

# Invisible man

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



1) Symbol In chapter 15, the narrator comes across a coin bank when leaving Mary's house. The coin bank is a figurine is of a grinning black man, who when a coin is placed in its hand and a lever is pushed, tosses the coin into his mouth. This is not only derogative on how society viewed the african americans but also symbolic in how the narrator has experienced the race being not only treated negatively, but regarded in terms of inequality and in a sense, bottom feeders.

More specifically, this can relate to the Battle Royal where the young black boys scavvaged up their winnings on the electrified carpet infront of an audience that was mainly wealthy white people. To the white men, this exemplified the black men's despair to grab up anymoneythey could, in a humiliating mannor, which was supplied by the white man himself. I think this symbol is significant because it symbolizes the reoccurring issue of black men being lesser equals of the white man, and it doesn't allow the narrator to forget about his " place" in society, as long as the rest of the race. )

Setting "... I found a home-or a hole in the ground, as you will.... My hole is warm and full of light. In my hole in the basement there are exactly 1, 363 lights. I've wired the entire ceiling, every inch of it. And not with flourescent bulbs, but with the older, more-expensive-to-operate kind, the filament type. (p. 6, 7)" " It was foggy with cigar smoke. And already the whiskey was taking effect. I was shocked to see some of the most important men in town quite tipsy. They were all there-bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, fire chiefs, teachers , merchants.

Even one of the more fashionable pastors. Something we could not see was going up front. A clarinet was vibrating sensuously and the men were

standing up and moving eagerly forward. (pg. 18) " It was a beautiful college. The buildings were old and covered with vines and the roads gracefully winding, lined the hedges and wild roses that dazzled the eyes in the summer sun. Honeysuckle and purple wisteria hung heavy from the trees and white magnolias mixed with their scents in the bee-humming air....

How the grass turned in the springtime and how the mocking birds fluttered their tails and sang, how the moon shone down on the buildings, how the bell in the chapel tower rang out the precious short-lived hours; how the girls in bright summer dresses promenaded the grassy lawn. (pg. 34)" "... winter, with the moon high above and the chimes in the steeple ringing and a sonorous choir of trombones rendering a Christmas -caarol; and over all is a quiteness and an ache as though all the world were lonliness. (pg. 5)" " The plant was in Long Island, and I crossed a bridge in the fog to get there and came down in a stream of workers. Ahead of me a huge electric sign announced its message through the drifting strands of fog.... Flags were fluttering in the breeze from each other in a maze of buildings below the sign, and for a moment it was like watching some vast patriotic ceremony from a distance. But no shots were fired and no bugles sounded (pg. 196)" " I was sitting in a cold, white rigid chair and a man was looking at me out of a bright third eye that glowed from the center of his forehead.

He reached out, touching my skull gingerly, and said something encouraging, as though i were a child. his fingers went away (pg 231). " " When I came out of the subway, Lenox Avenue seemed to careen away from me at a drunken angle, and I focused upon the teetering scene with wild,

infant's eyes, my head throbbing (pg. 251). " " Then I was back in the street and moving toward the subway. My eyes adjusted quickly; the world took on a dark-green intensity, the lights of cars glowed like stars, faces were a mysterious blur; the garish signs of movie houses muted down to a soft sinister glowing (pg. 84). " "... a small crowded room of men and women sitting in folding chairs, to the front where a slender woman in a rusty black robe played passionate boogie-woogie on an upright piano along with a young man wearing a skull cap who stuck righteous riffs from an electric guitar which was connected to an amplifier that hung from the ceiling above a gleaming white and gold pulpit. A man in an elegant red cardinal's robe and a high lace collar stood resting against an enormous Bible and now began to lead a hard-driving hymn which the congregation shouted in an unknown tongue.

And back and high on the wall above him there arched the words in letters of gold: LET THERE BE LIGHT (pg497, 498). " " It was a hot dry August night. Lightning flashed across tge eastern sky and a breathless tension was in the humid air (pg 516). " I believeRalph Ellison has created a credible setting because in each of the examples, a detailed description of the narrator's surrounding is evident. With such detail, it is clear to the reader what time period the novel or flashback is taken place in and theenvironmentthe main character, or author is experiencing.

In this case, the story is taking place first in the south, then making its way towards the north, Harlem, in the early 1920's and 1930's. 3) Striking images, ideas, events, objects " I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook

like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids- and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me (pg. 3). " Opening the prologue, the narrator starts by introducing himself as an invisible man.

This introduction is important because it immediately allows the reader to understand the narrator's self placement in society, which also sets the constant theme throughout the novel. " Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility (pg. 7). " Prior before this excerpt, the narrator explained he installed 1, 369 lights in his basement.

He goes on to explain why he possesses so many lights in the theory that even though he is " invisible" he still exists; and the light permits him to exist. In addition, he explains that he hadn't begun to live until he realized he was invisible. I interpret this as him stepping back from participating in the life society leads, and observing and living his own, secluded. " All my life I had been looking for something, and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was.... I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer (pg. 5). " The narrator begins to flashback to his adolescent years by explaining what he now realizes was the hindering aspect of his youth. Throughout the book he begins to find himself, and his place in society. " You're hidden right out in the open - that is, you would be only if you realized it (pg. 154). " At the

Golden Day, the veterandoctortells this to the narrator. In his flashback, this is when the narrator gets the notion of being an invisible man of society. It also foreshadows his future understanding of himself. Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you? (pg. 581)" Ending the novel, the narrator leaves the reader with these words. This can be interperprated into different views. To me, this means that he may speak for you, it is possible that he is expressing your feelings or describing some part of your experience; and who is to prove otherwise other than yourself? 4) Figures of Speach " Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass (pg. ) . " This metaphore is used to exemplify the narrator's view upon his place in society and how he is viewed. With this, he is trying to explain that when in public, he is never seen as he is; whether he had been replaced by his surroundings, other people, or figments of the viewer's imagination. "... A figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy (pg. 4). " Another metaphore is used to explain how the narrator experiences invisibility.

Invisibilty has led him to question if in reality he is infact viewed and understood as an actualhuman beingor is he rather a neusance, or terrorist in other's lives in that they wish not to see him- making him invisible. " Live with your head in the lion's mouth (pg. 16). " A few of the narrator's grandfather's last words that had powerful meaning. To live with your head in the lion's mouth means to live life on the edge, or to live life in a knowingly dangerous manor. The grandfather did not want his grandchildren to live life in fear, and with the wills of society.