



Racism and Identity in Invisible Man: Strategies for helping "Non-traditional" AP Students Succeed

Curriculum Unit 16.02.08

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It [identity] is the American theme. The nature of our society is such that we are prevented from knowing who we are. It is still a young society, and this is an integral part of its development
-Ralph Ellison

Introduction

Identity formation is a complex and dynamic process that changes over time. Although most individuals form an identity in adolescence, many adults reevaluate their identities as result of external factors. According to the Act for Youth Center for Excellence:

Identity refers to our sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. Our identities are not simply our own creation: identities grow in response to both internal and external factors. To some extent, each of us chooses an identity, but identities are also formed by environmental forces out of our control. ¹

Factors such as family traditions, cultural or ethnic origins, race, class, sex, etc. all contribute to the construction of identity.

Individuals have both a self-identity, which refers to the way in which we understand and define ourselves, and as a social-identity, which refers to the way the individual is defined by others. Typically social identity is confined to categorical markers or broad, socially defined labels (race, sex, national origin, etc). A person's self-identity and social-identity can sometimes be in conflict. The self-identity is more complex and nuanced; it does not usually fit neatly into the confines that social-identity thrusts upon it.

To complicate matters, since identity is formed in interaction with others and the world, different historical or political moments can reframe the way a person understands the self. An example of this might be the understanding of one's racial identity after the election of the first Black U.S. president. In this instance a significant historical occurrence can alter the degree of positivity a person of color feels towards his or her own racial identity. Likewise, an individual who experiences racial profiling may develop a more negative understanding of his or her racial identity. The degree to which social-identity is altered as a result of shifting historical or political moments can have a significant impact on an individual's experience and understanding of themselves

Erik Erikson, the psychosocial theorist who revolutionized developmental thought, writes, "human growth" results from "conflicts, inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase in good judgment, and increase in the capacity 'to do well' according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are important to him.... The use of the words 'to do well' puts up the whole question of cultural relativity." ¹ Here Erikson affirms the dialectical nature of identity formation and the importance of the cultural space in which it is formed. Identity is constantly changing and is altered through its interaction with the world, hopefully in ways that enhance the individual self over time. Because of this, young people are continually renegotiating the self. This is not an egoistic or self-centered approach to understanding their surroundings as some writers might suggest but rather, a necessary method of psychosocial survival.

Insofar as young adults are developing a "vital personality" that weathers the conflicts that arise between social-identity and self-identity, teen readers are drawn to texts that reflect this struggle. As a result the unit that follows features the novel, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, with the intent to help students investigate the historical, social and political conditions that shape identity as well as to provide opportunity for students to explore the origin and parameters of their own identities. This second goal, described in greater detail in the pages that follow, intends to reinforce the construction of positive social and self-identities. Additionally, the unit addresses the need of "non-traditional" Advanced Placement students—advocated for both access and practices addressing the social and academic barriers to success.

School Context

The Engineering & Science University Magnet School is a 6-12 STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) themed inter-district magnet school. Temporarily located on the outskirts of New Haven, CT, the school will move into its permanent space, which is being constructed on the campus of the University of New Haven (UNH), in 2017. The school is designed in partnership with the UNH Engineering program.

ESUMS students have the opportunity to co-enroll in UNH courses as early as the 10th grade dependent on academic performance. Additionally, UNH offers a number of scholarships for ESUMS graduates. ESUMS is considered an urban school, drawing 60% of enrollees from New Haven, while the remaining 40% come from the surrounding suburban towns. The ESUMS student body is ethnically diverse : 8% of students identify as Asian, 44% identify as Black or African American, 18% identify as Hispanic, and 31% identify as White. ESUMS is a newer school. 2015-2016 marked the school's second graduating class of 55 students. Class cohorts are generally small, averaging approximately 80-100 students per grade.

Although ESUMS is considered a successful school, a significant achievement gap exists within the school itself. While a substantial portion of graduates are attending competitive schools and universities including Yale University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Wentworth College, UNH, and Howard, another portion is lagging behind. A third of the current 12th grade cohort scored under 400 on the critical reading portion of the SAT, placing them into a remedial/transitional English course for the senior year.

The unit that follows is designed to address this gap by providing students of varying abilities with access to a complex text while building their composition skills. The unit will be taught in an Advanced Placement Literature and Composition Course that is open to any student who chooses to enroll. ESUMS uses an AP open policy, which means that any student who would like to enroll in an AP course may do so even if they are not designated as AP potential. The College Board predicts that 60% of AP potential students will pass the AP exam each year. PSAT and SAT scores determine AP potential status.

Rationale

Talented and gifted programs at the high school level most often take the form of Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework. ² According to Godley *et al.* , AP and IB programs help high school students develop the stamina and persistence necessary to succeed at the college level. In one study, data showed that, “Pittsburgh Public School students who graduate having taken two or more AP courses are twice as likely to persist in college compared to their peers who do not take AP courses.” ³ A 2008 study completed by researchers at the University of Texas (funded in part by the College Board) found a significant correlation between success at the post-secondary level and the completion of AP coursework at the high school level. The study affirms that students who enroll in AP courses have higher GPAs in college and are more likely to graduate within four years ⁴ . While some critics of the AP program contend that the coursework results in stressful learning conditions due to the accelerated pacing, most agree that access to these programs must be more equitable.

Encouraging students who may not meet the “AP potential” standards, often times those from marginalized backgrounds, to enroll in AP classes is, however, only part of the solution. Education researcher and activist Diane Ravitch questions the effectiveness of access campaigns in her blog post entitled, “Are AP Courses Ripping Off Minority Students.” Ravitch cites a *Baltimore Sun* article that highlights the failure rate of AP exams. “For the 2011-2012 school year...about 40 percent of students who took an AP class failed, but nearly 75 percent of African American students nationwide failed, and the pass rates for Latinos and low income students are far below those of Whites and Asians. ⁵” Ravitch’s important post critiques the testing industry’s drive for profit by pushing its evaluation tools as a panacea for the achievement gap; however, the benefits of a literature course that places diverse, complex texts and analytical thinking at its bedrock is something that should be championed. As educators we must both insist that low-income and minority students have opportunities to study rich material and also find ways to support students’ success in advanced programs.

The unit that follows incorporates strategies and content designed to support “non-traditional” AP student success in an AP Literature and Composition classroom. According to Godley *et al.* , helping students to identify as AP students by creating shared learning communities, intentionally addressing racial or income divides within the classroom, and normalizing puzzlement and confusion can pave the way for student

success. Additionally, using reflective writing (metacognition strategies) about student thinking and writing as well as personal response to thematic ideas can help remove barriers to student achievement. Finally, educators can encourage students' entry into the material through relevant, interesting, and familiar topics. It is this final recommendation that shapes much of the unit that follows.

After a course orientation, the first novel I teach in my AP Literature and Composition class is Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Questions of identity are central to this lengthy and complex text. Although students in the 11th and 12th grade have some level of comfort with the concept of identity, a surface reading of the novel can oversimplify the plight of the nameless narrator as he struggles against the social conditions that deny him a vision of himself. The unit that follows is certainly not the first to focus on the theme of identity as an entry point into the text; however, it expands the study of identity to include personal writing and connections to current events. Young people are drawn to investigations of the self because they are still discovering their identities and forming their place in the world. The historical forces that give shape to the novel (the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, The American Communist Party, racism, Black Nationalism, etc.) influence the protagonist's construction of identity, much as contemporary socio-political influences (The Great Recession/predatory lending, the celebration of Black Excellence, the popularity of Bernie Sanders, the Black Lives Matter Movement, etc.) impact the identity formation of young people in 2016.

Identity in *Invisible Man*

Invisible Man is chiefly a novel about defining one's identity as an individual and as part of a larger group. Throughout the novel, the nameless protagonist struggles to understand his place in a world of ever shifting modes of power, and regional place, which both disrupt his sense of self. The work is structured as a series of cyclical episodes in which the narrator arrives at a new identity, usually one that is placed upon him by others or necessitated by the conditions in which he finds himself. Race, regional origin, and class position serve as barriers to knowing the self. Ultimately, Ellison seems to suggest that to know oneself is a source of power that frees the individual from the alienating forces of oppression.

Invisible Man is written with a frame story. The novel opens with the nameless protagonist hiding out in a Harlem basement apartment as he sets down to retrospectively narrate the experiences that lead to this moment. The apartment is brightly lit by hundreds of light bulbs, fed by the electricity the Invisible Man steals from Monopolated Light & Power. This opening scene introduces readers to some of the major motifs of the novel. The light bulbs foreshadow the invisible man's struggle to be seen. He desires recognition of his self-identity over social identity. "Before that I lived in the darkness into which I was chased, but now I see. I've illuminated the blackness of my invisibility." ⁶ The frame structure introduces the concept of voice, oration and story-telling as a means of defining oneself. The protagonist uses story-telling to wrest his identity from the hands of others.

As the novel continues it shifts back in time and the Invisible Man is faced with a series of others who seek to define him. Perhaps the most striking example is the scene of the "battle royal". During this selection the Invisible Man has been invited to share his graduation speech with a group of important White officials from his hometown. However, once he arrives at the event he is forced to fight a group of other young black men while blindfolded. The fight, arranged for the entertainment of the white officials, is followed by the narrator's efforts to deliver his speech after his mouth has been bloodied. The Invisible Man's difficulty speaking and his

error in saying “social equality” in the place of “social responsibility” illustrate the limitations a White, wealthy power-structure place on the Black individual. Following the speech, the Superintendent emerges to award the Invisible Man a scholarship to a *negro college*, “He makes a good speech and some day he’ll lead his people down the proper paths...This is a good, smart boy so to encourage him in the right direction.” ⁷ In this instance, the town’s White elite define the “proper path” and “right direction” towards identity. Here Ellison demonstrates the limitations placed on Black identity as a result of racism, but he is also invoking important and varying traditions in Black political thought which also give shape to the narrator’s identity.

The use of the terms “social responsibility” and “social equality” invoke the ideas of Booker T. Washington, who believed that Black Americans could achieve progress by working within the channels already afforded to them and proving acceptability to White society through diligence and hard work, versus those of W.E.B. Du Bois, who asserted the opposite—that in order to defeat racism, Black Americans needed to seek their own political power. These two competing notions pull at the narrator throughout the first half of the novel. The White elites of the novel favor the ideology of Washington over Du Bois, thus holding up their ideal of the identity the Invisible Man should aspire to.

As the novel continues, the Invisible Man is recurrently confronted with questions of self-identity. After being expelled from college for embarrassing the school leaders in front of a wealthy white donor, the Invisible Man struggles to understand his place in the world. He had come to envision his potential through the university, but soon learns the dean, Dr. Bledsoe, is more concerned with maintaining his own image and power than looking out for the interests of the students. “For three years I had thought of myself as a man and here with a few words he’d [Bledsoe] made me feel as helpless as an infant.” ⁸ In this instance the Invisible Man reflects on his time at the college. During his time at the college the Invisible Man believes that the only acceptable method of achievement for a Black man is through the formal channels of academia; thus, evoking the ideas of Booker T. Washington. His expulsion denies him the ability to identify as a Black scholar, which creates a crisis between his social and self-identities. The Invisible Man leaves the college disillusioned, betrayed, and searching for new meaning.

Once the Invisible Man arrives in Harlem, signaling a shift in the novel’s tone and pace, he meets a group of activists known as the Brotherhood, who are organizing against evictions, and working people’s exploitation, and who are champions of the Black struggle. The Brotherhood is a loose representation of the American Communist Party. Although the degree to which Ellison was involved with the Communist Party USA has been contested, researcher and literary critic, Barbara Foley, asserts he collaborated with the party throughout the 1930’s and 1940’s:

It has become critical commonplace that in his unsympathetic portrayal of the Brotherhood in *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison, ‘got it right’ about the left, as it were. While Ellison spent some time on the fringes of the Communist Party (CP), the story goes, he was always wary of its motives and, as a Black man, skeptical of its class based politics. . . . However, during the late 1930’s and early 1940’s—the period presumably covered in the Harlem portion of the novel—Ellison, in fact, vigorously endorsed and supported the program and outlook of the U.S. Communist left. ⁹

In the novel, once the Invisible Man joins forces with the Brotherhood, he embraces his new party identity and begins using the power of voice to agitate and motivate Harlem Blacks to join the Brotherhood in struggle. He is given a new party name and identity and for a time seems to have found an alternative path to self-

acceptance and success, but this does not last and Ellison asks the reader to consider what the protagonist has given up in order to be brought into the fold of the Party. Ultimately, when the police kill brother Clifton, one of the few other Black members, after he (Clifton) has abandoned his role in the Party, the Invisible Man becomes disillusioned by the Brotherhood's tepid response and refusal to organize a political response to the slaying. In this space, he begins to question who he is once more.

Remarkably, Brother Clifton is killed while running from the police for illegally selling "Sambo" dolls on the street. The Sambo doll is a racist caricature of a Black man, designed with exaggerated African American features. When the Invisible Man first sees Brother Clifton selling the dolls, he becomes infuriated and believes Clifton's reactionary behavior paints him as a race and class traitor; however, after reflecting on the invisible string that allows Clifton to manipulate the puppet, he comes to identify himself with the doll. This moment initiates another major identity crisis in the novel. The Invisible Man discovers that his understanding of himself as a Black leader and a party member are undermined by the treatment he receives by the White party members.

In the final scenes of the novel, identity is revisited again. Harlem erupts into violence after the Brotherhood fails to provide direction to the outpouring of anger and resentment generated by Brother Clifton's death. Amidst the chaos, the Invisible Man stumbles around Harlem wearing a disguise. Mistaken for a figure named Rinehart, the Invisible Man learns that identities are fluid and complex. He can masquerade as a preacher, a gambler, a lover, etc. "Still, could he be all of them: Rine the runner and Rine the gambler and Rine the briber and Rine the lover and Rinehart the Reverend? Could he himself be both rind and heart? What is real anyway?...His world was possibility and he knew it." ¹⁰ In this last act, the Invisible Man consciously puts on the identity of another without it interfering with his understanding of self. The novel ends after the Invisible Man is chased into a manhole and must burn the papers in his briefcase, each of which connects to one of his past identities (his diploma, his scholarship letter, his new Brotherhood Name, etc.), in order to light his way. This culminating symbolism suggests that the narrator must shed his past selves, which were constructed under the influence of others, in order to truly be free.

Ellison on Identity

In a 1953 interview with the *Paris Review*, Ellison asserts, "It [identity] is *the* American theme. The nature of our society is such that we are prevented from knowing who we are. It is still a young society, and this is an integral part of its development." ¹¹ Here Ellison appears keenly aware of the impacts exploitation and oppression have on self-actualization. Although Ellison affirms identity formation is a universal experience, *Invisible Man* primarily explores the limitations that racism places on the individual's creation of self. Ellison explains that it is necessary for the nameless protagonist to discard the social-identities that have been thrust upon him in order to achieve his self-identity.

After all, it's a novel about innocence and human error, a struggle through illusion to reality. Each section begins with a sheet of paper; each piece of paper is exchanged for another and contains a definition of his identity, or the social role he is to play as defined for him by others. But all say essentially the same thing: "Keep this nigger boy running." Before he could have some voice in his own destiny, he had to discard these old identities and illusions; his enlightenment couldn't

come until then. Once he recognizes the hole of darkness into which these papers put him, he has to burn them. That's the plan and the intention; whether I achieved this is something else. ¹²

Ellison delineates the limitations society places on the individual's ability to create a vision of himself. To trade these labels or social identities for a self-identity the protagonist must recognize their origin and destroy them.

Enduring Understandings

- People have both social-identities and self-identities. When the self-identity doesn't match the social-identity, conflict arises.
- Racism, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression all contribute to a conflict between social-identity and self-identity.
- To know oneself is a source of power.
- Ideas of who we are as individuals are influenced by historical events, socio-political moments and material conditions.
- The structure of a novel contributes to its meaning as a whole.

Essential Questions

- What is identity?
- How is identity created?
- What happens when self-identity and social identity are in conflict?
- How does our environment (historical/political moment) impact our identities?
- What does it mean to be Black in America?
- What does it mean to be Black during the Harlem Renaissance?
- How is the self-identity of a minority affected when occupying spaces of dominate identity (What does it mean to be Black in white spaces)?

Assessment

After reading the novel *Invisible Man* students will write an essay in response to the AP 2003 form B prompt:

Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures—national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional. Such collisions can call a character's sense of identity into question. Select a novel or play in which a character responds to such a cultural collision. Then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response and explain its relevance to the

work as a whole. ¹³

Students will write a 40 minute timed response to the essay question. In class sessions that follow, students will revise and expand their initial draft.

Teaching Strategies

To Help Students Identify as AP Students

A significant portion of students enrolling in an AP Literature course that uses an open enrollment policy may feel under-confident in their ability to succeed in the course. Typically taken in the senior year of high school, the AP Literature and Composition course may be the first AP class a student has taken. In order to help students succeed they must begin to think of themselves as AP students, embrace the workload, and establish a comfort with “confusion” and “puzzlement.” I define success as individual growth in reading and composition measured through a portfolio system and not necessarily the results of the AP exam itself.

At the start of the course it is important to build a culture of academic risk-taking and a community of support. Teachers of accelerated classes should intentionally organize seating, and promote dialogue between students of varying racial, economic and academic experience. Within the first weeks of school, the teacher should facilitate discussions about the fears and challenges students hold about the course. Terry Monroe, an AP teacher with Pittsburgh Public Schools, fosters AP identification with his literature students by presenting them with an article about the challenges and criticisms of the AP program. He then asks them to think about their own goals and the reason they elected to enroll in the course. ¹⁴

This unit provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce student identification as accelerated learners. In addition, journaling and personal writing about identity can help students connect with the struggle of the *Invisible Man* and begin to understand the political implications of being denied access to identity. Students are asked to respond to the following: 1. Do you consider yourself a gifted learner? Why or why not? 2. Do others consider you a gifted learner? Why or why not? 3. Describe the academic journey that led you to AP Literature & Composition.

Students are then asked to share their personal writing with a small group of classmates in order to build trust and promote a culture of achievement. Each group will then share out patterns of ideas that emerge from their conversation with the whole class. This assignment pairs well with a reading of chapters one or two of *Invisible Man*, because both address questions or feelings of belonging.

To Help Students Understand Political Context of the Novel

The rich political history of *Invisible Man* can be easily lost on a reader unfamiliar with the U.S. left at the turn of the century. Most students come to the novel with little knowledge of the leading Black political theoreticians (Washington, Du Bois, Garvey, etc.) and almost no knowledge of revolutionary politics. As a result, young readers require support developing the background necessary to understand the influences these bodies of thought have on the novel.

To help students understand the theoretical contributions Washington, Du Bois and Garvey offer, divide students into groups and assign each group the task of researching one of the figures. As a product of their research, groups will create posters detailing the philosophies of each figure, and making note of contemporary figures that seem to share these ideas (e.g. Ben Carson exhibits the beliefs of Booker T. Washington, whereas Ben Jelous exhibits the influences of Du Bois's more). The posters are then hung around the classroom where the teacher can refer to them. As characters express viewpoints that correspond to the beliefs of these theorists, ask students to consult the posters to identify the origin of the thoughts expressed in the novel. See the Appendix for samples of student work.

In order to help students understand the Brotherhood and the criticisms Ellison is levying against the Communist Party USA, student must become familiar with politics of the U.S. left. To provide this context, divide students into groups and assign each group to read and annotate a section of the journal article, "The Communist Party and Black Liberation in the 1930's" by Paul D'Amato. After annotating and discussing in a small group, students will write a gist statement (a one to three sentence summary of the section). Regroup students, so that each new group is comprised of members who have read different sections of the text. In this new formation, students will share elements of their original group discussion, share questions that arose and create an outline on chart paper using their gist statements as a basis for summarizing the article in its entirety.

This strategy has multiple benefits. In additions to providing necessary background knowledge for the novel, students are also engaging with a complex text published in a peer-reviewed journal and developing varied approaches (annotating, questioning, summarizing, small- group discussion) to help make meaning of complicated written material. The text itself details both the contributions the Communist Party USA made to the Black struggle and where the party failed to sustain meaningful support to Black workers.

Finally, to familiarize students with the American left at the turn of the century, students can view selections of the documentary film, *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*. The first third of the film details Grace Lee Boggs's early activism and political life. The film depicts the conditions of Black Americans in living in Chicago in the 1930's and also provides helpful background knowledge that may be lost on young readers of *Invisible Man* . For example, the documentary briefly explains why Marxist activists took party names to protect their identities. This provides context for understanding why the Brotherhood gives the Invisible Man a new name after he joins them.

To Help Student Understand Identity

In order to help student explore the concept of identity, various opportunities for journaling, small group discussion, and personal response are peppered throughout the teaching of the unit. Invite students to journal about themselves using the aforementioned essential questions as prompts. Students might also respond to short quotations about identity (see the appendix for an example) or view a Ted Talk such as Amy Walker's "Defining Your Identity."

To Help Students Understand Novel Structure

The *Invisible Man* is written as a series of cyclical episodes in which the protagonist gains and sheds a number of identities. To help students keep track of key events and develop an understanding of the symbolism in the novel, students will take structured notes during reading. In addition to dialectical journal entries, a staple of the AP Literature and Composition classroom, students will be provided a note taking template to help them track identity formation as it arises in the text. Because identity formation is closely associated with paper

documents in the novel, students are asked to identify important paper documents, describe the conditions under which the document was received and respond to the identity the grows out of or in reaction to this.

Lessons

Lesson 1

Objective: Understand and analyze how setting develops the meaning of a work as a whole.

1) Do Now: Our identities are complex and sometimes we express ourselves differently in different contexts. Write a 1-page journal entry comparing and contrasting your home identity with your school identity. Are you the same person in both environments? How does each environment influence the way you present yourself to those around you? Be specific.

Teacher notes: set timer for 10 minutes to allow for student writing. As students are writing, balance monitoring the room and encouraging reluctant writers with writing your own response. As many educational theorists, including Donald Murray and Lucy Calkins, have argued writing with students builds democracy, trust and models the writing process in the classroom.

2) Pair Share: Ask students to turn to a partner and read their writing aloud to each other. Once students have completed the pair share (5 minutes), ask students to share what stuck out to them from their partner's work.

Teacher notes: Call on 3-4 groups individuals to share their response with the whole class. Follow up questions such as: 1) Why do you think you express yourself differently in different environments? 2) When do you think you learned to express yourself differently in different environments? 3) How do different environments affect your identity?

3) Reread pages 34-38 in *Invisible Man*. In this selection Ellison carefully lays out the geography of the state college for Negroes. How does this map symbolize the school's idealistic vision of racial progress and the hard realities of black life, which the school's philosophy attempts to deny?

Teacher notes: During reading, instruct students to take notes on patterns of imagery and word choice (diction). This can be done using annotation or the teacher can provide a note-taking template.

4) Small group discussion: Once students have finished reading and annotating, place them in small groups of 3-4. Here, students will share their observations.

Teacher notes: Be sure students notice the language of domestication: the tame rabbits, the ants marching in military file, the students marching to the church in military file, the founders statue, etc. Use the following prompting or follow up questions: 1) Why do you think Ellison includes these references to domestication?

2) What do you notice about the sequence in which the campus is unfolded? What do we see first, second and last? (a. the beautiful and well maintained campus b. worn down country side beyond campus c. the founders statue). You might also see if students can make connections between the setting and their own cities.

5) Whole groups discussion. Call on groups to share their findings with the class. Ask: How might the setting

impact the Invisible Man's identity?

6) Closure: Make a prediction about how leaving the college will affect the Invisible Man's identity.

Lesson 2

Objective: Identify and analyze Ellison's use of color as motif in *Invisible Man*.

1) Do Now: While in the hospital the Invisible Man asserts, "When I discover who I am, I'll be free." Respond to this statement. What does it tell us about the protagonist and how does it connect to the meaning of the work as a whole.

2) Whole class share: the teacher calls on 4-5 students to share responses.

3) Pair student in groups of 3-4. For homework they have read chapter 10-11 and written dialectical journal entries focusing on example of color symbolism. In groups students share and discuss journal. Teacher monitors room and prompts group discussion where necessary.

3) Whole group share: teacher calls on each group to share something that emerged from their discussion. Use the following prompting questions: 1) What examples of color imagery do you notice? 2) What details stand out to you from the description of the Optic White paint? 3) What kinds of things is Optic White paint used for? 4) How is the paint made? 5) Describe the struggles the Invisible Man has while making the paint? 6) React to the company slogan "Keep America Pure with Liberty Paints."

4) Quick write—a 2 to 3 minute initial jotting down of ideas. How does the imagery connect to the Invisible Man's struggle to determine his identity?

Teacher notes: Teachers may want to provide a mini lesson on symbolism prior to or during the lesson.

5) Whole group share: teacher calls on 3-4 students to share their quick writes. Once quick writes have been shared, identify the color imagery as a motif. Explain that motif is a reoccurring symbol that is complex because its meaning can change over time. Ask students what the color white has symbolized in the novel. Students can take turns coming up to the board and writing their idea. After several minutes, the teacher reads the responses aloud to the class to allow time to reflect on their thinking. Students will record notes

6) Homework: Thinking about chapters 10-11 what other barriers to establishing an identity does the Invisible Man experience. Think about all the different groups he meets while working at Liberty Paints.

Lesson 3

Objective: Analyze symbolism in *Invisible Man*. Make text to world connections to investigate theme.

1) Do Now: To what extent does the IM have control over his own identity? His own life? Explain. To what extent do you?

2) Begin by showing student an image of a "Sambo" doll and ask them to observe what they see. Students discuss in small groups before sharing their observations with the whole class. Inevitably students will remark about the exaggerated features of the doll: the large mouth and eyes, the dark skin, the red and black contrast between the clothing and complexion. Once students have shared their observations, provide a short

reading that describes the origin and history of the image. Students might also read Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s essay "Should Blacks Collect Racist Memorabilia?" or the 1899 children's book *Little Black Sambo* in order to develop an understanding of the Sambo trope. Following these readings, students reread the scene and write dialectical journals to analyze the symbolism of the doll and its effect on the Invisible Man.

Teacher note: educators must be cautious and sensitive when addressing this history. Students of color will easily draw parallels to their contemporary experience and space should be provided to allow for this discussion.

3) Dive students into groups of four and assign each group a different reading. In groups students will read selections, take notes and discuss.

Teacher will select texts relevant to their audience. Some suggested texts are:

Groups 1) Bass, Paul. "The "Surge" Hits Church Street | New Haven Independent." *New Haven Independent* . N.p., 2014. Web. 26 July 2016.

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/the_surge_hits_church_street/

Group 2) Hanna, Jason. "Judge Rules NYC's Stop-and-frisk Policy Unconstitutional; City Vows Appeal." *CNN* . Cable News Network, 12 Aug. 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/12/justice/new-york-stop-frisk/>

Group 3) Vega, Tanzina. "Shooting Spurs Hashtag Effort on Stereotypes." *The New York Times* . The New York Times, 2014. Web. 26 July 2016.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/13/us/if-they-gunned-me-down-protest-on-twitter.html?_r=0

Group 4) Smith, Darron T., PhD. "Images of Black Males in Popular Media." *The Huffington Post* . TheHuffingtonPost.com, 14 Mar. 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/darron-t-smith-phd/black-men-media_b_2844990.html

4) Reorganize students so that each new group is made up of a student who has read a different text. In these new groupings prompt student to summarize and share reactions to their reading.

5) Whole group discussion: Post the essential questions of the unit and ask student to think about how the articles reflect those questions. (What is identity? How is identity created? What happens when self-identity and social identity are in conflict? How does our environment (historical/political moment) impact our identities? What does it mean to be Black in America? What does it mean to be Black during the Harlem Renaissance?

How is the self-identity of a minority affected when occupying spaces of dominant identity? What does it mean to be Black in white spaces?)

6) Homework: Reread pages 434-440. Write a journal responding to the following: How do the articles read in class connect to the novel? How is Clifton's identity shaped by his interaction with the police officer?

Teacher Resources

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage International, 1995. Print.

Wherever page numbers in the discussion of *Invisible Man* are referenced, the above edition is cited.

Appendix 1

Standards

The College Board provides a comprehensive list of standards that comprise an AP Literature and Composition course. Although this unit provides students opportunities to practice many of these standards, the unit emphasizes the following:

R2 The student understands a work's thematic meaning and recognizes its complexity.

R5 The student makes careful details about textual detail, establishes connections among observations, and draws from those connections a series of inferences leading to an interpretive conclusion about a piece of writing's meaning and value.

W6 The student engages in multiple opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that

A) is informal and exploratory, allowing students to discover what they think on the process of writing about their reading.

B) Involves research, perhaps negotiating differing critical perspectives.

C) Entails extended discourse in which students develop and argument or present and analysis at length.

D) Encourages students to write effectively under time constraints they encounter on essay exams in college courses in many disciplines.

Students will be using the lens of identity to investigate the way theme develops over the course of a novel. At the same time, students are asked to consult historical materials in order to place the novel in its political context. The activities described in the section titled teaching strategies demonstrate multiple ways these standards are approached. Additionally if the unit is taught outside of an AP course the instruction aligns with Common Core State Standards for ELA. Specifically, the unit draws on CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Appendix 2

Teacher Created Materials

Respond to the quote by psychosocial theorist, Erik Erikson, and the quote by author Ralph Ellison. How do you think each writer would describe the problem of identity?

Step One: Read the quote 2-3 times.

Step Two: Circle/Highlight any words or phrases that stick out to you.

Step Three: **Paraphrase** the quote in your own words. What is it **literally** saying?

Step Four: Consider why the author included this quote. How does it **connect** to the **big picture** of the text?

Step Five: Consider the **author's tone** and **word choice (diction)**.

"In the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without identity."-Erik Erikson

"I was pulled this way and that for longer than I can remember. And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own. I have also been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear what I called myself. So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others I finally rebelled. I am an invisible man." -Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Endnotes

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3. Godley, Amanda, Terry Monroe, and Jaclyn Castma. "Increasing Access to and Success in Advanced Placement English in Pittsburg Schools." *The English Journal* (2015): 28-24. Web. 15 May 2016.
4. Dodd, Barbara, Donn Godin, and Linda Hargrove. *College Outcomes Comparisons by AP and Non-AP High School Experiences* . Rep. The College Board. New York: College Board, 2008. Print.
5. Ravitch, Diane. "Are AP Courses Ripping-off Minority Students." Weblog post. *Diane Ravitch's Blog* . N.p., 22 Aug. 2013. Web. 1 May 2016.
6. Ellison, 13
7. Ellison, 30
8. Ellison, 144
9. Ralph Ellison as Proletarian Journalist/Science & Society Vol. 62 No. 4 pgs 537-556
10. Ellison, 498
11. Chester, Alfred, and Vilma Howard. "The Paris Review." *Paris Review* . N.p., 1954. Web. 26 July 2016.
12. Chester, Alfred, and Vilma Howard. "The Paris Review." *Paris Review* . N.p., 1954. Web. 26 July 2016.
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