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Sample MonkeyNotes

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The Invisible Man

by

H. G. Wells

1897



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Dr. Karen Ruff

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

England in the 1890's. Iping and the surrounding area

Much of the action initially occurs around or in a couple of pubs and an inn, thus taking advantage of the natural opportunity for people to spread rumors, speculate on mysterious issues, and expand.....

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Griffin - The Invisible Man. He is an albino college student who had changed his area of study from medicine to physics and had become interested in refractive indexes of tissue. During his studies he stumbled across formulas that would render tissue invisible. Eventually he tries the formula on himself, thinking.....

Mr. Marvel - The first character whom Griffin tries to use as an accomplice. Mr. Marvel is short, fat, and a loner. He is the area tramp. Griffin perhaps also thinks that he is a little stupid and will

Dr. Kemp - A former associate of Griffin's in his college days. Griffin had been a student and knew Kemp to be interested in bizarre, and idiosyncratic aspects of science. It is to Kemp's house that Griffin goes.....

Minor Characters

The Halls - Proprietors of the Coach & Horses. Mrs. Hall is the one who is primarily in charge. She is happy enough to leave Griffin alone so long as her money is coming in on time. Her husband is.....

Teddy Henfrey - A clock repairman who happens to visit the inn for a cup of tea. Mrs. Hall takes advantage of him to try to find out about her strange guest. Because the stranger will not talk, Teddy convinces.....

Fearenside - a cartman who delivers luggage from the station whenever he is needed. He notices darkness through a torn pant leg where there should be pink flesh and starts the stories of.....

Cuss - a general practitioner who attempts to get an interview with Griffin. He is the first to realize he actually see emptiness where there should be flesh and bone. He also tells an outrageous story to

Mr. And Mrs. Bunting - Bunting is the vicar. Cuss takes his story to Bunting. The next evening Bunting and his wife hear noise in their house after they have gone to bed. They are able to.....

Other people in the town who appear briefly in the story but have no particular characterization.

Huxter; **Wadgers** the blacksmith; **Jaffers** the village constable; **The mariner** ;**Colonel Adye** chief of Burdock Police

CONFLICT

The story contains both external and internal conflict. In either case, both the protagonist and the antagonist is Griffin himself as he has made himself his own worst enemy. The external conflicts that Griffin causes are between Griffin and various members of the town as his invisibility is gradually discovered. People react with fear and then with terror as Griffin aggravates the situation by lashing out against people as soon as they figure him out. The people accept his existence with surprising lack of suspicion about the possibility of such an occurrence, which may be a lack on the author's part. Once they believe that he exists, the.....

SHORT PLOT SUMMARY (Synopsis)

The plot is simple and straightforward. Griffin, having rendered himself invisible with an earlier experiment, enters a town and sets up a lab in an inn where he works night and day to come up with a formula that will

reverse his invisibility. When he slips up and accidentally reveals himself, he engages in immature and violent actions until he is forced to run and find a new hiding place. As more people become aware of his existence, his situation becomes more perilous. Finally, he stumbles into the home of a former college professor whom he assumes will be interested in his experiments and willing to help him. The doctor, Mr. Kemp, however, reads newspaper accounts of Griffin's insane actions against people in the town and betrays his trust. Griffin is hunted down, caught and killed, whereupon he becomes visible again. The little, inconspicuous victim of some of Griffin's behavior is left with the stolen money and the documents that explain Griffin's experiments. The story closes with the suggestion that Marvel himself might try the experiments if only he could figure them out.

THEMES

- Corruption of morals in the absence of social restriction
- Science without humanity

(Note: see additional theme analysis in Overall Analyses section.)

MOOD

The mood is generally distant as that of a newspaper reporting telling about a strange.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY OF H. G. WELLS

Born September 21, 1866, Herbert George Wells has been called the Father of Science Fiction. His best-known stories are The Time Machine, The Invisible Man, and War of the Worlds, but he wrote over 100 books, among them nearly 50 novels.

Wells had humble origins; he was the son of domestic servants who had become shop keepers. At the age of 17 he left a hated apprentice position and became a pupil/teacher in a small country school. He won a scholarship to the Normal School of Science in London, but never obtained his degree. Subsequently, he held the poorest paying teaching positions. He tried his hand at a novel, but the first one was not well accepted.

When a hemorrhage threatened his life, Wells abandoned his unsuccessful marriage as well as his poor paying job and ran off with one of his students whom he later married. Out of necessity, he turned to journalism and short story writing. Within a year he wrote The Time Machine, a novel that has been described as a "resounding success." A few years later he wrote War of the Worlds (1897), his most famous work. He was soon able to give up journalism and devote himself to becoming a full time novelist.

In 1901, Wells turned to advocating social ideals and became involved with the.....

LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In the late 1800's, England had some rather stuffy notions about humanity and social behavior in general. Wells' intention in *The Invisible Man* was to experiment with the limits to which a person might go if he/she were released from the bonds of social restriction. Wells himself attended the Normal School of Science in London where he was impressed with a romantic conception of science, which is subsequently reflected in his writing. The Time Machine, The War of the Worlds, and The Invisible Man were all written in the style of what

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 1. The Strange Man's Arrival

Summary

A stranger arrives in Bramblehurst railway station. He is bundled from head to foot with only the tip of his nose showing. He enters the Coach & Horses Inn and demands a room and a fire. Mrs. Hall, the owner prepares a supper for him and offers to take his coat and hat, but he refuses to take them off. When he finally removes the hat, his entire head is swathed in a bandage. Mrs. Hall thinks he has endured some accident. She tries to get him

to talk about himself, but he is taciturn with her, although not particularly rude.

Notes

This introduction to the Invisible Man through the eyes of the town people is actually about midway through his own story. He has already gone from place to place trying to keep his cover and has committed two acts of violence, one against his own father and the other against the proprietor of a costume shop whom he tied and gagged in order to be able to steal clothing and money. Nevertheless, his intention at this point is simply to find a quiet place and work as quickly as possible to find an antidote to the invisibility. The primary thread of the story—that of the growing rumors and suspicions, which eventually contribute to his exposure—is begun.

CHAPTER II. Mr. Teddy Henfrey's First Impressions

Summary

Teddy Henfrey, a clock repairman, comes to the inn for tea. Mrs. Hall asks him to “repair the clock” in the stranger’s room. Teddy deliberately takes as long as he can with the clock, taking it apart and reassembling it for no reason. The stranger finally gets him to hurry up and leave. Offended, Teddy talks himself into believing that the stranger is someone of a suspicious nature, perhaps even wanted by the police and is wrapped up to conceal his identity. Teddy runs into Mr. Hall and warns him about the stranger, informing him that a “lot of luggage” will be coming. It would seem that the stranger intends to stay awhile.

Mr. Hall goes home intending to investigate the stranger, but is put off by the short-tempered demeanor of his wife.

Notes

Mrs. Hall, although not a major character, is revealed as rather devious in a harmless sort of way. She really wants to know what the man’s disfigurement is; she assumes he has been in a horrible accident, and the motherly side of her wants to know how to express sympathy. She is a very good innkeeper under the circumstances. While she is not above using Teddy to pry for information, she does not contribute to the spread of rumors. In fact, we are told later that she defends him as long as he is faithful about paying his bill. Teddy is a character typical of the other people of the town. He wants to know the man’s story, and when he is rebuffed for his persistence, he begins to imagine all sorts of things. His imagination soon becomes fact to him, and he spreads his new knowledge to anyone who will listen.

CHAPTER III. The Thousand and One Bottles

Summary

The stranger’s luggage arrives at the inn. Numerous crates fill the deliveryman’s cart, some of them containing bottles packaged in straw. Fearenside, the cartman, owns a dog that starts to growl when the stranger comes down the steps to help with the boxes. The dog jumps for the stranger’s hand, but misses and sinks his teeth in a pant leg. The dog tears open the trouser leg, whereupon the stranger goes quickly back into the inn and to his room.

Concerned about the possibility of injury, Mr. Hall goes to the stranger’s room. He gets a glimpse of what seems like a white mottled face before he is shoved by an unseen force back through the door. The stranger soon reappears at the door, his trousers changed, and gives orders for the rest of his luggage. The stranger unpacks 6 crates of bottles, which he arranges across the windowsill and all the available table and shelf space in the inn’s parlor—a space he seems to have commandeered for himself.

Mrs. Hall enters later to tend to his needs and catches a quick glimpse of him without his glasses. His eyes seem hollow; he quickly puts his glasses on. She starts to complain about the straw on the floor, but he tells her to put it on the bill and to knock before entering his rooms. She points out that he could lock his door if he doesn’t want to be bothered, advice that he takes. He then works behind the locked door all afternoon. At one point,

Mrs. Hall hears him raving about not being able to “go on.” She hears a sound like a bottle being broken. Later she takes him tea and notes the broken glass and a stain on the floor. He again tells her to “put it on the bill.”

Meanwhile Fearenside talks in the beer shop of Iping Hangar. Fearenside says that the stranger is a “black man,” an assumption derived from the absence of “pink flesh” when the trouser leg was ripped open. When reminded of the pink nose, Fearenside claims that the man must therefore be a “piebald,” or a part white, part black creature.

Notes

Fearenside is more observant than even he realizes. Of course, Griffin knows that a close look at his torn pant leg will reveal a “missing” leg, but he also needs to get away from the dog until they can get the animal under control. Subtle differences among characters of the town are beginning to be revealed. Mrs. Hall notices a “hollow” look to the guest’s eyes, an appearance masked by the dark glasses he usually wears. His frustration is over the failure of his experiments; she notes the mess he makes but cleans up after him with minimal complaint when he gives her extra money. Fearenside, on the other hand, liberally discusses the “discoveries” he has made as a result of the brief encounter. Fearenside refers to horses as an example of the “patchy” color that can happen when black and white are mixed.

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Griffin - Griffin is the model of science without humanity. He begins his road to decline in college when he becomes so obsessed with his experiments that he hides his work lest anyone else should receive credit. When he runs out of money, he kills his own father—a crime that makes the rest of his crimes pale in comparison. He goes from scientist to fanatic when he begins to focus all of his attention merely on the concept of invisibility and neglects to think about the consequences of such a condition. He may not have had any intention initially of trying the potion on himself, but the interference of his landlord and prying neighbor lady motivate him to.....

Marvel - Mr. Marvel is the local tramp. He is harmless, eccentric, fat, but not nearly as stupid as Griffin thinks he is. He is smart enough to know when a good thing has happened to him; the stories he tells to the press bring him much attention and sympathy. In the end, he gets to keep all the.....

Kemp - Kemp is referred to as “the doctor,” but his degree seems to be an academic one rather than a medical one. He continues his own study in hopes of being admitted to “the Royal Fellows.” His own experiments and fascination with science enable him to listen sensibly to Griffin, but in.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The plot of the story is very straightforward. It begins in third person as the narrator introduces the Invisible Man midway through his experiences. Once the Man is revealed, Griffin himself takes over and tells how he began his experiments and what happened to him after he had taken the potion. At the end, the point of view once again changes to that of an objective narration.

As Griffin tells his story, one can see that his behavior becomes increasingly reprehensible. In a very logical way, people first in Iping, and then in surrounding towns, become aware of

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

Corruption of Morals in the Absence of Social Restriction -

The narrator uses the Invisible Man to experiment with the depth to which a person can sink when there are no social restrictions to suppress his behavior. When Griffin first kills his father, he excuses it away by saying that the man was a “sentimental fool.” When he takes the potion himself, he endures such pain that he “understands”

why the cat howled so much in the process of becoming invisible. Nevertheless he has no compassion for the cat, for his father or for any of the people he takes advantage of in the course of trying to survive invisibility. On the contrary, he descends from committing atrocities because they are necessary to.....

POINT OF VIEW

The point of view is third person dramatic for the first half of the book. Then it is a.....

STUDY QUESTIONS - BOOK REPORT / ESSAY IDEAS

1. Why does Mrs. Hall tolerate the Invisible Man as long as she does?
2. Why do you think Griffin smashes bottles and swears behind the locked door of his room?
3. How do the speculations of the people in town exemplify human nature?.....

ESSAY TOPICS - BOOK REPORT IDEAS

Research modern scientific discoveries. When has science proceeded without regard to the sanctity of life? Write a paper about the responsibilities of valid research. (Hint: how about animal experimentation, strip coal mining, etc.)

Locate at least one other story that uses the idea of an invisible person. How does that

QUOTES - QUOTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

1.) Page 8. **“Everything was ruddy, shadowy, and indistinct to her, the more so since she had just been lighting the bar lamp, and her eyes were dazzled. but for a second it seemed to her that the man she looked at had an enormous mouth wide open,—a vast and incredible mouth that swallowed the whole of the lower portion of his face.”**

Mrs. Hall has received a glimpse of Griffin’s face. He had to remove the lower part of the bandages in order to eat.

2.) Page 20. **“That marn’s a piebald, Tedd. Black here and white there—in patches. And he’s ashamed of it. He’s a kind of half-breed, and the colour’s come off patchy in places instead of mixing. I’ve heard of such things before. and it’s the common way with horses, as anyone can see.”**

In the tavern, Fearenside and the other men of the village are discussing the identity of the stranger. In the absence of the known, their imaginations create a person who fits what they think they know.....

VOCABULARY WORDS

ambition
caricature
confederate....

END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS

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