

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Invisible Man

by
H.G. Wells

Book Information

H.G. Wells, The Invisible Man
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Interest Level: UG

In this modern classic mystery, a scientist must face the consequences of rendering himself invisible with a secret formula.

Topics: Classics, Classics (All);
Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other;
Mysteries, Secrets; Popular Groupings,
College Bound; Popular Groupings, Upper
Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews;
Series, Scholastic Classics

Main Characters

Griffin a scientist who successfully makes himself invisible

Kemp a doctor who was a former medical school classmate of Griffin at University College

Mr. and Mrs. Hall the owners of the Coach and Horses, an inn where Griffin retreats after becoming invisible

Mr. Marvel a tramp who is forced to help Griffin retrieve his books and escape detection

Vocabulary

depredations destructive actions

interlocutor fellow participant in a conversation

metamorphosed transformed the appearance of

navvy an unskilled laborer

obdurate stubborn

vivisection dissection of a live animal

Synopsis

The story begins as a man, curiously clothed with his head wrapped in a bandage, rents a room at the Coach and Horses Inn in Iping. The strangeness of the man's appearance and habits draws the

curiosity of the inn's owners as well as many other residents of the town. The man claims to be an "experimental investigator" and spends much of his time behind closed doors working with chemicals and books. The townspeople try to pry into his work and speculate as to why his head is wrapped and what he is really doing inside the inn. The man is very secretive, does not answer many questions, and only ventures out of the inn at night.

Then a strange thing happens at the vicarage. The vicar and his wife hear noises in their home and try to locate the source. They follow the noises to the study where they hear the clinking of money, at which point they enter the room but see nothing except a burning candle. The incident baffles them. On the same night, the Halls are awake making liquor in their basement. Noticing their front door is unlocked and suspecting the renter to have opened it, they check his room and find that he is not there. The suspicious coincidence of the man's absence from his room and the theft of money from the vicarage brings the constable to the inn to arrest the man. However, before the man can be arrested he removes his clothes, thus becoming invisible, and escapes.

Along the road the Invisible Man meets Mr. Marvel, a tramp. Since floating items would draw attention, the Invisible Man coerces him to help retrieve some books and clothes from Iping. He continues to use Marvel as a "tool" for his own plans by having the man carry money that he steals from various homes and businesses. Marvel eventually escapes, but not before the Invisible Man is shot in the arm.

The Invisible Man retreats to a home that he quickly discovers belongs to Kemp, a former medical school classmate. Hoping to form an alliance with Kemp, the Invisible Man, Griffin, reveals the story of how he came to be invisible, the repercussions of invisibility, and his plan to begin a reign of terror. Frightened by Griffin, Kemp reports him to the police. On discovering Kemp's betrayal of him, Griffin escapes Kemp's home. Griffin later decides to murder Kemp for his betrayal, and he heads for Kemp's house. Griffin eventually gains access into Kemp's

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boarded-up house, but Kemp flees. Griffin chases Kemp into town where some townspeople help him subdue Griffin. In the struggle, Griffin is killed, and his body once again becomes visible.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

After Griffin escapes Kemp's house the first time, Kemp helps the police establish a plan of action to capture Griffin. The suggestions Kemp gives them come directly from the information Griffin just gave him about life as an invisible person. What other tactics could they use?

The police could direct citizens to watch for footprints mysteriously appearing. They could also ask people to search for a hazy outline in rain or fog.

Literary Analysis

The Invisible Man could seemingly fit into several genres of literature. Name which categories could be appropriate and explain why.

Some students may suggest that the book is science fiction because it involves scientific impossibility. Others may believe it is a mystery because it involves actions or characters that cannot be fully understood. Another possibility is that it is an adventure because Griffin's story involves risk and unusual action. It could also be argued to be a horror story since it elicits fright and revulsion in the reader. Some may consider it to be a tragedy because the story ends with the death of the main character, whose ambition destroys his opportunity for a spectacularly successful career.

Inferential Comprehension

Who would Griffin likely have pursued next if he had successfully killed Kemp? Why?

He probably would have tried to find Mr. Marvel so he could retrieve his books and punish him for betraying him.

Constructing Meaning

Griffin anticipated a great deal of advantage in being invisible but is bitterly disappointed when he actually becomes invisible. Would you like to be invisible? Why or why not?

Some students may think the benefits of invisibility would outweigh the consequences. Others may disagree, citing the problems invisibility causes Griffin.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The setting of the story influences the events and outcome of the story a great deal. The story is set in a time when few modern conveniences are available. Have the students choose a scene from the story and rewrite it as if it were set in the modern time period.

Recognizing Details Griffin's experiments are based on the refractory or reflective powers of light. He is fascinated by the way light is reflected and the different effects colors have on that process. Invite a physics teacher to the classroom to demonstrate how light reflectivity can affect visibility. Also have the students discuss with the physics teacher whether human invisibility is a real possibility.

Identifying Reading Strategies The narrator never explains what Marvel does with the money that Griffin had stolen and given him to carry. But there is a hint as to what he does with it. Ask the students to explain, either in a discussion or in writing, what he probably does with the money.

Responding to Literature The main character, Griffin, spends many years dreaming of and working on the idea of making himself invisible. When he finally succeeds in achieving his dream, he becomes very disillusioned because invisibility becomes a detriment rather than a benefit. Have the students share or write about something they dreamed of or worked towards for a long time but were disappointed in when they finally accomplished or experienced it. This could

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include dreams such as going to Disney World or a similar place but finding it to be disappointing. It could also involve wanting to become friends with someone, only to find out the person you tried to befriend was not the type of person you had hoped.