

AP and GT English IV- Literature and Composition
Summer Reading

Welcome to your AP/GT English IV Summer Reading! I am really looking forward to working with you in the coming year, and am happy to answer any questions you might have about the summer novels. In addition, you should be prepared for a test and/or essay with a presentation over the reading the first two weeks of school. Your subsequent coursework/tests dealing with the summer reading will count for several grades the first nine-weeks.

Reading assignment: Have both works read by the first day of school.

I. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

According to BarnesandNoble.com, In this practical and amusing guide to literature, Thomas C. Foster shows how easy and gratifying it is to unlock those hidden truths, and to discover a world where a road leads to a quest; a shared meal may signify a communion; and rain, whether cleansing or destructive, is never just rain.

II. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

Invisible Man is a milestone in American literature, a book that has continued to engage readers since its appearance in 1952. A first novel by an unknown writer, it remained on the bestseller list for sixteen weeks, won the National Book Award for fiction, and established Ralph Ellison as one of the key writers of the century. The nameless narrator of the novel describes growing up in a black community in the South, attending a Negro college from which he is expelled, moving to New York and becoming the chief spokesman of the Harlem branch of "the Brotherhood", and retreating amid violence and confusion to the basement lair of the Invisible Man he imagines himself to be. The book is a passionate and witty tour de force of style, strongly influenced by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Joyce, and Dostoevsky.

NOTE: For most major works, study guides such as SparkNotes are readily available, and we are very familiar with them. Study guides, however, are not always reliable sources for information about works or interpretation of them. The writers of these guides are often college students doing part-time jobs, and they make significant mistakes. Study guides are appropriate only for review or, occasionally, clarification. Tests, essays, and class discussions are based on primary texts, so the only way to really understand a work and do well on assessments is to read it yourself. There is no substitute or easy way around it—and that goes for your summer reading AND all the reading you'll do in class next school year.

Tips:

To help with class discussions and assignments, **you may wish** to annotate in your novels. . You will need to be able to write directly into your books. You may highlight, too, but simply highlighting is just coloring, and you need to annotate! Mark, make notes, and respond in the margins about such "noteworthy" items as:

Possible ways to annotate:

- Highlight sentences and make notes in the margin
- Make notes in the margin
- Use sticky notes and make notes on the sticky notes
- Draw lines to something you want to remember
- Circle words, phrases
- Bracket words, phrases
- Connect related ideas with lines
- Outline main ideas in the margin

- Use an asterisk to note something unusual, special, or important

Possible items to annotate:

- New characters
- Description of characters
- places
- events
- important words or words to be defined
- recurring words, events, places (motifs)
- literary elements that contribute to the sound/meaning of the passage
- questions the reading raise
- new ideas
- reactions to the reading
- emotions/conflicts, etc.
- Use brackets, checks, starts, bullets, asterisks, etc., to mark very important items or things you want to come back to later.

Note: Again, annotating is an option. If you have any questions during the summer months regarding these novels, feel free to email me at emily.groce@dsisdtx.us. I may not get back to you immediately, but I will get back to you in a timely manner.

***Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison optional study guide**

1. How strong of a character was IM? What were his weaknesses? What do you think his hopes and dreams were? Was he a sympathetic character?
2. Were there characters in the book that represent sources of moral authority and stability?
1. At times, the use of language in this book was just amazing to me . . . When IM gave his speeches, or in descriptions . . . What do you think of Ellison's writing style?
2. Think about the impact this book made when it was published . . . It was written in the 40's but not published 'til 1952 . . . what was life like in America? Especially for African Americans?
3. How do you think this book was received at the time it was published? How do you perceive it today? What can we learn from it today?
4. Who – or what - does the Invisible Man represent? Is he an everyman? Are his experiences unique to African American culture?
5. Did you feel that the same events occurred over and over again . . . How would you compare the opening Battle Royal to the fight at the Bar with Mr. Norton to the fight at the paint factory to the battle in Harlem with Ras the Destroyer? Any other examples?

6. What do you think of the reaction of the college president to IM taking Mr. Norton to those “forbidden” places? What did you think of his treatment of IM, sending him to NY with those awful letters?
7. What do you think Ellison was trying to say about society in his depiction of Liberty Paint . . . The whitest paint ever, but the secret ingredient was 10 drops of black paint . . .
8. What do you think was going on in the paint factory with the Union meeting? Did that forecast any events in the book?
9. What about his treatment at the factory’s hospital? Did that seem possible to you as a reader? How did it change IM’s life?
10. Were you surprised at IM’s speech/oration at the eviction of the old couple? What gave him the courage to speak to the crowd like that?
11. Did the description of the belongings that were cast out on the street humanize the couple for you?
12. What was the Brotherhood? When you first read about them, what did you think their goals were? Were you suspicious of them?
13. Why did he join the Brotherhood? Why did the brotherhood choose him? How was he invisible to them?
14. When did he lose the support of Brother Jack? Did it matter to the IM that he had?
15. What did you think of his grandfather’s philosophy . . . “yes ‘em” to death . . .
16. What was his relationship to Tod Clifton – the other African - American man working for the Brotherhood? Did the Brotherhood set them up as competitors? Why do you think Tod fell out of the group? And why did he wind up selling those Sambo puppets? What do you think the author was trying to communicate with that?
17. How did Tod’s murder affect him? What did he hope to accomplish with the funeral? What did you think of his funeral speech?
18. When he confronted Ras, after the funeral, he had to run for his safety. He donned a disguise - white hat and sunglasses - and people thought he was someone named Rinehart . . .what did he learn from that experience?
19. Do we, as a society, really see people or do we see types . . .
20. His being mistaken for Rinehart opened his eyes to a lot of things . . . That many people are invisible, that people will only see what they want to see about a person . . . Were there other things this deception changed in him?
21. He wondered who was left who really knew him . . . did he even know who he was himself?
22. Why did he stay in hibernation down in the coal cellar?
23. Why did he decide it was time to rejoin the world?

24. In a Random House question, "Invisible Man may be said to exemplify the paranoid style of American Literature"... How does Ellison establish an atmosphere of paranoia in his novel? How is that paranoia appropriate to the subject matter of this book?
25. Ellison was criticized by contemporaries for being insufficiently "Afrocentric." Do you agree? Do you think he made artistic compromises in order to make *Invisible Man* accessible to white readers?
26. Did you notice how it seemed Invisible Man was involved in so many layers of American society – from poor black sharecroppers to white rich society folks... how well did Ellison represent them? What did you take away from the dissection of society?
27. What has changed in the 60 years since the book was published?
28. This was considered controversial in its day... why do you think it was? In today's society, is it still?
29. How did Ellison use music, specifically jazz, in his writing?
30. Symbols are important in this book. How important were dreams to the Invisible Man? What about the link of chain that Brother Tarp gave Invisible Man? What was his relationship with Brother Tarp?
31. How were women perceived in this book?
32. At the end of the book, the Invisible Man concludes that "even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play"... what do you think that role should be?
33. For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
34. How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
35. How would you describe the author's writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
36. How effective is the author's use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
37. Did the book hold your interest?
38. How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
39. Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
40. What makes Ellison's narrator invisible? What is the relationship between his invisibility and other people's blindness--both involuntary and willful? Is the protagonist's invisibility due solely to his skin color? Is it only the novel's white characters who refuse to see him?
41. One drawback of invisibility is that "you ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world" [p. 4]. How does the narrator try to prove that he exists? Does this sentence provide a clue to the behavior of other characters in the book?

42. What are the narrator's dreams and goals? How are these variously fulfilled or thwarted in the course of the book?
43. Is the reader meant to identify with the narrator? To sympathize with him? How do you think Ellison himself sees his protagonist?
44. What is the significance of the grandfather's deathbed speech [p.16]? Whom or what has he betrayed? What other characters in this book resort to the same strategy of smiling betrayal?
45. Throughout the novel the narrator gives speeches, or tries to give them, to audiences both black and white, at venues that range from a whites-only "smoker" to the funeral of a black street vendor murdered by the police. What role does oratory--and, more broadly, the spoken word--play in *Invisible Man*?
46. The "battle royal" sequence portrays black men fighting each other for the entertainment of whites. Does Ellison ever portray similar combats between blacks and whites? To what end?
47. Throughout the book the narrator encounters a number of white benefactors, including a millionaire college trustee, an amiable playboy, and the professional agitator Brother Jack. What does the outcome of these relationships suggest about the possibility of friendship or cooperation between the races?
48. What black men does the protagonist choose as mentors or role models? Do they prove to be any more trustworthy than his white "benefactors"? What about those figures whose authority and advice the narrator rejects--for example, the vet in *The Golden Day* and the separatist Ras the Exhorter? What characters in *Invisible Man*, if any, represent sources of moral authority and stability?
49. What cultural tendencies or phenomena does Ellison hold up for satire in this novel? For example, what were the real-life models for the Founder, the Brotherhood, and Ras the Exhorter? How does the author convey the failures and shortcomings of these people and movements?
50. Why might Tod Clifton have left the Brotherhood to peddle demeaning dancing Sambo dolls? What does the narrator mean when he says: "It was as though he [Clifton] had chosen...to fall outside of history"? How would you describe Ellison's vision of history and the role that African-Americans play within it?
51. *Invisible Man* may be said to exemplify the paranoid style of American literature. How does Ellison establish an atmosphere of paranoia in his novel, as though the reader, along with the narrator, "had waded out into a shallow pool only to have the bottom drop out and the water close over my head" [p.432]? Why is this style particularly appropriate to Ellison's subject matter?
52. Where in *Invisible Man* does Ellison--who was trained as a musician--use language to musical effect? (For example, compare the description of the college campus on pages 34-7 to Trueblood's confession on 51-68, to the chapel scene on 110-135, and Tod Clifton's funeral on 450-461.) What different sorts of language does Ellison employ in these and other passages? How does the "music" of these sections--their rhythm, assonance, and alliteration--heighten their meaning or play against it?
53. What is the meaning of the novel?