

Invisible man by ralph ellison

Literature



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The invisible man is a novel which depicts an imaginary character as invisible. The book can be characterised by the use of first person narration. Though he narrates his ordeals throughout the book, the protagonist remains unnamed. He does not reveal his name to the readers throughout the narration. The book can be said to be just passing a certain message to the readers. After publishing this book, the author is also believed to have stopped writing. He can be said to also have become invisible to the literature world. The author's life contains many similarities with that of the protagonist in this book.

The book begins with the character giving a description of his residence. Invisibility is portrayed here when he states that he lives in a forgotten place. This tries to imply that even his residence is invisible. He goes on to say that the basement of the house he stays in is of the nineteenth century. By declaring that he does not pay rent the protagonist is trying to further the notion of invisibility. It means that he goes unnoticed, and no one seems to realise that he exists.

For a black person to reside in a white neighbourhood there has to be something special about him. In the days when this book was written, this was not possible. Racial discrimination was a common occurrence in the mid years of 20th century. The character in this book says he lives in a white neighbourhood. This implies that he must be invisible as he goes unnoticed by many people surrounding him. Many of the people whom he interacts with are white. In the entire narration, the character only comes into contact with white people.

He writes to the white people a paper about the struggles of black men basing it on his experiences. He is awarded a scholarship as a result of this

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paper which is termed as “ excellent”. The character in this book tries to encourage black people not to lose hope. He declares the struggles he goes through as a way of implying that living in a white neighbourhood also has challenges. He bemoans the state of invisibility but, the book indicates that he accepts it as a way of life. He does not reveal his real name to the reader though he seems aware of the presence of his audience.

In conclusion, the author uses this book to pass his ideas with himself as the narrator. He makes a statement of the things that ought to change within the American social system. Giving an account of his own life through the book reveals the contents of the paper indicated to have been written by the protagonist. The paper about struggles of black men can be equated to the book itself. The book narrates the struggles of a black man living in a white neighbourhood. The challenges identified here can be associated to the challenges black Americans faced at the time of publishing this novel.

References

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House, 1952.