

The WordSmith Prompts

***Invisible Man* – Ralph Ellison**

Chapter and Section Prompts

Chapter One:

What are the real brutalities in this chapter?

Chapter Two:

Section 1 (to ‘...those millionaires!’): ‘Writing is nothing more than a guided dream’ (Jorge Luis Borges). Explore the dreamlike elements in this section.

Section 2 (to ‘...the white folks treats me fine’’’): What makes Trueblood’s narrative both compelling and significant? Try, in your response, to say something under each of the five SCASI headings – Setting, Character, Action, Style and Ideas.

Section 3 (to ‘...“As soon as you can,” he said.’): Attempt to explain Mr. Norton’s reaction to Trueblood’s story.

Chapter Three:

(From a past AP exam; answer in relation to this chapter.) One definition of madness is ‘mental delusion or the behaviour arising from it’. But Emily Dickinson wrote –

‘Much madness is divinest Sense –
To a discerning Eye –’

Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a ‘discerning Eye’. Select a novel or play in which a character’s apparent madness or irrational behaviour plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain what this delusion or eccentric behaviour consists of and how it might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the ‘madness’ to the work as a whole.*

Chapter Four:

Section 1 (to ‘...before the last bell sounded.’): How does the narrator show a sense of persecution in this section? Does Ralph Ellison see those feelings as being justified?

Section 2 (to ‘...And I had to attend chapel.’): What might we find surprising in this section?

Chapter Five:

Trace the elements of bitterness, cynicism and despair running through this chapter. Do any of those feelings appear to be in contradiction?

Chapter Six:

Section 1 (to ‘...I packed my bags.’): From a past exam; answer in relation to this section. ‘An honest man can feel no pleasure in the exercise of power over his fellow citizens’ (Thomas Jefferson). Explore the means by which, in a novel or play of your choice, one character attempts to exercise control over other people. How successful is he (or she)? How does the writer want us to feel about the character’s success – or failure?

Section 2 (to ‘...and hurried for the bus.’): How do you think Ralph Ellison wants us to view the narrator’s behaviour in this section?

Chapter Seven:

Section 1 (to ‘...I felt sad and utterly alone.’): Which of the advice the vet offers to the narrator seems most likely to be of help to him?

Section 2 (to ‘...take Harlem a little at a time.’): What aspects of Harlem take the narrator by surprise? Do any of them bode well, or ill, for him?

Chapter Eight:

How in this chapter does Ralph Ellison create, and sustain, an air of suspense?

Chapter Nine:

Section 1 (to ‘...as loud as a fifty-cent piece.’): How does the idea of planning run as a theme through this section?

Section 2 (to ‘...dreaming of revenge.’): What strangenesses and shocks does the narrator encounter in this section? How does he attempt to cope with them?

Chapter Ten:

Section 1 (to ‘...”He’s in charge.”’): What is the nature of the narrator’s failure in this section, and what factors contribute to it?

Section 2 (to ‘...let him git on back on the job”’): How and for what reasons do the narrator and Brockway treat each other with suspicion?

Section 3 (to ‘...let him pass.”’): What is the narrator likely to have learnt from this encounter?

Section 4 (to ‘...an important victory.’): Explain why the narrator feels he has ‘lost irrevocably an important victory’.

Chapter Eleven:

Section 1 (to ‘...could hear no machinery’): How might we see this episode as symbolic? From a narrative point of view, is it too lengthy?

Section 2 (to ‘...late afternoon Harlem.’): How has this experience affected the narrator?

Chapter Twelve:

Section 1 (to ‘...the soft cool splash of sleep’): How does Ralph Ellison create a feeling of salvation here?

Section 2 (to ‘...“I’ll remember that,” I said.’): What voice seems to speak through Mary Rambo?

Section 3 (to ‘...You really baptized the ole Rev!’”): Does Ralph Ellison want us to see the narrator as being overcome by cynicism, or only realism?

Section 4 (to ‘...my first northern winter had set.’): What inner conflicts does the narrator experience here?

Chapter Thirteen:

How does this chapter explore the concept of dispossession? What, if anything, has been reclaimed by its end?

Chapter Fourteen:

What ominous notes are struck amidst the general hopefulness of this chapter?

Chapter Fifteen:

How does Ralph Ellison humanise the narrator in the course of this chapter – and perhaps make us concerned for him?

Chapter Sixteen:

Analyse the rhetorical devices the narrator employs in his speech, and their effect. Why do some of the group express concern at what he has said?

Chapter Seventeen:

Section 1 (to ‘...on the way down,” he said.’): How does Ralph Ellison vary the mood in this section?

Section 2 (to ‘...we reached my door.’): Is the narrator likely to have found what happens in this short section reassuring?

Section 3 (to ‘...gather them in.”’): How are the narrator’s feelings towards Todd Clifton somewhat mixed?

Section 4 (to ‘...I had found the Brotherhood.’): What does Ras the Exhorter represent? How much sympathy do you think Ralph Ellison has with his ideas?

Section 5 (to ‘...what they think I am.’): *Does* the narrator appear to be what they think he is?

Section 6 (to ‘...was working very well.’): What gives rise to the sense of optimism in this section?

Chapter Eighteen:

Section 1 (to ‘...to discuss strategy.’): How politically savvy does the narrator show himself to be in this section?

Section 2 (to ‘...going downtown for a meeting.’): In what ways does this section call into question both the Brotherhood’s soundness and the narrator’s?

Chapter Nineteen:

Section 1 (to ‘...’let them come.’): Why might we judge this episode to be stagey and melodramatic?

Section 2 (to ‘...a deep sleep’): How does the narrative zig-zag in this section?

Chapter Twenty:

Section 1 (to ‘...erase the scene from my mind.’): What are the nightmarish elements in this episode? Pay some attention in your response to the way the story is told.

Section 2 (to ‘...I’d been asleep, dreaming.’): What are the sources of the narrator’s disillusionment, as it shows itself in this section?

Chapter Twenty-One:

Section 1 (to ‘...’I ate very little.’): How does the narrator deal with his feelings of guilt?

Section 2 (to ‘...simmered away in the heat.’): Why does the narrator experience a feeling of failure when he has completed his speech? What indications are that his failure has not been complete?

Chapter Twenty-Two:

How in this chapter does the narrator show himself to have grown in stature?

Chapter Twenty-Three:

Show how the focus of this chapter is on both ironies and subterfuges.

Chapter Twenty-Four:

Section 1 (to ‘...she wouldn’t be missed’): How does this section constitute a ‘winding-up’ of the novel’s action?

Section 2 (to ‘...She moved into my arms.’): How are women represented in this section as being another disadvantaged group in society?

Section 3 (to ‘Ran.’): How in this section does Ralph Ellison convey a sense of gathering momentum and inevitability?

Chapter Twenty-Five:

Section 1 (to ‘...backing away, and ran...’): How does this section provide us with a glimpse down into Hell?

Section 2 (to ‘To Mary, I thought, to Mary.’): ‘I’d run, been run, been chased, operated, purged...’ What ‘purging’ does the narrator seem to undergo in this section?

Section 3 (to ‘...sleeping invisibly.’): What new perspectives does this section offer?

Section 4 (to ‘...every part but his eyes.’): Explore the symbolism of this section.

Section 5 (to ‘The end was in the beginning.’): Explore the symbolism of the narrator’s dream.

Epilogue

‘What is wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote’ (E. M. Forster).

Can we see that process working in the novel’s epilogue?

General Essay Prompts

Questions are ordered according to the SCASI structure (Setting, Character, Action, Style and Ideas), with some overlap among the various areas.

*Prompts modelled on past AP exam questions

**Prompts modelled on past IB exam questions

***Prompts modelled on past IGCE A Level exam questions

Setting

1. ‘And, after all, our surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency’ (Pauline Hopkins).

Choose a novel or play in which cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how surroundings affect this character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole.*

2. Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole.*

3. ‘Novels and plays often tell the story of how human beings courageously attempt to survive, escape, or best of all transform their environment.’

Discuss such attempts in narrative texts you have studied, paying some attention to why the characters have wanted, or needed, to do that. Suggest how successful or otherwise they have been.

4. ‘History gives us the facts, sort of, but from literary works we can learn what the past smelled like, sounded like, and felt like, the forgotten gritty details of a lost era. Literature brings us as close as we can come to reinhabiting the past’ (Scott Herring).

How does Ralph Ellison, in *The Invisible Man*, help us to ‘reinhabit the past’?

5. How far have novelists you have studied developed a sense of community in their novels? Why have they thought it important to do that?***

6. ‘This story could not have happened anywhere else.’

Discuss the validity of this comment.

7. Ralph Ellison, in his Introduction, suggests that he has written in part about ‘areas of society whose manners, motives and rituals were baffling.’ Show how in the course of the novel he throws some light on those areas.

8. In Chapter Twenty-Five the narrator writes about the members of the Brotherhood’s refusal to recognise ‘the beautiful absurdity of their American identity and mine’. In light of your reading of the novel, what meaning can you give to that phrase?

9. Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures – national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional. 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.*

10. ‘Although in poems, plays and novels we meet individual characters in a range of historical, social and cultural settings, their shared humanity allows us to engage with them, despite those differences in setting.’

Explore the settings of literary texts you have studied, showing how the ‘shared humanity’ of their characters allows the writing to transcend the limitations of time and place.***

11. What picture of the society of the time is painted by the novel? Is it a cynical picture? If so, is the cynicism expressed directly by the novelist or indirectly, through the events of the novel or one of the characters?***

12. ‘The skill of writing is to create a context in which other people can think’ (Edwin Schlossberg).

How successfully, in *Invisible Man*, has Ralph Ellison created such a context?

13. ‘It is one of the tasks of the modern novel to confront those aspects of society which make people unhappy.’

How far do the novels and plays you have studied (modern or not) fulfil this obligation?

14. ‘Literature is the denunciation of the times in which one lives’ (Camil Jose Cela).

Does *Invisible Man* support that suggestion?

Character

15. In what ways can we describe the narrator as the ‘hero’ of *Invisible Man*?

16. ‘Traditionally, the hero somehow represents the community and carries with him its hopes and fears.’

How far would you regard this to be true of the narrator in *Invisible Man*?**

17. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, ‘Show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy.’

Select a novel or play in which a major character exhibits heroic qualities but suffers a tragic downfall. Examine the relationship between the character’s heroic qualities and his or her downfall.

18. Literature often depicts individuals who are, or who see themselves as, different from the people around them. Write an essay in which you explore some of the struggles that arise from such differences (real or imagined) in a novel or play you have studied.

19. Explain, with reference to works you have studied, why writers are frequently drawn to tell stories about characters who are rebellious towards or in some way alienated from society.**

20. ‘In our world of ordinary men and women – living ordinary lives, frittering away their time on petty activities – it raises our spirits to read of individuals of intensity. They awaken our sense of the potential of humans.’

To what extent does one or more of the major characters in a novel or play you have studied ‘awaken our sense of human potential’? Does the experience raise our spirits?

21. ‘The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way’ (E. M. Forster).

By this standard, is the narrator in *Invisible Man* a round character?

22. ‘An honest man can feel no pleasure in the exercise of power over his fellow citizens’ (Thomas Jefferson).

Explore the means by which, in a novel or play of your choice, one character attempts to exercise control over other people. How successful is he (or she)? How does the writer want us to feel about the character’s success – or failure?

23. A bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, recounts the psychological or moral development of its protagonist from youth to maturity, when this character recognizes his or her place in the world. Select a single pivotal moment in the psychological or moral development of the protagonist of a bildungsroman. Then write a well-organized essay that analyzes how that single moment shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.*

24. Examine the narrator's attempts, as the story develops, to understand both himself and what is happening around him. Has he made any progress in either of those attempts by the end of the novel?

25. 'I was becoming someone else' (Chapter Sixteen).

To what extent, in the course of *Invisible Man*, does the narrator become 'someone else'?

26. 'Men's lives are not progressions...nor are they a series of facts that may be enumerated & in their proper order understood. Rather they are a series of transformations, some immediate & shocking, some so slow as to be imperceptible' (Richard Flanagan).

Apply that idea to the narrator in *Invisible Man*.

27. 'Identity! My God! Who has any identity any more anyway?' (Chapter Nine).

How far can we see *Invisible Man* as the story of one man's search for an identity?

28. The narrator writes about the part of him that 'observed listlessly but saw all, missing nothing, was still the malicious, arguing part,; the dissenting voice, my grandfather part; the cynical, disbelieving part – the traitor part that always threatened internal discord' (Chapter Sixteen).

Show how those parts of character are key to the telling of the story in *Invisible Man*.

29. The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, 'No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.'

From a novel or play choose a character or characters whose minds are pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within characters illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.*

30. Explore the methods by which novelists have allowed us to see into the minds of their characters, and suggest, with examples, which methods have been most successful.**

31. 'I felt that one of the ever-present challenges facing the American novelist was that of endowing his inarticulate characters...with eloquence' (Ralph Ellison, in his Introduction to *Invisible Man*).

How has Ralph Ellison, in the novel itself, set about meeting that challenge? How successful has he been?

32. ‘The artist should be in his work, like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should be felt everywhere and seen nowhere’ (Gustave Flaubert).

Show how Ralph Ellison uses the figure of the narrator to remain unseen himself.

33. ‘The glory of the protagonist is always paid for by a lot of secondary characters’ (Tony Hoagland).

Relate that comment to *Invisible Man*.

34. ‘Writers are at their best when they focus on the imperfections in human nature.’

Show how some particularly powerful writing derives its impact from such a focus.***

Action

35. A character's attempt to achieve something he or she sees as important is central to many plays, novels, and poems. Choose a literary work or works in which a character undertakes such an attempt. Show with clear evidence from each of your choices how the character's efforts are used to develop a theme in the work.*

36. ‘A searching after truth is one of the most fundamental aspects of story.’

How far is that true of one or more novels or plays you know well?***

37. ‘Who would have thought I’d ever come here? How things were twisted around!’ (Chapter Sixteen).

Show how one of the compelling features of the novel is the way things are continually being ‘twisted around’.

38. What insights have you had into the way writers whose work you have studied choose the events to include in the stories they wish to tell, and also into how they decide how to arrange those events?**

39. A novelist has said of his work, ‘It is easy to begin and end a story, but figuring out how to hold up the middle is tough.’

How has a novelist you have studied ‘held up the middle’ in one or more of his or her novels?**

40. ‘Among the most powerful tools at a storyteller’s disposal are suspense and surprise.’

Explain the difference between those two features of novels and plays, illustrating your answer from literature of quality you have studied.**

41. ‘Changes of pace in a novel or play – for instance, between episode and analysis – establish a rhythm that carries the reader (or audience) forward but at the same time can allow respite from the intensity of the action.’

Illustrate the truth of that statement from a play or novel you have studied.

42. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.*

43. Many narratives have one or more significant moments of crisis. Write about the significance of crises in the work of writers you have studied.***

44. Choose a single episode from a novel that you think would work well on stage, as part of a play, or as a scene in a film. Explain why you have selected that particular episode, and say what would make it an effective piece of theatre or cinema.

45. ‘Narrative point of view’ = who tells the story; ‘narrative voice’ = how they speak to the reader.

With reference to one or two pieces of fiction you have studied, explore the decisions taken by novelists about one or both of those aspects of their writing, and the effect of those decisions on the reader’s experience.**

46. ‘It is always dangerous to write from the point of *I*’ (Anthony Trollope).

What difficulties can arise for both the novelist and the reader when a story is told in the first person? Illustrate your answer by reference to novels you know well.

47. The novelist E. M. Forster wrote that the basic quality of a good story is ‘that of making the audience want to know what happens next.’

How does Ralph Ellison work to make us want to know ‘what happens next’ in *Invisible Man*? What methods has he used?

48. Works of literature often depict acts of betrayal. Friends and even family may betray a protagonist; main characters may likewise be guilty of treachery or may betray their own values. Select a novel or play that includes such acts of betrayal. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the nature of the betrayal and show how it contributes to the meaning of the work as whole.*

49. 'What is the best way of telling a story?' (George Eliot, *Leaves from a Notebook*).

From your reading of *Invisible Man*, what decisions do you think Ralph Ellison has taken about 'the best way of telling a story'?

50. Show how in novels, short stories or plays you have studied writers use uncertainty as a means of introducing tension into their writing.**

51. 'In narratives, what we are not told is just as important as what we are told.'

Write about the significance of the gaps or of the untold stories in narrative texts by writers you have studied.***

52. 'At every stage in the progress of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the *illuminating incident* to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity' (Edith Wharton).

Select an 'illuminating incident' from a novel or play of literary merit and explain how it throws light both on the situation in which it occurs and on the meaning of the whole piece of work.*

53. 'For history records the patterns of men's lives, they say' (Chapter Twenty).

What 'patterns of men's lives' does *Invisible Man* record?

54. Explore the nature, impact and significance of climaxes and /or anticlimaxes in the narratives of writers you have studied.***

55. 'In the end is my beginning.'

This has been said by an author to explain how he organises his writing. Examine one or more novels or plays to see whether their structure reflects a similar mode of planning.**

56. Discuss the ways in which writers you have studied prepare their readers or audiences for the conclusion of the stories they are telling.**

57. It has been argued that the ending of a novel or play should offer 'Not rounding off, but opening out'.

Discuss that idea in relation to one or more pieces of writing you have studied.**

58. 'Nearly all novels are feeble at the end.'

How far can you defend novels you have studied against this criticism?***

Style

59. 'When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock – to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures' (Flannery O'Connor).

What light may that statement throw on nature and purpose of Ralph Ellison's writing style in *Invisible Man*?

60. Select a passage from the book (a longish paragraph or two) whose style you see as typical of the whole novel, and analyse its stylistic features.

61. 'We create words, words create wonders' (Chandan Sharma).

Show how in a variety of literary works you have studied writers use words to 'create wonders'.

62. 'Language is the key to the heart of people' (Ahmed Deedat).

Show how writers whose work you know well use language to reveal 'the heart of people'.

63. 'Some writers of fiction paint with a very broad brush and carefully avoid cluttering their writing with minutiae; others make full use of significant detail to add texture and deeper meaning to the stories they tell.'

Discuss the use of significant detail in novels or short stories you have studied.**

64. As a character in, and the recorder of, the story, the narrator seems to remember effortlessly, but understand with difficulty. How is that duality reflected in his style of writing?

65. 'I was working on the proof of one of my poems all the morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon I put it back again' (Oscar Wilde).

What evidence is there, in fiction you have studied, of authors taking a great deal of care in polishing their work?

66. 'Vigorous writing is concise' (William Strunk).

Ralph Ellison's style is not concise; does that mean it is not vigorous?

67. 'It is the process of argument and persuasion that most strongly engages us.'

In light of this view, consider ways in which writers use argument and persuasion.***

68. 'Words can entice, compel us and can ensnare us.'

In light of this comment, consider ways in which writers present persuasive or seductive uses of language.***

69. 'For I had now come to believe...that there was a magic in spoken words' (Chapter Seventeen).

Illustrate that idea from the novel's 'spoken words'.

70. Write about the ways writers you have studied use dialogue in their work.***

71. 'DIALOGUE Must (1) Further Plot; (2) Express Character' (Elizabeth Bowen).

Does the dialogue in *Invisible Man* pass that test - or challenge its validity?

72. 'The tone of *Invisible Man* is consistently sombre, which matches the grimness of the tale told but becomes wearisome at times. A few lighter moments would have given the novel some sparkle!'

How far do you agree with that statement?

73. 'The difficulty of literature is not to write, but to write what you mean; not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish' (Robert Louis Stevenson).

Discuss a novel you have studied (or a play or a collection of poetry), explaining how the way it is written has affected you.

Ideas

74. 'A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say' (Italo Calvino).

Using that standard, discuss two or more pieces of literature that you regard as classics, or likely to become so, giving reasons for your judgement.

75. Discuss the writers' treatment of one or more of the following themes in novels you have studied: love, deceit, power, wealth, war, courage, illness and death, race, self-discovery, redemption**

76. 'Destruction lies ahead unless things are changed' (Chapter Fourteen).

How central to the book is that message?

77. In Chapter Three the vet draws a distinction between ‘experience...and conscious thought’.

Are those two things seen to be in opposition as the story develops? Which appears to be the better route to understanding, for the narrator?

78. ‘Everything what looks good ain’t necessarily good’ (Chapter Thirteen).

How fully is that comment borne out by the events of the story?

79. Discuss how far the novel’s title is appropriate to the story told. How does it help us to understand Ralph Ellison’s own view of what is important in the story?

80. A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning.

Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.*

81. Examine the ways in which novelists whose work you have studied present stories of failure or suffering. What do you gather about the effect they are trying to produce in their readers?***

82. Explore the range of attitudes to colour we encounter in the novel. How do they help us to understand the causes, nature and outcomes of prejudice?

83. ‘I hadn’t worried too much about whites as people’ the narrator says in Chapter Eight.

What impression of white people might we take from the novel?

84. ‘Literature illustrates the heights to which humans can aspire and the depths to which they can sink.’

Examine this spread of human behaviour in a piece of literature you have studied, and show how far the author makes any kind of moral judgement of his or her characters.

85. Many works of literature deal with political or social issues. Choose a novel or play that focuses on a political or social issue. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses literary elements to explore this issue and explain how the issue contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.*

86. 'A great literature is chiefly the product of inquiring minds in revolt against the immovable certainties of the nation' (Henry Louis Mencken).

What light does that quotation throw on Ralph Ellison's purpose in writing?

87. Some novels and plays seem to advocate change in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Choose such a novel or play and note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or audience's views.*

88. Roland Barthes has said, 'Literature is the question minus the answer.'

Choose a novel or play and, considering Barthes' observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers any answers. Examine how the author's treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole.*

89. 'Lessons of wisdom have never such power over us as when they are wrought into the heart through the groundwork of a story' (Laurence Sterne).

What if any 'lessons of wisdom' has Ralph Ellison worked into his novel?

90. How important is it for us to feel, at the end of a novel, that justice has been done? What sort of justice, if any, has been done by the end of *Invisible Man*?

91. A father in a novel by William Styron tells his son that life 'is a search for justice.'

Choose a character from a novel or play who seeks justice, either for himself or for someone else. Show how the character either finds justice or fails to do so, and explore the meaning of the concept within the context of the whole work.*

General

92. What, in the opening pages of *Invisible Man*, will make the reader want to continue into the novel? What might make us decide not to read on? What would we lose if we did not do that?

93. 'Literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice' (Cyril Connolly).

For what reasons might we read *Invisible Man* twice? (Do not include 'to prepare for an exam' as a reason.)

94. 'The purpose of literature is to turn blood into ink' (T.S. Eliot).

Examine the implications of that comment, in relation to literature of quality you have studied.

95. In his Introduction, Ralph Ellison writes of the potential of the novel genre as ‘a raft of hope, perception and entertainment’.

How fully does *Invisible Man* in particular fulfil that potential?

96. ‘For God’s sake, learn to look beneath the surface’ the vet tells the narrator in Chapter Seven.

How far, in the course of the novel, does the narrator do that?

97. ‘Genuine bravery for a writer.... It is about calmly speaking the truth when everyone else is silenced, when the truth cannot be expressed. It is about speaking out with a different voice, risking the wrath of the state and offending everyone, for the sake of the truth, and the writer’s conscience’ (Murong Xuecun).

How does this comment help us understand the nature and purpose of *Invisible Man*?

98. In every piece of writing some lines or episodes are especially significant and memorable. Show how some of these moments stand out in *Invisible Man* and help the reader focus on an essential aspect of the novel.**

99. ‘Black literature is taught as sociology, as tolerance, not as a serious, rigorous art form’ (Toni Morrison).

Explain why black literature you have studied deserves to be regarded as ‘serious, rigorous art’.

100. ‘If a reading of *Invisible Man* does not make us feel uncomfortable, not as members of one group or another, but as human beings, then the novel has not failed – but we have.’

Discuss that comment.

101. A critic has said that one important measure of a superior work of literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of pleasure and disquietude. Select a literary work that produces this ‘healthy confusion’.

Write an essay in which you explain the sources of the ‘pleasure and disquietude’ experienced by the readers of the work.*

102. ‘To provoke dreams of terror in the slumber of prosperity has become the moral duty of literature’ (Ernst Fischer).

How far does that quotation help us understand Ralph Ellison’s purpose in writing *Invisible Man*?

103. 'The test of literature is, I suppose, whether we ourselves live more intensely for the reading of it' (Elizabeth Drew).

Are we likely to 'live more intensely' for having read *Invisible Man*? Whether your answer is yes or no, try to explain why.

104. By what variety of methods do writers you have studied establish mood and atmosphere in their writing?*

105. 'Literature is analysis after the event' (Doris Lessing).

How well does that phrase describe the structure and essential nature of *Invisible Man*?

106. 'The important thing in writing is the capacity to astonish. Not shock - shock is a worn-out word - but astonish' (Terry Southern).

In what ways may *Invisible Man* astonish us?

107. 'Write what should not be forgotten' (Isabel Allende).

Does this piece of advice throw any light on why Ralph Ellison has written *Invisible Man*?

108. 'The most important thing in a work of art is that it should have a kind of focus' (Leo Tolstoy).

What would you regard as the 'focus' of *Invisible Man*?

109. What part does change, and in particular the tension between old and new ways of thinking and behaving, play in novels or plays you have studied?*

110. 'Every autobiography is a work of fiction, and most works of fiction are in part autobiographies.'

Discuss this suggestion, illustrating your ideas from *Invisible Man*.

111. 'We do not live an equal life, but one of contrasts and patchwork; now a little joy, then a sorrow, now a sin, then a generous or brave action' (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

How is that account by Emerson of the nature of life reflected in the structure and the action of *Invisible Man*?

112. 'All literature, however dark, has some light.'

Discuss that suggestion, illustrating your argument by reference to two or more works of literary merit.**