

Ralph Ellison's The Invisible Man:

An extremely powerful story of a young Southern Negro, from his late high school days through three years of college to his life in Harlem.

His early training prepared him for a life of humility before white men, but through injustices-large and small, he came to realize that he was an "invisible man". People saw in him only a reflection of their preconceived ideas of what he was, denied his individuality, and ultimately did not see him at all. This theme, which has implications far beyond the obvious racial parallel, is skillfully handled. The incidents of the story are wholly absorbing. The boy's dismissal from college because of an innocent mistake, his shocked reaction to the anonymity of the North and to Harlem, his nightmare experiences on a one-day job in a paint factory and in the hospital, his lightning success as the Harlem leader of a communistic organization known as the Brotherhood, his involvement in black versus white and black versus black clashes and his disillusion and understanding of his invisibility- all climax naturally in scenes of violence and riot, followed by a retreat which is both literal and figurative. Parts of this experience may have been told before, but never with such freshness, intensity and power.

This is Ellison's first novel, but he has complete control of his story and his style. Watch it.

Source: Kirkus Reviews

Michael Doane's The Crossing on Reedsy Discovery:

In Doane's debut novel, a young man embarks on a journey of self-discovery with surprising results.

An unnamed protagonist (The Narrator) is dealing with heartbreak. His love, determined to see the world, sets out for Portland, Oregon. But he's a small-town boy who hasn't traveled much. So, the Narrator mourns her loss and hides from life, throwing himself into rehabbing an old motorcycle. Until one day, he takes a leap; he packs his bike and a few belongings and heads out to find the Girl.

Following in the footsteps of Jack Kerouac and William Least Heat-Moon, Doane offers a coming of age story about a man finding himself on the backroads of America. Doane's a gifted writer with fluid prose and insightful observations, using The Narrator's personal interactions to illuminate the diversity of the United States.

The Narrator initially sticks to the highways, trying to make it to the West Coast as quickly as possible. But a hitchhiker named Duke convinces him to get off the beaten path and enjoy the ride. "There's not a place that's like any other," [39] Dukes contends, and The Narrator realizes he's right. Suddenly, the trip is about the journey, not just the destination. The Narrator ditches

his truck and traverses the deserts and mountains on his bike. He destroys his phone, cutting off ties with his past and living only in the moment.

As he crosses the country, The Narrator connects with several unique personalities whose experiences and views deeply impact his own. Duke, the complicated cowboy and drifter, who opens The Narrator's eyes to a larger world. Zoey, the waitress in Colorado who opens his heart and reminds him that love can be found in this big world. And Rosie, The Narrator's sweet landlady in Portland, who helps piece him back together both physically and emotionally.

This supporting cast of characters is excellent. Duke, in particular, is wonderfully nuanced and complicated. He's a throwback to another time, a man without a cell phone who reads Sartre and sleeps under the stars. Yet he's also a grifter with a "love 'em and leave 'em" attitude that harms those around him. It's fascinating to watch The Narrator wrestle with Duke's behavior, trying to determine which to model and which to discard.

Doane creates a relatable protagonist in The Narrator, whose personal growth doesn't erase his faults. His willingness to hit the road with few resources is admirable, and he's prescient enough to recognize the jealousy of those who cannot or will not take the leap. His encounters with new foods, places, and people broaden his horizons. Yet his immaturity and selfishness persist. He tells Rosie she's been a good mother to him but chooses to ignore the continuing concern from his own parents as he effectively disappears from his old life.

Despite his flaws, it's a pleasure to accompany The Narrator on his physical and emotional journey. The unexpected ending is a fitting denouement to an epic and memorable road trip.

Source: Reedsy Discovery