

LESSON NOTE ON LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH WEEK 6

SUBJECT: LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH
TOPIC: NON-AFRICAN PROSE: "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison Cont'd
CLASS: SS2
WEEK: 6

CHARACTERS, THEIR ROLES AND SIGNIFICANCE

3. Brother Jack

Role

Brother Jack is the mastermind (Founder) behind the Brotherhood movement; a movement that claims to be objective in their dealings, treating everyone as one regardless of their pigmentation (skin colour). He is like every other white, snap like a general. He does not accept opposition neither does he listen to the opinion of the Narrator except it tallies with what he wants to hear. He tells the Narrator he is hired to speak and not to think. At the end of the novel, Brother Jack sees the Narrator and his fellow blacks as unseen, they are just members.

Significance

(a) Brother Jack's blindness in one eye is symbolic, it, in a way represents the blindness of all the members of the Brotherhood. It represents their choice to see things in a particular light, to debunk emotions and uphold science. It shows their ignorance at how the world works and the balance that is needed to make a change

(b) Jack's blindness in one eye is symbolic. It, in a way, represents the blindness of all the members of the Brotherhood. It represents their choice to see things in a particular light, to debunk emotions and uphold science.

4. Ras the Exhorter

Role

He is later known as Ras the Destroyer; he is the mastermind behind the black group that is in strong opposition to the activities of the Brotherhood in the Harlem District. He, alongside his member, believes in the use of provocative speeches and violence. He organises rallies during which he kicks against every form of unity with the whites. He goes as far as confronting members of the Brotherhood who speak against his belief. To him, the Narrator is nothing but a whitewashed dummy who blindly obey every instruction of his white masters.

Significance

(a) Ras the Exhorter is used by the writer to represent the group of blacks who believe strongly that nothing good can come out of the unification of the black white race. Based on their history of and experiences of slavery, torture and pain from the whites, these people believe that blacks are to unite and fight their common enemy: the whites.

(b) Ras, is the only character who quickly deciphers the irregularities of the goals of the Brotherhood. He is obsessed with the black race and believes that blacks should fight against racial subjugation. He urges blacks to be confrontational in their dealings with whites. He is not a villain in the sense of the word. He only instigates the people to act.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

I. Use of simple language

The language of the novel is simple and straightforward.

II. Blindness as metaphor

The writer makes use of the metaphor of blindness to convey his message of invisibility. Blindness, as used by Ellison in the novel, can be defined as the choice of certain persons to see things in a certain light.

III. Characters as metaphors in the novel.

Almost all the characters are symbols of different ideas that are embedded in the novel. For instance, the manhole represents the marginalisation which at the time the novel was published in 1952, was restricting many blacks from being integrated into the American society.

IV. Narrative technique

Ellison makes use of the first-person point of view to help the readers see his thought processes as he grows physically and psychologically.