

**AP English 11  
Meadows  
Summer Reading Assignment**

*Invisible Man*  
by Ralph Ellison

**Comprehension – Complete eleven (11) of the questions relating to your reading of the novel. Responses should be typed and written in complete sentences.**

1. What is the significance of the Founder's posture in his statue on campus?
2. Why is Mr. Norton so affected by Jim Trueblood's story?
3. Why have white people lavished help upon Trueblood since his disgrace, when they ignored him before his crime?
4. Why do the students and teachers at the college hate and fear Trueblood and the other "black belt" inhabitants?
5. Why doesn't Dr. Bledsoe give the narrator a second chance at the college?
6. Why does the narrator refuse grits and pork chops at the breakfast counter?
7. Why does young Mr. Emerson show Invisible Man the contents of the letter? Why does Invisible Man mistrust his offers of friendship?
8. What is the motto of the Liberty Paint Company? What is their method of keeping paint pure white? In what way does the ethos of the company resemble that of the American Republic?
9. Why is Lucius Brockway against unionization?
10. Is Brockway being used by the white bosses, or is he taking advantage of his position and knowledge to use others?
11. Ellison gives a detailed catalogue of the belongings of the elderly evicted couple. What do these individual items signify?
12. Why does Emma think Invisible Man should be "a little blacker"? [p. 303]
13. What is the significance of Mary's cast-iron bank? Why is it appropriate that the narrator is unable to rid himself of it? Is it significant that the people who won't let him discard it are themselves black?
14. Why does Brother Tarp choose the narrator to be the recipient of his leg chain?

15. Is Invisible Man's rage at Clifton's Sambo doll more than just racial? Does he see it as specifically mocking him?
16. What does the word "Tod" mean in German? Why is this a symbolically appropriate name for Tod Clifton?
17. What does Invisible Man mean when he says that Sybil sees him as an "entertainer?" [p. 521]
18. In what way is the riot at the end of the book reminiscent of the battle royal at the beginning?
19. What has accounted for the change in Mr. Norton's manner when he meets the narrator at the end of the book?
20. Why does Invisible Man move underground after the riot?
21. What was Jack's reason for writing the anonymous letter?

**Discussion – Prepare a response for the following discussion question.**

On the surface, the theme of **Invisible Man** confronts everyone who lives in the modern world; man's quest for personal identity. Yet, Ellison's hero is invisible within a larger context because of his race. In **The Souls of Black Folk** (1905), W.E.B. Du Bois theorized that the black American has two selves, a white one and a black one. This duality further complicates Ellison's narrative; it is the heart of his conflict and establishes an atmosphere of paranoia.

In a well-constructed essay (3-5 paragraphs), address whether or not the hero of **Invisible Man** finds his individuality.