

Textual Analysis: *Invisible Man*

100 pts

5-8 pages (double-spaced) (approx. 1200-2000 words)

Task:

For this essay, you will produce an original argument about Ralph Ellison and/or *Invisible Man*. The best essays will be driven by **one identifiable question or observation about the text**, whether about a certain motif, literary device, element of style, broader cultural / philosophical interest, or the application of specialized terminology or theoretical framework (we'll talk more about this in class).

Support your argument:

Successful essays will demonstrate sustained engagement with both one's topic and the conversation surrounding one's topic; what have other readers already said about it? It is unnecessary to read or cover *everything* that has been said about *Invisible Man*. You should identify any specific arguments or ideas that have influenced your own, defining key terms / concepts to which you refer, and briefly summarizing your contribution.

Turn to the text:

No matter what topic or approach you choose, be sure that your argument is shaped by *Invisible Man* and not the other way around. In other words, do not distort *Invisible Man* to fit a particular argument. Your writing should begin with the text and return to it often. In fact, literature is most compelling when it fails to conform to expectations! Consider the way *Invisible Man* might illuminate or obscure certain critical questions.

Incorporating a “So What”:

An exemplary essay will not just explain “why” but also “so what.” A “so what” places your discussion within a larger intellectual, historical, or cultural context (past or present). It explains how *Invisible Man*, when read through your perspective, can help to understand something else about culture broadly.

Works Cited:

Your essay should be followed by a **Works Cited list** (MLA or Chicago are fine), composed of the resources that you reference. Lastly, but also firstly, be sure to give your work **an appropriate and provocative title**.

Due Dates:

Preface, Due Friday, February 22, 2019

You will begin by writing a “preface” to your essay, an abstract of 100-200 words that states and positions your argument in terms of “what,” “how,” and “why.” That is:

- 1) Identify *what* aspect of *Invisible Man* you will be discussing.
- 2) Explain *how* you will discuss it (through aesthetic or literary devices of interest, allusions and historical/cultural context, a particular philosophical or theoretical lens?).
- 3) Show / convince your reader *why* they should consider what you have put forth as significant for better understanding *Invisible Man*.

Rough Draft, Due Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Prepare a complete draft of your essay for in-class peer editing.

Final Draft, Due Friday, March 1, 2019

	100-90	89-80	79-70	69 and below
Argument	On topic, coherent, and built from textual evidence and original thought; includes a “so what”; analysis is in-depth and conclusive	On topic, coherent, and built from textual evidence; analysis is in-depth and conclusive	On topic but not coherent or lacks in-depth and conclusive analysis	Argument is off topic or indecipherable
Structure	Clearly and logically leads reader to a conclusion; ideas are organized by some greater unity; transitions seem organic and thoughtful	Clearly and logically leads reader to a conclusion; minimal instances of misplaced or stray ideas; transitions are evident but not fully integrated	Lacking clear, logical organization; shows some coherence but ideas often stray and lack unity; transitions are evident but not fully effective or integrated	Lacking clear, logical organization, with little coherence of ideas; transitions are absent or ineffective
Textual Evidence	Includes textual evidence that advances argument	Provides at least two direct quotes from the text	Makes general/passing references to the text	Provides no textual support
Language and Style	Prose is polished and takes an appropriate tone; makes consistent use of a literary lexicon	Prose takes an appropriate tone and is mostly polished; mostly consistent use of a literary lexicon	Prose takes an appropriate tone but has little variety in sentence structure or word choice; some use of a literary lexicon	Prose takes an inappropriate tone or has little to no variety in sentence structure or word choice; use of a literary lexicon absent or insufficient
Mechanics and Evidence of Revision	Zero to minimal typos and grammar errors; incorporation of editing notes	Minimal distracting typos or grammar errors; incorporation of editing notes	Some distracting typos or grammar errors; surface level editing	Failure to meet page/word count; several distracting typos or grammar errors; surface level editing