

**To Ban or Not to Ban the *Invisible Man*:
A School Board Simulation**

Overview

In September, 2013, the Randolph County School Board received a complaint from the mother of a high school junior regarding the book *Invisible Man*. The School Board initially voted to ban the book from the schools' libraries and curriculum, but after public outcry, reversed the decision later the same month. In this lesson, students will explore themes of First Amendment rights and the freedom to read, while also gaining an active understanding of the roles of School Board members and the responsibilities of active community members, by participating in a School Board simulation where they grapple with the same choice: whether or not to ban *Invisible Man*.

Creation of this curriculum was funded by the **Freedom to Read Foundation's Judith F. Krug Memorial Fund**. For more information about the Freedom to Read Foundation, go to <http://www.ft rf.org/>.



Grades

8-12

Materials

- Pine County Schools news release (fictional), attached
- "Pine County board bans *Invisible Man* from school libraries" article (fictional, but based on Randolph County, NC occurrence), attached
- Summary of *Invisible Man*, attached
- Instructions for School Board Members, attached
 - Note that one of the instruction sheets is for a school board member who is FOR the removal of the book; the other instruction sheet is for a member who is AGAINST the removal of the book (only one student in the School Board group should receive the sheet noting that he/she is AGAINST the ban.)
- Group instructions (4 groups) for presenting citizens: Concerned Parents of Pine County; American Family Group; ACLU; and Pine County 451), attached
- OPTIONAL: Create a Bumper Sticker assignment, attached
- FREE BANNED BOOKS TRADING CARDS FOR NC TEACHERS & CLASSROOMS!
 - This year, thanks to a Judith Krug Memorial Grant from the [Freedom to Read Foundation](http://www.ft rf.org/), Chapel Hill Public Library is able to send out FREE classroom sets of its 2015 Banned Books Trading Cards<<http://chapelhillpubliclibrary.org/txp/?s=News&id=1185>> to educators across the state. If you'd like to order up to 25 sets for use in your classroom, please fill out this form https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1E5n-E0J6iTyl_cyK40fiA6uFIHEu1oIOiCJGC03rkZU/viewform
 - If you have any questions about the Banned Books Trading Card project or have trouble placing your order, please contact, Susan Brown at sbrown2@townofchapelhill.org.
 - See the Consortium's lesson "The Right to Read: Exploring Book Challenges and Bans," which includes a student activity for creating their own trading cards.

Essential Questions

- For what reasons do people challenge books?
- What are some reasons a school board might choose to ban certain books from schools and curriculums?
- Under what circumstances (if any) should a book be removed from a school, school library, and/or a curriculum?
- Does book banning violate the First Amendment? Explain.

- How can/should schools accommodate parents who don't want their children reading a specific book?
- How is the work of a School Board relevant to each of us?
- What are appropriate ways to make your opinion known regarding school issues?

Duration

60-90 minutes

Procedure

BANNED: *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

1. As a warm up, project the attached meeting notice from the Pine County School Board. Have a student volunteer read it out loud and discuss:
 - Before we discuss the content of this release, tell me what you already know about a local government's role and responsibilities in terms of schools. What is the job of a School Board?
 - What information is this announcement sharing?
 - What do you think it means for a book to be "removed?"
 - Do you know anything about *Invisible Man* and/or Ralph Ellison?
 - For what reasons might this book have been removed from Pine County Schools?

Pine County School Board Simulation: What Should the Board Do?

2. Explain to students that the Pine County School Board received a few parental complaints about the novel *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison being taught at Pine County High School. Many of the complaints felt that the content of the book was inappropriate for a high school classroom. Last month, in a 4-1 vote, the Pine County School Board decided to remove the novel *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison in response to those complaints. In the time since the School Board's decision, their ruling has garnered local, state, and national attention, much of it negative. Due to additional complaints from citizens of Pine County, the Board has decided to hold a special meeting to provide citizens with the opportunity to share their opinions on the recent decision to ban the book. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board will hold another vote to decide whether to uphold or reverse their decision. Tell students they will be assuming the roles of the Pine County School Board or various stakeholders to simulate the next Pine County School Board meeting.
3. Divide students into five groups. The group playing the School Board should include 5 students. Provide one student in this group with the "School Board Chair" handout (this student will lead the meeting), three students with the "School Board Member" handout that notes their last vote was "FOR" the removal, and one student with the "School Board Member" handout that notes their last vote was "AGAINST" the removal. The remaining four groups can consist of any number of evenly divided students; these groups will be assuming the roles of various community stakeholders. Provide each group with copies of one of the four attached assignments: Concerned Parents of Pine County; American Family Group; ACLU; and Pine County 451.
4. Also provide each student with a copy of the attached "Pine County board bans *Invisible Man* from school libraries" article and the attached "School Board Meeting Agenda." (Teachers can also provide the attached summary of *Invisible Man* if students are not familiar with the book.) Give students 6-8 minutes to read their instruction sheets and articles silently. Then, summarize the process and answer any questions students may have once you are finished:
 - **School Board:** Under the School Board Chair's leadership, you will spend the next 15 minutes preparing for your School Board meeting. Under the direction of your chair, you will introduce yourselves to one another and share your previous vote regarding the removal of *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. You will then discuss possible pros and cons of banning the book, then review the agenda and anticipate the positions of each citizen group scheduled to present at the next meeting. As a council, create 2-3 follow-up questions to ask each group after their presentation. During the meeting today, you will listen closely to the presentations and based on the arguments presented, make a decision regarding whether or not to stick by your previous decision to ban the book, or reverse your decision and allow the book.

- **Citizen Groups:** You will spend the next 15 minutes developing a presentation to the School Board in which you share your views on the School Board's decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and official reading lists. Your group must create an organized, creative, and motivational presentation that will convince the School Board to support your group's position. Also, you should spend some time thinking about the other citizen groups that are on the agenda and inferring what their stance may be so that you are prepared to respond to anyone who may have an opposing viewpoint. (Point out that it is possible students have been assigned a stance that they personally disagree with. Let the class know they will have an opportunity to share their own opinion of the issue after the simulation.)
5. Allow groups to begin working and circulate around the room to ensure students are on the right track. The simulation is designed to be entirely student lead, with the student playing the Chair leading the meeting. During the preparation time, check in with the Chair to ensure he/she is prepared on what to do. (During the simulation, the teacher should be prepared to assist this student in moving things along if needed, but try to allow the students to have control of the simulation as much as possible.)
 6. Once all groups are ready, arrange the room so that the School Board members are facing the groups of presenters. The teacher should review expected behavior for the simulation, such as:
 - Remain respectful at all times and encourage one another.
 - Assume your assigned role and take the simulation seriously.
 - Listen when others are speaking. Do not discuss your presentation while other groups are presenting.
 - Maintain order and professionalism throughout the hearing, whether you agree with what is being said or not. (No name-calling, eye rolling, smacking teeth, disruptive comments, etc.)
 7. After all groups have presented and been questioned by School Board members, and if time permits, the Chair can call a brief 3 minute break, in which presenting groups can discuss and prepare a 1-2 minute closing statement/summary. If time does not permit, the Chair should thank all presenters for their time and close the public comment section of the meeting. At this point, two options for closing the simulation include:
 - The Chair can lead the Board in an open deliberation regarding the removal of *Invisible Man*. Each Board member would state their current opinion of the removal, discussing which of the presenters affected their opinion. Presenting citizen groups should only listen at this point. This discussion would end with each Board member casting their final vote.
 - If time is limited, the Chair can simply call for each board member to state their vote based on where they currently stand regarding whether to uphold their decision to remove the book or allow it.

Debriefing the Simulation

8. Once the School Board has voted, the Chair should close the meeting by thanking the attendees for their time and participation. Have the class give a round of applause for all of their hard work. Debrief by discussing:
 - School Board members, what factors influenced you to make the decision you made?
 - All participants: Regardless of which opinion you presented, what is your personal opinion regarding whether *Invisible Man* should be banned? Was the School Board justified in banning the book and should they overturn the decision, thus allowing the book in the library and on the reading list? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think people challenge books in hopes of having them removed or restricted from curriculums, reading lists and/or libraries?
 - Do you think removing (banning) books from public schools is constitutional? Why or why not? Does book banning violate the 1st Amendment? Explain.
 - Do you believe it's dangerous to ban books from schools? Why or why not? Can you think of any times when banning or restricting access to a book might make sense?
 - How can/should schools accommodate parents who don't want their children reading a specific book?
9. Inform students that this actually happened in Randolph County, NC in 2013. After a parent complained about *Invisible Man*, the Randolph County School Board voted to remove *Invisible Man* from schools. After a flurry of national press, a large majority of it negative, the School Board reversed its decision a few weeks later.

(Additional details to share with students can be found at

<http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2013/09/randolph-county-board-education-lifts-ban-invisible-man.>)

Discuss:

- What did it take on the part of the community for the School Board to both ban and then allow Invisible Man?
- Why is being an informed, active community member important?
- Why is the work of a School Board particularly relevant to each of you? Given this relevance, how many of you have been to a School Board meeting and why?
- Why is it important that you and your family be informed citizens and stay apprised of the decisions School Board members are considering?
- Would you want to be a School Board member who makes decisions like these? Why or why not?
- What are appropriate ways to make your opinion known regarding school issues? (Make sure to highlight choices such as writing a letter, signing up to speak at a Board hearing, making an organized and mature presentation, etc.)

10. Optional: As a culminating activity, instruct students to create a bumper sticker (assignment sheet is attached.)



News Release from the Pine County School Board

The Pine County School Board will hold a special School Board meeting to provide parents, students, and citizens with an opportunity to publicly comment on the School Board's decision to remove the novel *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison from the school district's libraries and official summer and supplemental reading lists.

This special session will take place on February 1 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of Pine County High School, 5000 Cone Street.

Citizens who wish to speak must sign up outside the auditorium prior to the meeting between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Pine County board bans 'Invisible Man' from school libraries

By Joseph Heller, Pine County Courier

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison is banned from the shelves of Pine County Schools libraries. By a 4-1 margin, the Pine County Board of Education voted Monday night, at its regular meeting held at Pine County High School, to remove all copies of the book from school libraries. The action stems from a Pine County High School parent's complaint about the book. Committees at both the school and district levels recommended it not be removed.

The book, originally published in 1952, addresses many of the social and intellectual issues facing African-Americans in the first half of the 20th century. It was one of three books from which rising Pine County High School juniors could choose for summer reading for the 2013-14 school year. The others on the list were "Black Like Me" by John Howard Griffin and "Passing" by Nella Larsen; honors students had to choose two books.

All board members had been supplied with copies of the book last month to read.

One Board member asked if everyone had read the book, stating, "It was a hard read." Another who voted in favor of the book's removal said, "I didn't find any literary value." He also objected to the language in the book. "I'm for not allowing it to be available.

Another Board member asked if there were other options to which Herbert George Wells, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, replied that there were other choices. He also explained that the book is on the N.C. Department of Public Instruction's list of suggested supplemental works for high school students.

It was at this point that a Board member made the motion to ban the book, which passed.

The board action was prompted by a complaint about the book from a parent of a PCHS 11th-grader. The parent submitted a request for reconsideration of instructional media form, which detailed, in a 12-page supplemental document, reasons for the book's removal.

The parent stated, in part, "The narrator writes in the first person, emphasizing his individual experiences and his feelings about the events portrayed in his life. This novel is not so innocent; instead, this book is filthier, too much for teenagers. You must respect all religions and point of views when it comes to the parents and what they feel is age appropriate for their young children to read, without their knowledge. This book is freely in your library for them to read." Parson also objected to the type of language used in the book and its sexual content.

A school-based, six-member media advisory committee met, according to board policy, and recommended it not be removed from the library.

A 10-member District Media Advisory Committee also met, agreeing with the school-level group's decision. According to its recommendation, "the committee appreciated the parent's concern for their child and the interest taken in their education. The District Media Advisory committee unanimously agreed that the book does relate directly to curriculum and PCHS should keep the book on the shelf and as a literature piece for instruction."



Pine County School Board Meeting Agenda

I. Welcome

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Hearing on Pine County School Board's Decision to Remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and official reading lists.

Concerned Parents of Pine County	3 – 5 minutes
<i>Questions from School Board</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>
ACLU of North Carolina	3 – 5 minutes
<i>Questions from School Board</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>
American Family Association	3 – 5 minutes
<i>Questions from School Board</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>
Pine County 451	3 – 5 minutes
<i>Questions from School Board</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>

IV. Open deliberation & vote by School Board

School Board Instructions
SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

During tonight’s School Board meeting, the Board will hear from various groups of community members regarding whether the Board should uphold or reverse the previous decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists.

As the CHAIR of the Board, you will be responsible for leading tonight’s meeting and keeping order, as well as expressing your own opinions regarding the issue. As you listen to citizen opinions and the thoughts of your fellow Board members, your responsibility is to lead the School Board in making a decision for the common good of Pine County students, parents, and citizens.

Your last vote:

At the last meeting, you voted **FOR** the removal of *Invisible Man* from all Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. At this meeting, you can decide whether to change your mind, or uphold your previous decision.

Instructions:

1. Review all the materials provided. As you read the “Summary of *Invisible Man*” handout, create a two-column chart noting why someone might support the book being banned in one column, and why someone might support it being included in the curriculum in the other column.
2. When everyone is ready, as the CHAIR, instruct each Board member to share how they previously voted regarding the removal of *Invisible Man*, then share how you also voted. Discuss the following questions as a group:
 - Why do you think people would support the removal of this book?
 - Why do you think people would oppose the removal of this book?
3. Together, review the agenda and think about each of the citizen groups presenting to you today. Lead the Board in discussing which position each group may take on the issue. (At this point, this is just “guess work.”) As a Board, create 2-3 follow-up questions to ask each group after their presentation. (These questions may change based on what you hear in the actual presentations later.)
4. Once it is time for the School Board meeting to begin, YOU, as the Chair, will:
 - Call the meeting to order by greeting the council members and welcoming the citizens in attendance.
 - Lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - Review the purpose of today’s meeting (to reconsider the Boards previous decision to ban *Invisible Man*.)
 - Follow the meeting agenda that you received and call each group up to present. (Each group will have up to 5 minutes to present to the Board. You should keep track of the time to ensure groups do not go over.)
 - After each presentation, open the floor for questions so that School Board members can question the presenting group. (You and the Board may refer to the questions you previously created, or ask questions based on new information you heard.) Remember, you need to gather all of the information you can in order to make an informed decision. (Again, make sure each group is questioned for no more than 2 minutes.)
5. Once all groups have presented, as the Chair, thank all presenters for their time, and begin an open School Board session in which you and your fellow members deliberate whether to uphold or rescind your decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. At the conclusion of the discussion, you should call for a vote.

School Board Instructions:
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

During tonight's School Board meeting, the Board will hear from various groups of community members regarding whether the Board should uphold or reverse its previous decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. As you listen to citizen opinions and the thoughts of your fellow Board members, your responsibility is to make a decision for the common good of Pine County students, parents, and citizens.

Your last vote:

At the last meeting, you voted **FOR** the removal of *Invisible Man* from all Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. At this meeting, you can decide whether to change your mind, or uphold your previous decision.

Instructions:

1. Review all the materials provided. As you read the "Summary of *Invisible Man*" handout, create a two-column chart noting why someone might support the book being banned in one column, and why someone might support it being included in the curriculum in the other column.
2. In a few minutes, the Chair of the Board will begin the meeting. You should be prepared to share how you previously voted regarding the removal of *Invisible Man*. The Chair will lead you in discussing the following questions as a group:
 - Why do you think people would support the removal of this book?
 - Why do you think people would oppose the removal of this book?
3. Together, you will then review the agenda and think about each of the citizen groups presenting to you today. Think about which position each group may take on the issue. (At this point, this is just "guess work.") As a Board, you will create 2-3 follow-up questions to ask each group after their presentation. (These questions may change based on what you hear in the actual presentations later.)
4. Once it is time for the School Board meeting to begin, the chair will call the meeting to order, lead you in the Pledge of Allegiance, and call each group up to present. Listen carefully and take notes regarding each group's position and points. After each presentation, the Chair will open the floor for questions, at which point you can question the presenting group. (You may refer to the questions you previously created, or ask questions based on new information you heard.) Remember, you need to gather all of the information you can in order to make an informed decision for the good of the entire community.
5. Once all groups have presented, the Chair will begin an open deliberation session in which you and your fellow members will discuss whether to uphold or rescind your previous decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair will call for a vote.

School Board Instructions:
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

During tonight's School Board meeting, the Board will hear from various groups of community members regarding whether the Board should uphold or reverse its previous decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. As you listen to citizen opinions and the thoughts of your fellow Board members, your responsibility is to make a decision for the common good of Pine County students, parents, and citizens.

Your last vote:

At the last meeting, you voted **AGAINST** the removal of *Invisible Man* from all Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. At this meeting, you can decide whether to change your mind, or uphold your previous decision.

Instructions:

1. Review all the materials provided. As you read the "Summary of *Invisible Man*" handout, create a two-column chart noting why someone might support the book being banned in one column, and why someone might support it being included in the curriculum in the other column.
2. In a few minutes, the Chair of the Board will begin the meeting. You should be prepared to share how you previously voted regarding the removal of *Invisible Man*. The Chair will lead you in discussing the following questions as a group:
 - Why do you think people would support the removal of this book?
 - Why do you think people would oppose the removal of this book?
3. Together, you will then review the agenda and think about each of the citizen groups presenting to you today. Think about which position each group may take on the issue. (At this point, this is just "guess work.") As a Board, you will create 2-3 follow-up questions to ask each group after their presentation. (These questions may change based on what you hear in the actual presentations later.)
4. Once it is time for the School Board meeting to begin, the chair will call the meeting to order, lead you in the Pledge of Allegiance, and call each group up to present. Listen carefully and take notes regarding each group's position and points. After each presentation, the Chair will open the floor for questions, at which point you can question the presenting group. (You may refer to the questions you previously created, or ask questions based on new information you heard.) Remember, you need to gather all of the information you can in order to make an informed decision for the good of the entire community.
5. Once all groups have presented, the Chair will begin an open deliberation session in which you and your fellow members will discuss whether to uphold or rescind your previous decision to remove *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and summer reading lists. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair will call for a vote.

Concerned Parents of Pine County (CPPC)

After seeing that *Invisible Man* was listed a summer reading choice for 11th graders, you and several other parents of Pine County students got together and formed the group **Concerned Parents of Pine County (CPPC)**. The group's goal is to get the book *Invisible Man* and other books you all feel are inappropriate for teens removed from Pine County Schools. Initially, the CPPC petitioned Pine County High School itself to remove the book, but a panel selected by the school decided against removal. Not ready to give up, the CPPC took the case to the Pine County School Board. Here, you were successful in convincing the School Board to go against the school's decision and to remove the book from Pine County Schools.

At today's meeting, your goal is to convince School Board to **UPHOLD** the decision to **remove** *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and reading lists.

Some arguments to consider:

- The book's content, including scenes of sexual abuse and incest, are inappropriate for high school students.
- This book contains inappropriate language, including racial language like the "n-word."
- This book is freely available in the high school's library where any student can check it out.
- Parents should have the right to say what their children can and can't read at school. Requiring this book be an option for summer reading infringes upon that choice.

Prepare for the Meeting

1. Work together to develop a 3-5 minute presentation for the School Board. Your presentation should:
 - a. Begin with an introduction and overview of your stance regarding the removal of *Invisible Man* from Pine County Schools.
 - b. Answer the following questions in your presentation...
 - Why do you want School Board Members to uphold the book removal?
 - How will the removal of the book improve life in Pine County? Who will benefit and how?
 - How will reversing the former decision and keeping the book negatively impact Pine County students and families?
 - Why should the School Board vote according to your beliefs over those opposing you?
 - c. End with a convincing conclusion that will make the council remember your presentation.
2. As you develop your presentation, consider what the other citizen presenters might say in their presentations. Be prepared to argue why voting to uphold the removal will have more of a positive impact on Pine County than what those opposing you are requesting.
3. Anticipate what questions Board members might ask you so that you are prepared to answer.
4. Select 1-2 group members to present your stance to School Board members. The rest of the group will be responsible for assisting in answering questions the School Board will ask you after your presentation is finished. Remember, your goal is to get the School Board to **UPHOLD the removal of *Invisible Man***. Good luck!

American Family Group (AFG)

Your group represents the **American Family Group**, and your goal is to convince School Board to **UPHOLD** the decision to **remove** *Invisible Man* from Pine County School libraries and reading lists.

Background on the AFA:

The mission of the American Family Group is to inform, equip, and activate individuals to strengthen the moral foundations of American culture. The AFG “acts to stop wickedness by exposing the works of darkness, promote virtue by upholding in culture that which is family-friendly, and motivate people to take a stand on cultural and moral issues at the local, state and national levels.”

Some arguments to consider:

- This book does not illustrate the just and moral America that we want to promote as a society. For example, the book contains a scene in which a father abuses his daughter. There is also a great deal of sexual innuendo and discussions of prostitution. There is no reason to expose youth to such filth.
 - This book has no literary value. It is not written well and it difficult to understand.
 - American families should not be forced to have their children exposed to un-American ideas that they disagree with. Allowing books such as this takes away parental freedom and unjustly gives power to the schools to promote biased views.
1. Work together to develop a 3-5 minute presentation to School Board. Your presentation should:
 - a. Begin with an introduction and overview of your stance regarding the removal of *Invisible Man* from Pine County Schools.
 - b. Answer the following questions in your presentation...
 - Why do you want School Board Members to uphold the book removal?
 - How will the removal of the book improve life in Pine County? Who will benefit and how?
 - How will reversing the former decision and keeping the book negatively impact Pine County students and families?
 - Why should the School Board vote according to your beliefs over those opposing you?
 - c. End with a convincing conclusion that will make the Board remember your presentation
 2. As you develop your presentation, consider what the other citizen presenters might say in their presentations. Be prepared to argue why voting to uphold the removal will have more of a positive impact on Pine County than what those opposing you are requesting.
 3. Anticipate what questions School Board members might have of you so that you are prepared to answer.
 4. Select 1-2 group members to present your stance to School Board members. The rest of the group will be responsible for assisting in answering questions the School Board will ask you after your presentation is finished. Remember, your goal is to get the School Board to **UPHOLD the removal of *Invisible Man***. Good luck!

ACLU of North Carolina

Your group represents the **ACLU of North Carolina**, and your goal is to convince School Board to **OVERTURN** the decision to remove *Invisible Man* and instead, **keep the book** in the Pine County School libraries and on reading lists.

Background on the ACLU of NC:

The ACLU of North Carolina (ACLU-NC) is the North Carolina state affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union. The North Carolina affiliate of the ACLU was founded in 1965, is based in Raleigh, and has grown to approximately 10,000 members and supporters statewide. Their mission is to preserve and defend the guarantees of individual liberty found in the North Carolina Constitution and the US Constitution, with particular emphasis on freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of religion, equal protection under law for all people, the right to privacy, the right to due process of law, and the right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.

Some arguments to consider:

- The freedom to read is just as essential to a healthy democracy as the freedom of speech and all other rights protected by the U.S. Constitution. Banning a book severely restricts such rights.
 - Government censorship has no place in a free society. If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.
1. Work together to develop a 3-5 minute presentation to School Board. Your presentation should:
 - a. Begin with an introduction and overview of your stance regarding the removal of *Invisible Man* from Pine County Schools.
 - b. Answer the following questions in your presentation...
 - Why do you want School Board Members to overturn the book removal?
 - How will keeping the book in the library and on the reading list improve life in Pine County? Who will benefit and how?
 - How will maintaining the former decision and banning the book negatively impact Pine County students and families?
 - Why should the School Board vote according to your beliefs over those opposing you?
 - c. End with a convincing conclusion that will make the Board remember your presentation
 2. As you develop your presentation, consider what the other citizen presenters might say in their presentations. Be prepared to argue why overturning the removal and allowing the book will have more of a positive impact on Pine County than what those opposing you are requesting.
 3. Anticipate what questions School Board members might have of you so that you are prepared to answer.
 4. Select 1-2 group members to present your stance to School Board members. The rest of the group will be responsible for assisting in answering questions the School Board will ask you after your presentation is finished. Remember, your goal is to get the School Board to **OVERTURN the removal of *Invisible Man***. Good luck!

Pine County 451

Your group represents the organization Pine County 451 (PC 451), and your goal is to convince School Board to **OVERTURN** the decision to remove *Invisible Man* and instead, **keep the book** in the Pine County School libraries and on reading lists.

Background on the PC 451:

Pine County 451 is a group of concerned citizens and parents that oppose government censorship. Their name comes from the book *Fahrenheit 451*, a novel that presents a future American society where books are outlawed and "firemen" burn any that are found. The group was formed after hearing that the Pine County School Board removed *Invisible Man* from Pine County Schools.

Some arguments to consider:

- *Invisible Man* is an American classic. It won a National Book Award when it was published in 1953. It was also named one of the 100 most important books of the 20th century by *Time* magazine and *the Modern Library*.
 - The rest of the state and country finds it ridiculous that the School Board is banning books in the 21st century. Actions like this make our community comparable to Hitler and the Nazis. We could lose out on tourism dollars if people refuse to visit Pine County as a response to the Board's decision, not to mention we look like we are living in the Dark Ages.
 - Parents who object to assigned texts still have the option to choose an alternative reading assignment.
1. Work together to develop a 3-5 minute presentation to School Board. Your presentation should:
 - a. Begin with an introduction and overview of your stance regarding the removal of *Invisible Man* from Pine County Schools.
 - b. Answer the following questions in your presentation...
 - Why do you want School Board Members to overturn the book removal?
 - How will keeping the book in the library and on the reading list improve life in Pine County? Who will benefit and how?
 - How will maintaining the former decision and banning the book negatively impact Pine County students and families?
 - Why should the School Board vote according to your beliefs over those opposing you?
 - c. End with a convincing conclusion that will make the council remember your presentation
 2. As you develop your presentation, consider what the other citizen presenters might say in their presentations. Be prepared to argue why voting to overturn the removal will have more of a positive impact on Pine County than what those opposing you are requesting.
 3. Anticipate what questions School Board members might have of you so that you are prepared to answer.
 4. Select 1-2 group members to present your stance to School Board members. The rest of the group will be responsible for assisting in answering questions the School Board will ask you after your presentation is finished. Remember, your goal is to get the School Board to **OVERTURN the removal of *Invisible Man***. Good luck!

Summary of *Invisible Man*

Invisible Man is the story of a young, college-educated black man struggling to survive and succeed in a racially divided society that refuses to see him as a human being. Told in the form of a first-person narrative, *Invisible Man* traces the nameless narrator's physical and psychological journey from blind ignorance to enlightened awareness — or, according to the author, "from Purpose to Passion to Perception" — through a series of flashbacks in the forms of dreams and memories. Set in the U.S. during the pre-Civil Rights era when segregation laws barred black Americans from enjoying the same basic human rights as their white counterparts, the novel opens in the South (Greenwood, South Carolina), although the majority of the action takes place in the North (Harlem, New York).

In the Prologue, the narrator — speaking to us from his underground hideout in the basement (coal cellar) of a whites-only apartment building — reminisces about his life as an invisible man. Now in his 40s, he recalls a time when he was a naïve young man, eager to become a renowned educator and orator. The narrator begins his story by recalling his high school graduation speech, which attracted the attention of the white school superintendent who invites him to give the same speech at a local hotel to the town's leading white citizens. But when he arrives at the hotel, the narrator is forced to participate in a brutal blindfolded boxing match (the "battle royal") with nine of his classmates, an event, which, he discovers, is part of the evening's entertainment for the "smoker" (a kind of stag party). The entertainment also includes a sensuous dance by a naked blonde woman, and the boys are forced to watch. The boxing match is followed by a humiliating event: The boys must scramble for what appear to be gold coins on an electrified rug (but, which turn out to be only worthless brass tokens). Then the narrator — now bruised and bleeding — is finally allowed to give his speech in front of the drunken white men who largely ignore him until he accidentally uses the phrase "social equality" instead of "social responsibility" to describe the role of blacks in America. At the end of his speech — despite his degrading and humiliating ordeal — the narrator proudly accepts his prize: a calfskin briefcase containing a scholarship to the state college for Negroes.

That night, the narrator's dead grandfather — a former slave — appears in a dream, ordering him to open the briefcase and look inside. Instead of the scholarship, the briefcase contains a note that reads, "Keep This Nigger Boy Running." The dream sets the stage. For the next 20 years of his life, the narrator stumbles blindly through life, never stopping to question why he is always kept running by people — both black and white — who profess to guide and direct him, but who ultimately exploit him and betray his trust.

Focusing on the events of one fateful day, the narrator then recalls his college days. Assigned to chauffeur Mr. Norton, a prominent white visiting trustee, around the campus, the narrator follows Mr. Norton's orders and takes him to visit two sites in the nearby black neighborhood — the cabin of Jim Trueblood, a local sharecropper, and the Golden Day, a disreputable bar/half-way house for shell-shocked World War I veterans. The narrator, however, is expelled from his beloved college for taking Mr. Norton to these places and sent to New York, armed with seven letters from his dean (Dr. Bledsoe). The letters, he believed, are letters of recommendation, but are in reality letters confirming his expulsion.

Arriving in New York City, the narrator is amazed by what he perceives to be unlimited freedom for blacks. He is especially intrigued by a black West Indian man (later identified as Ras the Exhorter) whom he first encounters addressing a group of men and women on the streets of Harlem, urging them to work together to unite their black community. But the narrator's excitement soon turns to

disillusionment as he discovers that the North presents the same barriers to black achievement as the South.

Realizing that he cannot return to college, the narrator accepts a job at a paint factory famous for its optic white paint, unaware that he is one of several blacks hired to replace white workers out on strike. Nearly killed in a factory explosion, the narrator subsequently undergoes a grueling ordeal at the paint factory hospital, where he finds himself the object of a strange experiment by the hospital's white doctors.

Following his release from the hospital, the narrator finds refuge in the home of Mary Rambo, a kind and generous black woman, who feeds him and nurses him back to health. Although grateful to Mary, whom he acknowledges as his only friend, the narrator — anxious to earn a living and *do something* with his life — eventually leaves Mary to join the Brotherhood, a political organization that professes to be dedicated to achieving equality for all people. Under the guidance of the Brotherhood and its leader, Brother Jack, the narrator becomes an accomplished speaker and leader of the Harlem District. He also has a brief liaison with Sybil, a frustrated white woman who is attracted to him because she sees him as the embodiment of the stereotypical black man.

But after the tragic death of his friend Tod Clifton, a charismatic young black "Brother" who is shot by a white policeman, the narrator becomes disillusioned with the disparity between what the organization preaches and what its leaders practice. As a result, he decides to leave the Brotherhood, headquartered in an affluent section of Manhattan, and returns to Harlem where he is confronted by Ras the Exhorter (now Ras the Destroyer) who accuses him of betraying the black community. To escape the wrath of Ras and his men, the narrator disguises himself by donning a hat and dark glasses. In disguise, he is repeatedly mistaken for someone named Rinehart, a con man who uses his *invisibility* to his own advantage.

The narrator discovers that the Harlem community has erupted in violence. Eager to demonstrate that he is no longer part of the Brotherhood, the narrator allows himself to be drawn into the violence and chaos of the Harlem riot and participates in the burning of a Harlem tenement. Later, as he flees the scene of the burning building and tries to find his way back to Mary's, two white men with baseball bats pursue him. To escape his assailants, he leaps into a manhole, which lands him in his underground hideout.

For the next several days the sick and delusional narrator suffers horrific nightmares in which he is captured and castrated by a group of men led by Brother Jack. Finally able to let go of his painful past — symbolized by the various items in his briefcase — the narrator discovers that writing down his experiences enables him to release his hatred and rediscover his love of life.

Source: <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/i/invisible-man/book-summary>



Create a Bumper Sticker

Assignment: Based on your participation in the Pine County School Board simulation, create a bumper sticker either supporting or opposing the School Boards ban of *Invisible Man*. The bumper sticker should represent your personal opinion and not the option you were assigned to present. You may also choose to create a general bumper sticker addressing related themes such as First Amendment rights and the freedom to read. The bumper sticker must contain the following:

The Bumper Sticker

Possible Points

- / 20 Points The bumper sticker must contain an original slogan, word, or phrase that expresses an attitude about the School Board's ban of *Invisible Man*, or about related themes such as the freedom to read or the First Amendment. The slogan must be an expression that is effective and convincing to its intended audience.
- / 20 Points The bumper sticker must contain an appropriate visual image or symbol.
- / 10 Points The overall work must be creative and clearly show to its viewer that great effort was put forth in creating and completing the bumper sticker.

The Paragraph

You must also write a paragraph explaining your bumper sticker and its goal/purpose. The paragraph must:

Possible Points

- / 20 Points The paragraph must explain your opinion on the School Boards initial ban on *Invisible Man*.
- / 20 Points The paragraph should explain the meaning of the bumper sticker (i.e., why you chose the text you did as well as the visual image.) You should also explain the target audience. (Example: School Board members, local citizens, apathetic teens, etc.)
- / 10 Points The paragraph needs to be written in legible pen or typed. You must use complete sentences that connect ideas to receive full credit for the assignment.

/ 100 Points Total Points for this Assignment

Bumper Sticker Example: