



[King of the Bingo Game](#), by Ralph Ellison

In A Nutshell

Ralph Ellison is one of the best-known African-American writers, famous for his apolitical approach to the black experience in America. Although he was originally a music major in college, he received widespread critical acclaim later on in life for his novel *Invisible Man*, published in its entirety in 1952.

"King of the Bingo Game" was published in 1944, and it was the last piece Ellison published before releasing *Invisible Man*. The story focuses on a southern black man attempting to win a bingo game in order to save the woman he loves. Scholars have said that "King of the Bingo Game" marks Ellison's artistic maturity, and typically view the story as a study for *Invisible Man*. "King of the Bingo Game" bears many of the same hallmarks as Ellison's later novel: a nameless, southern black protagonist, surrealist touches, and similar character arcs. You should Shmoop *Invisible Man* if you want to learn more about Ellison's novel.

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- 1 What might "King of the Bingo Game" look like as a full-length novel? Why might Ellison have chosen to use the short story form instead?
- 2 Is "King of the Bingo Game" applicable to types of oppression other than racism?
- 3 Do you understand the story as being ultimately optimistic or pessimistic? What makes you think so?

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