend that it does not happen either. One must stand up for what he believes in and be himself; they must play their own role in society. This seems to be a quality that is scarce in our own world, where one is often persecuted for taking a stance on an issue. Just as the narrator understands that no matter how life works out for oneself, everyone still has their own specific and important role to play. Ellison also learned that lesson in his own life and knew that if he wanted to help society, he had to put his stories out there with the hope that we learn from them, and can create a better future.

Ellison's own experience of being content and confident with who they are as a person is demonstrated not only in his life but also in his work. In *Invisible Man*, Ellison describes his own thoughts and feelings through his main character's actions, thoughts on life, and major life changing events. Ellison's goal in his writing is to tell his audience stories that can inspire lives. He attains this goal by incorporating knowledge he discovered and developed during his lifetime into his novels, and by creating a realistic theme that often compares to the instinctual attempt by people to have everyone in the world experience the same epiphany as the narrator did in *Invisible Man*. The epiphany as experienced in *Invisible Man* is one that will produce a world in which people do not need to judge others and be stereotypical. Ralph Ellison composes his novels based on the faults in our reality, and the hope that, in the end, everyone can overcome these faults together.