

**HUNTINGTON  
THEATRE  
COMPANY PRESENTS**

**POWERFUL AMERICAN CLASSIC**

**ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY  
OREN JACOBY**

**INVISIBLE**

**BASED ON A NOVEL BY  
RALPH ELLISON**

**DIRECTED BY  
CHRISTOPHER MCELROEN**

**CURRICULUM GUIDE**

**AVENUE OF THE ARTS  
BU THEATRE**



This Curriculum Guide was written by Marisa Jones, and provided by the Huntington Theatre Company's Department Of Education & Community Programs

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## **Standards**

Student Matinee performances and pre-show workshops provide unique opportunities for experiential learning and support various combinations of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts. They may also support standards in other subject areas such as Social Studies and History, depending on the individual play's subject matter.

Activities are also included in this Curriculum Guide and in our pre-show workshops that support several of the Massachusetts state standards in Theatre. Other arts areas may also be addressed depending on the individual play's subject matter.

## **Common Core Standards in English Language Arts**

### **Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 3**

- **Grade 7:** Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
- **Grade 8:** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the themes.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop related elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### **Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 5**

- **Grade 7:** Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
- **Grade 8:** Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks), create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

### **Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 6**

- **Grade 7:** Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
- **Grade 8:** Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view required distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

### **Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7**

- **Grade 7:** Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).
- **Grade 8:** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **Grades 9-12:** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist).

## **Massachusetts Standards in Theatre**

### **Acting**

- **1.7:** Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene **(By the end of Grade 8).**
- **1.12:** Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters' wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics **(By the end of Grade 8).**
- **1.13:** In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process) **(Grade 8).**
- **1.14:** Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices **(Grades 9-12).**
- **1.15:** Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis **(Grades 9-12).**
- **1.17:** Demonstrate increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble **(Grades 9-12).**

### **Reading and Writing Scripts**

- **2.7:** Read plays and stories from a variety of cultures and historical periods and identify the characters, setting, plot, theme, and conflict **(By the end of Grade 8).**
- **2.8:** Improvise characters, dialogue, and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts **(By the end of Grade 8).**
- **2.11:** Read plays from a variety of genres and styles; compare and contrast the structure of plays to the structures of other forms of literature **(Grades 9-12).**

### **Technical Theatre**

- **4.6:** Draw renderings, floor plans, and/or build models of sets for a dramatic work and explain choices in using visual elements (line, shape/form, texture, color, space) and visual principals (unity, variety, harmony, balance, rhythm) **(By the end of Grade 8).**
- **4.13:** Conduct research to inform the design of sets, costumes, sound, and lighting for a dramatic production **(Grades 9-12).**

## Connections

- **Strand 6: Purposes and Meanings in the Arts** — Students will describe the purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings (**Grades PreK-12**).
- **Strand 10: Interdisciplinary Connections** — Students will apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (**Grades Pre K-12**).

## Audience Etiquette

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to the Huntington Theatre Company.

- How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
- Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience will affect the actors' performance. No two audiences are exactly the same and no two performances are exactly the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students' behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
- Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. It is absolutely all right to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking and calling out during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be? Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
- Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are prohibited. Food and gum should not be brought into the theatre.
- Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun.

## **THE AUTHOR: RALPH ELLISON**

Ralph Ellison's crowning achievement, the novel *Invisible Man*, was inspired by his own personal experiences – successes and disillusionment – during the early 1900s. Born in Oklahoma City, Ellison would never really know his father, who died when he was three years old. Ellison learned later in life that his father had hoped he would become a poet. Ellison was an intelligent and intellectually curious person with a great love of music. As a young man, he threw himself into the vibrant jazz and blues scene of his hometown. He showed such promise that he was awarded a scholarship to Tuskegee University in Alabama in 1933, where he studied music composition. However, the scholarship did not cover the full cost of tuition, so he left for New York City to take a summer job and earn the difference. During this time, he formed relationships with many artistic and literary giants including Langston Hughes and Richard Wright – both men nurtured and supported Ellison's interests and writing. By the end of the summer Ellison was not only active within New York's artistic community but his participation in politics had been piqued as well. Ellison chose to stay rather than Alabama for the next school semester. His long and distinguished career as a writer began in the field of journalism, as one of his first notable jobs was covering the 1943 race riots in Harlem. He would go on to write and, after many years of editing, complete *Invisible Man* after serving as a merchant marine in WWII. There is no doubt that this novel's publication is Ellison's greatest literary accomplishment.

### **Questions:**

- Based on this brief biography and your own research, discuss what part of Ellison's personal history served as the basis for his novel, *Invisible Man*. How was Ellison's life different from the one he created for his protagonist?
- Do you think Ellison thought of himself as an "invisible man"? Why or why not?
- Research the career of Oren Jacoby, who adapted Ellison's novel into the play you will see. What type of artistic work is Jacoby best known for? What inspired him to adapt *Invisible Man* for the stage?

## **THEMES FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING**

### **The Political Machine**

IM is a young black man negotiating life in the midst of the racial tensions of 1930s America. Through his gift for oration, he is able to secure a scholarship to a prestigious black college. When he is unjustly thrown out of school and released from his job in New York City, a political organization known as the Brotherhood taps him to be their spokesman and face of the movement. Although IM strives to remedy social injustices, his efforts are repeatedly thwarted by the politics of the organizations to which he belongs, whether in his university or his workplace. These organizations have a rigid structure that he cannot infiltrate nor alter in any significant way. They seem to operate without need or care for him. Indeed, Brother Jack suggests that in the push for social change, “you mustn’t waste your time on individuals, they don’t count.” With a rival organization at the helm and race riots on the brink of exploding, IM is forced underground.

#### **Questions:**

- Do you agree with Brother Jack’s view? Why or why not? What does the Brotherhood stand for as an organization? What, ultimately, do you think Brother Jack really wants?
- What organizations work for social change today? How can individuals become more visible to, and through, the organizations around them? What can organizations do to increase that visibility, and should they do it?
- Do you think *Invisible Man* represents unions and other organized groups in a fair manner? Why or why not?

### **Invisibility & Blindness**

IM believes that he is “invisible” because the authority figures around him are “blind.” He arrives at this conclusion after a lifetime of events during which he is completely ignored and disregarded. But is Mr. Norton, President Bledsoe, or Brother Jack really blind, or could this characteristic be described as something else: indifference, ignorance, selfishness, or greed? And is IM really invisible? He is repeatedly recognized for being exceptional; he is even given a scholarship, a job, and a position speaking on behalf of the Brotherhood. It seems that it is precisely because he is noticed that he continues to end up in trouble with those in power—a “thorn in the side” of the important men around him.

#### **Questions:**

- In the novel *Invisible Man*, the protagonist is an unnamed narrator. In the theatrical adaptation, the character is referred to as IM for “invisible man.” Why did novelist Ralph Ellison choose to not give a name to the story’s central figure? When in the play does I.M. say he no longer remembers his name and what seems to have caused this amnesia? How does this connect to the character’s invisible status?

- When IM says he is “invisible,” do you think he is making a generalization about race in 1930s America as opposed to just his individual worth or value to society?
- Noting the limited female characters in this play, describe the importance of women to IM. Taking into consideration the historical context of the setting, how might this play speak to the “invisibility” of other groups and individuals, if even unintentionally?
- Do you think *Invisible Man* is a fitting title for this play? Using *Man* as a key word, create some new but appropriate alternate titles. Why is the word “invisible” important to this play?
- Who is “invisible” in American society today? How and why are they “invisible”?

### **The Pawn**

IM’s invisibility is an obstacle in his effort to establish his own unique identity. As IM transitions from one phase of his life to the next, he is forced to conform to a prescribed set of others’ expectations for how blacks should behave and the roles they should play in society, but none of these roles is an accurate reflection of who IM really is. Those in power do not see him as an individual, but rather as just a representative of a group that serves a particular purpose. Over time, IM becomes increasingly aware of this exploitation, and he remarks toward toward the end of the play, “Everywhere I’ve turned somebody wanted to sacrifice me for my own good, only they were the one who benefited.” Completely alone underground and struggling against society in the few means he has available, this invisible man must also wrestle with himself in the ongoing search for his identity and place in the world.

### **Questions:**

- A pawn is a piece in the game of chess. How is chess played? How do players use pawns strategically to help them win? When a person is described as being a pawn, what comparison is drawn between the game of chess and life?
- Why does Dr. Bledsoe feel the need to punish IM so severely? What is Bledsoe’s singular focus in his career and life?
- Why did the Board of Education provide scholarship money to IM? Why did Brother Jack give him a leadership position in his organization? Were either interested in helping IM get ahead? Or were these opportunities the means to some other end? Is IM simply a pawn in the game of his own life?

### **Hope & Hopelessness**

IM’s experiences in *Invisible Man* include intense swings from hope for a brighter future to hopelessness and despair so deep that they propel him away from human interaction. His admission to and dismissal from a prestigious university and his acquisition of and firing from gainful employment are only the beginning of a life

characterized by optimism followed by disappointment and disillusionment. After much success rallying and organizing the oppressed people of Harlem, IM's assignment is changed as false charges of inappropriate conduct are waged against him. While downtown running a misguided errand, the narrator's attempt to bring hope for positive change to his community unravels.

Throughout history, writers have grappled with these themes through literature, drama, and poetry. Matthew Arnold's lyric masterpiece, *Dover Beach*, touches upon many of the same ideas and motifs as Ralph Ellison's most famous novel. And yet, Arnold was an English poet writing in the mid-nineteenth century for a very different audience from Ellison's. In the final stanza, Arnold writes:

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

**Questions:**

- Although Ellison did not reference Arnold's poem as inspiration for *Invisible Man*, what parallels can you draw between the poem and the closing monologue of the play?
- How are the conflicts that IM faces universal in nature? How is this struggle between hope and hopelessness a reality facing humanity for all time?

## **MASTERY ASSESSMENT**

### **ACT ONE**

1. Describe the setting of *Invisible Man*.
2. What does IM (Invisible Man) appear to be doing during his opening monologue? At this moment, with whom or what is he in a “fight”?
3. Where does IM live and what is his place like?
4. A preacher and his congregation appear. A crying woman grabs IM’s attention. What does she reveal about her life and what does IM want her to tell him?
5. On his deathbed, did IM’s grandfather have any regrets?
6. Describe the “battle royal” and explain how IM ended up participating in it.
7. What gifts does the board of education bestow on IM? In IM’s dream, during which his grandfather is present, what does the letter in the briefcase say?
8. To whom does IM give a campus tour of his college?
9. Why is Mr. Norton interested in Trueblood’s family? What is the scandal following Trueblood?
10. What is the “stimulant” that Mr. Norton says he needs and where does IM take him to find it?
11. Who else is at the bar with IM and Mr. Norton? What happens to Mr. Norton while he is there?
12. When IM returns to campus he is in trouble. Who is Bledsoe and why is he angry at IM?
13. Instead of kicking IM out of school, what deal does Bledsoe make with him?
14. Where is IM going to live next?

## **ACT TWO**

1. What is IM told at his first appointment? Is it a successful meeting?
2. On his way to deliver his final letter of recommendation, who does IM run into on the street?
3. IM attempts to deliver his final letter to Mr. Emerson. At his meeting with Emerson, Jr., what does he learn about Dr. Bledsoe and the letters he's been delivering?
4. Where does IM finally get work?
5. Who does IM work for in the company? Why does this person get mad at IM?
6. How does IM end up in the factory hospital? What are the doctors and nurses doing to him?
7. After he is released from the Liberty Paints hospital, who cares for IM?
8. After he leaves Mary to search for a job, what disturbing scene does IM see on the street? How does he publicly protest against Marshal?
9. Brother Jack also witnesses the scene. What does he want IM to do? Initially, IM refuses. What makes him eventually call Brother Jack?

## **ACT THREE**

1. In order to be part of the Brotherhood, IM must leave Mary's house. What is Mary's initial excuse for refusing IM's payment for room and board?
2. Why does Brother Hambro dislike IM's first speech?
3. Who is Ras the Exhorter? What social issue in Harlem does IM want to protest and why is he resisted by the Brotherhood?
4. Why is Ras the Exhorter angry at IM and why does their meeting turn violent?
5. After the parade in Harlem, the Brotherhood calls IM into a hearing. What are the charges being leveled against IM and what is his new assignment?

6. Why is IM called back to his work in Harlem? What's happened since he left?
7. Where does IM find Tod Clifton? What is he doing?
8. What happens to Tod Clifton when the cops arrived? How does the Brotherhood respond?
9. What is Brother Jack's opinion of I.M.'s work? What does Brother Jack suggest is the mission of the Brotherhood?
10. Strangers begin to mistake IM for someone else. Who? List the many "hats" this mystery man must wear.
11. Why does IM turn his back on the Brotherhood? Does Ras believe him? What does IM try to explain to Ras's followers?
12. How does IM end up "underground"?
13. In the final scene, who does IM see? Does this person "see" him?

## **FURTHER EXPLORATION**

### **Vocabulary**

Advantageous  
Affidavit  
Agrarian  
Anonymity  
Armistice  
Camaraderie  
Careen  
Conciliatory  
Convalescence  
Converse  
Cynical  
Defunct  
Ectoplasm  
Eloquence  
Extol  
Framework  
Goad  
Incalculable  
Infantile  
Lobotomy  
Opportunist  
Oration  
Overt  
Palaver  
Phantom  
Rendezvous  
Resonant  
Rigor  
Scrim  
Tactician  
Transfixed

### **Existentialism**

Some critics suggest that *Invisible Man* is an existentialist work. Existentialists believe that science and morality cannot fully explain human existence. Therefore, understanding must come from the individual, and the individual is fully responsible for giving “meaning to life” through his or her passion and authenticity. The individual must remain true to his or herself to achieve any fulfillment through this life. Following World War II, the philosophy of existentialism exploded with the growing popularity of two great philosophers and writers working in France: Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Jean-Paul Sartre published his novel, *Nausea* in

1938 followed by his masterpiece on existentialism, *Being and Nothingness* in 1943. Camus, famous for writing *The Plague* and his play *Caligula*, actually rejected the modern idea of existentialism. He believed that life was futile; pointless. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (based on the Greek legend), Camus suggests that while life is meaningless, Sisyphus finds purpose by applying himself to the task of continually rolling a boulder up a hill despite being sentenced to an eternity of doing so. Camus rejected the existential label and seemed more interested in dealing with issues of the absurd.

**Questions:**

- Mr. Norton refers to the idea of “destiny.” Does the end of this play strike you as a foregone conclusion or do you think IM’s journey is a series of random events, unfortunate or otherwise?
- Research realism and theatre of the absurd. What are the key qualities and dramatic conventions that characterize those genres? Can *Invisible Man* be described as an existentialist, realistic, or absurdist work? Is it a combination of genres?
- Investigate works by Jean-Paul Satre and Albert Camus. How are these works similar to and different from *Invisible Man*? What literary, visual, and performing artists were working at the same time as Satre and Camus? What philosophies and perspectives are reflected in their work?
- Who were Ralph Ellison’s artistic contemporaries? Compare and contrast the themes and subject matters of their works with Ellison’s.

**Symbolism**

**Symbolism** is the technique used to represent an abstract idea by infusing meaning in an object, character, color or some other representative form. Take for example Ellison’s use of the paint color designed by the Liberty Paints Plant. Brockway says, “Our white, Optic White ... is so white you can paint a chunka coal and you’d have to crack it open with a sledge hammer to prove it wasn’t white clear through!”

**Questions:**

- What suggestion might Ellison be making about the societal view of Blacks in America during the 1920s and 30s through the use of Optic White paint as a symbol?
- What other symbols appear in *Invisible Man* and what do they represent?
- Consider contemporary American businesses, political and social organizations, and popular culture. What do their symbols communicate about their purposes and values?

**Booker T. Washington and Civil Rights**

Ralph Ellison, the novelist who wrote *Invisible Man*, studied at the Tuskegee Institute (now known as Tuskegee University and the basis for the college IM attends in the play). The founder of the school, Booker T. Washington (1856-1915),

is one of the greatest champions of education and political advancement for black Americans in our nation's history. Freed from slavery as a young boy, Washington received a tremendous education himself and became a great orator, leader, fundraiser and even advisor to many successful businessmen, philanthropists, and Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Despite his monumental achievements, Washington was criticized for not pushing the Civil Rights agenda more forcefully. Washington believed that inciting conflict would yield "disastrous" results – He wanted to make achievements through friendships and personal relationships and not heated confrontation.

**Questions:**

- Emerson, Jr. believes that IM will have more freedom in New York and that he shouldn't return to the South. Was he right? What historical evidence supports and contradicts Emerson, Jr.'s view?
- Why does Ras the Exhorter hate IM? How does he justify his feelings?
- Continue your research of Booker T. Washington, organizing his achievements into proper social and historical context. Do you agree that his tactic of moderation and focus on the educational needs of black Americans was the right priority to pursue? Or do his critics make a fair and valid point?
- Compare and contrast the character of IM with Washington. In what ways are they similar and how are they different?

**Page to Stage Adaptation**

A playwright working on a play that is an **adaptation** of another work, such as a novel, is faced with the challenge of condensing the story while remaining true to the author's intent. Oren Jacoby, the playwright responsible for adapting *Invisible Man* from novel to a dramatic format, had his work cut out for him. Every word in Jacoby's adaptation is taken from Ellison's original text. The novel, at 624 pages long in the hard cover edition, takes approximately three hours to watch live in the theatre—taking this story from page to stage was a daunting task.

**Questions:**

- Besides the length of both works, what do adaptors consider when transforming a novel into a play? For what reasons might an adaptor choose to make changes to the source material's characters or plot?
- After viewing the play version of *Invisible Man*, were there any scenes or ideas that seemed incomplete or needed more time or explanation?
- Reflect on movie or play versions of books you have read. Do you think that the live-action version is as good as the novel (for example: *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter*, *Wizard of Oz*, etc.)? Or is the show even better?
- In 2010, the Huntington Theatre Company produced *Stick Fly* by Lydia R. Diamond. HBO announced on December 18, 2012 that Diamond will adapt her play into an hour-long television drama. To do further investigation of

the page-to-stage adaptation process, contact the Huntington Theatre Company's Education Department for a copy of the *Stick Fly* script and compare it to the HBO version when it is broadcast. How did the story and characters change? What elements stayed the same? Why?

## **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

### **Music Appreciation**

Ralph Ellison was also a jazz musician and maintained a keen interest in this musical art form throughout his career. His talents and experiences within the jazz community are referenced in his own novel and in Oren Jacoby's adaptation of his most famous work.

Consider the use of music in this play by selecting a piece of music used in *Invisible Man*:

Louis Armstrong – “(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue”

Albert Ammons – “Boogie Woogie Stomp”

Count Basie – “Jumpin’ at the Woodside”

Muddy Waters – “Rollin’ and Tumblin’”

Count Basie – “Shiny Stockings”

Johnny Hodges – “Sophisticated Lady”

Billie Holiday – “All of Me”

After listening to the selection, reflect upon why Jacoby might have felt it was important to include this piece of music in his play. Jacoby didn't limit his musical choices to just jazz and blues – what other genres are heard during the course of the performance and why are these pieces relevant and timely?

### **Stage Combat**

All fight scenes on stage must be carefully choreographed so that the actors can simulate a physical confrontation without suffering actual bodily harm. Even if there is no physical contact, any use of a weapon must be carefully rehearsed, as well. Mastering this choreography can take hours of physically demanding practice, which continues until the very day of the performance. Just before the curtain rises, a fight captain (usually a stage manager) runs one last rehearsal, called a “fight call,” to remind the actors of the necessary muscle movements. Only those who have undergone this training should perform stage combat at full speed. In groups of six, act out the scene between IM and Ras the Exhorter during which the angry mob and the police chase IM underground. The Stage Directions read:

*IM turns on RAS, screaming defiantly, swinging his briefcase like a weapon. RAS is knocked down. Others start to close in on IM. Two cops run in, blowing whistles, chase RAS'S MEN off. IM hides as the others run out.*

After rehearsing this scene several times, share the finished product with the class at half speed. Consider the following questions: (a) How do you create the illusion of physicality? (b) How do you remain in character while also communicating safety issues with your scene partner?

### **Creating Characterization**

Have each student choose a character from *Invisible Man* to portray. As if preparing for the role in rehearsal, ask students to answer the following questions about their characters: (a) What is my objective in the play, and which obstacles stand in my way? (b) How, if at all, does my character transform during the course of the play? (c) Are there any contradictions inherent in my character? (d) What do other characters think of my character, and what does my character think of them?

### **Design Challenge**

Take a closer look at Jacoby's lengthy description of the setting before the opening of the play. Using this detailed information, make a plan for a set design concept. How do you simultaneously create a space which can serve as an illuminated room underground and as an Administrator's office on a college campus? Is less more? Or do you need a certain level of complexity in the design to capture the many places IM stops along his journey? What specific challenges does this play present to a set designer? Using drawings, pictures and thoughtful descriptions, share your ideas with the class.

### **Text Analysis 1**

Select one of the following quotes and discuss it in essay form.

“Hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action.”

“Humility is the secret, indeed, the very essence of progress. Not that I believed this—I only believed that it worked.”

“What had I meant by saying that I had become “more human”? More human. Did I mean that I had become less of what I was, less a Negro, or that I was less a being apart, less an exile from down home? Perhaps that was it, to become less—in order to become more?”

“Our job is not to ask them what they think but to tell them. And you weren't hired to think; you were hired to talk.”

“If I can't help them to see the reality of our lives, I'll help them ignore it until it explodes in their faces.”

“Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?”

**Text Analysis 2**

In essay form, discuss the following: How is IM's nightmare about his grandfather foreshadowing for the rest of the play? If IM's grandfather were alive at the time that IM came into adulthood, what advice would he have given his grandson? How did IM "go wrong," if at all?

**Group Plot Plan: Following the action of Jacoby’s adaptation of *Invisible Man***

This play moves fast, from one big moment in IM’s journey to the next! Plot out the major moments in the play by listing the **rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion**. And consider why this is an important story to tell by analyzing the **conflict** and major **themes**. In groups of 2 and 3, complete the worksheet below.

<p><b>THE CONFLICT</b> – What is the major issue or conflict facing IM which propels him forward?</p>	<p><b>THEMES</b> – What message(s) does this play convey to its audience?</p>
<p><b>RISING ACTION</b> – List each stop along the way toward the climax.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> <li>8.</li> </ol>	<p><b>CRISIS</b> – Describe the moment of greatest tension which requires IM to take action, leading directly to the climax of the play.</p>
<p><b>CLIMAX</b> – Describe the moment in which the conflict comes to a head and IM must face the consequences of his actions.</p>	<p><b>FALLING ACTION</b> – List the events directly following the climax that lead to the play’s conclusion.</p>
<p><b>CONCLUSION</b> – Describe the final moments of the play and the story’s end.</p>	<p><b>NOTES</b></p>

## **RELATED WORKS AND RESOURCES**

To broaden your familiarity with Ralph Ellison and the key topics in Oren Jacoby's play, consider consulting the following resources:

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