Never Let Me Go
(By Kazuo Ishiguro)

Ms. Sharpe / ENG4U
Dystopian Genre

Dystopian Literature

• When we think about the dystopian novel, what first comes to mind is often George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*.

• Published in 1949; he prophesied the advent of a flawless totalitarian society, in which the individual is of literally no significance.

• The critic Bernard Richards once said, “dystopias are useful; they warn us about what might happen.”
DYSTOPIAN GENRE

- The dystopian novel is a comforter to the human psyche; we like to read about death and corruption, as long as we know that it can't happen to us. Or do we?
- Could we all awaken one morning to find our bank accounts mysteriously cancelled? The world a changed, oppressive place? Maybe, and perhaps it is this that compels us to read dystopias; they provide a spark of danger in our otherwise mundane lives.
TYPES OF DYSTOPIA

Two Main Types of Dystopias:

1. Nasty Things Happen but Everything Turns out Right.

2. Nasty Things Happen but Despite Everyone's Best Efforts the Establishment Wins.

*most authors choose this one
NEVER LET ME GO

- Mixed Genre
  - Dystopian
  - Blends psychological realism with Science Fiction
  - Alternative History

- Set in a slightly skewed version of contemporary England, in which people are produced to provide ‘donations’ to the general public.

- Follows Kathy H and her childhood at Hailsham school...

(film trailer link)
AUTHOR: KAZUO ISHIGURO

- Born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1954 and moved to England when he was six years old. Despite living in England for the majority of his life, Ishiguro remained in touch with his native roots by speaking Japanese at home; he once said his love of writing began as a means to preserve memories of Japan, which he finally returned to in 1989.
- Worked as a social worker before developing a career in writing.
- Each of his first three novels won awards. His third, *The Remains of the Day*, won the Booker Prize, and *Never Let Me Go* won various critical acclaims as well. Ishiguro is known for writing novels about self-deception, regret, and personal reflection.
- Was named Order of the British Empire for his contributions to literature in 1995.
The book’s setting in time is vague and foggy. The front piece states the main events of the book take place in England in the 1990’s but it jumps around from past to present and there is no specific timeline or events alluding to a moment in history. At one point, it is mentioned that the “great breakthroughs in science” happened “after the war, early fifties” but it, nevertheless, is a time when human cloning has been developed and widely adopted, blurring an exact, realistic time period even more.

The book takes place in England where Ishiguro was raised all his life.

Ishiguro worked as a social worker for sometime and the narrator, Kathy, plays the role of a “carer” in the book.
PLOT OVERVIEW

Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were once students at a mysterious boarding school named Hailsham for “special” children.

The story is told form the perspective of Kathy as she looks back on the main events of her life with Ruth and Tommy in an attempt to understand her existence.
CHARACTER LIST

- Kathy
- Ruth
- Tommy
- Miss Lucy
- Miss Emily
- Madame
- Miss Geraldine
- Christie
- Rodney
- Laura
- Moira
- Henry
- Keffers
PART 1 - CHILDHOOD

Kathy introduces herself as an exceptional “carer”. She tells how none of her patients have ever been classified as “agitated” and how her good work has given her many privileges, such as being able to choose the donors she cares for. This is how Ruth and Tommy reenter her life 10 years after their last meeting. She begins to reflect on their lives together, beginning at Hailsham to when she becomes their carers.

Kathy attributed the bullying of Tommy to the fact that he never entered anything in the Exchanges. The Exchange was an event Hailsham students participated in several times a year, where they would submit works of art to be seen and hopefully bought, with tokens, by other students to be kept in a “collection”. An even greater honor was to have one’s work be taken away by Madame to something called The Gallery. Tommy, however, lacked the creative bug and never had anything to share at these Exchanges and it was because of this, Kathy believed, the other students treated him badly.

Sometime after Tommy’s tantrum and accidental assault of Kathy, she notices a change in him. Suddenly, he can control his temper and, without the probability of getting a rise out of him, the other kids begin to leave him alone. Kathy questions him about this sudden change, and Tommy says its all because one guardian (teacher) named Miss Lucy simply told him “It’s alright to not be creative” and that the students at Hailsham “aren’t being taught enough”. Kathy is confused by this and tells Tommy it must be “rubbish”.
PART 1 CHILDHOOD (CON’T)

Kathy had purchased a tape called Songs After Dark by Judy Bridgewater at a Sale and she was extremely fond of one song called Never Let Me Go. This song, Kathy imagined, was about a woman that could not have babies and then, miraculously, she does and she sings “never let me go” to that baby. Kathy was imagining this one afternoon, as she danced around her dorm, holding a pillow baby to her chest, when she realized she was being watched by Madame. Strangely, Madame was staring at her and weeping. Kathy’s tape disappeared soon after that, and Ruth, knowing it meant a lot to Kathy, tried to find but never did.

Kathy then skips forward to her last year at Hailsham, when she and the others are around 16 years old. One day, Miss Lucy overhears a group a boys talking about what they want to be when they are older and she snaps and tells the students exactly what they really are and exactly what they will do with their lives- clones made to give vital organs to actual human beings in need.

It is revealed that Tommy and Ruth had been a couple for sometime but were currently separated and many predicted Kathy to be the “likely successor”, although she did not understand why. Sex amongst the students begins to become common, as they cannot get pregnant, and the whole idea becomes complicated for Kathy.

Miss Lucy seeks Tommy out to tell him that she was wrong, it isn't alright if he cannot be creative. Shortly after this, Miss Lucy leaves Hailsham with no explanation.
PART 2 – ADULT

- Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy move to the Cottages. Ruth and Tommy continue to date, and Kathy enters into sexual relationships with various partners with no commitment, unsure of why she does so.

- They learn about something called a “deferral” where if two clones are really, truly in love, they can request to have their donor life push back so they can be together.

- The three friends, along with some older students at the Cottages, venture to Norfolk to find Ruth’s possible, with no success. There, Kathy and Tommy rediscover her favorite misplaced cassette tape.

- Tommy tells Kathy his theory about The Gallery from Hailsham- that their art work would be used to reveal each students soul and prove if two were really in love in the case of a deferral.
PART 3

Kathy decides to take on Ruth as a donor, despite not seeing her for 10 years since she abruptly left the Cottages. Their relationship still remains rocky.

When they hear about a marooned boat near Kingfield, where Tommy happens to be living now, they decide to take a day off and see the sight.

On the ride back from seeing the boat, Ruth admits to intentionally keeping Kathy and Tommy apart as kids and begs them to forgive her, be together now, and go for the deferral. Soon after this talk, Ruth completes.

On Ruth’s death bed. Kathy promises to go for the deferral with Tommy. She begins as his carer and the two begin a romantic relationship.

They finally decide to go seek out Madame. They find her house, where she lives with Miss Emily. The two of them reveal to Kathy the entire history behind Hailsham, from its creation to recent closing, and they tell them there is no such thing as a deferral.

Madame reveals to Kathy why she cried all those years ago—because in her mind she saw a little girl who was begging a kind world to “never let me go”

Tommy and Kathy head back and Tommy has his first tantrum in years. Later, he tells Kathy he doesn’t want her to be his carer anymore.

Kathy learns Tommy as finally completed and she decides to take her turn as a donor.
THEMES & MOTIFS

➤ Growing Up / Maturation
➤ Power of Memory
➤ Individual Goals vs. Social Expectations
➤ Inevitable Loss
➤ Life, Death & Humanity
➤ Loving, Caring & Donation
➤ Dignity of Human Life
➤ Copies / Clones
➤ Pretending and Fantasy
➤ Lost and Found
➤ Willful Innocence
➤ The Idea of a Soul
SYMBOLS

➤ Judy Bridgewater Tape
  “Songs After Dark”

➤ Hailsham

➤ Copies / Clones

➤ The Woods behind Hailsham

➤ The Boat
CHAPTERS 1-4

QUESTIONS

1. Get into partners or a small group

2. Work through the provided questions

3. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the class
CHAPTERS 1-4 QUESTIONS

1. Describe the setting of the story.
2. Describe the character Kathy H.
3. Describe Hailsham.
4. What seems to be Tommy’s flaw? Describe what happens to him and how other kids treat him.
5. How does Kathy H. seem to feel about Tommy?
6. What’s wrong with Tommy’s art?
7. Why is this a problem at Hailsham?
8. How do all of Tommy’s problems disappear?
9. Explain Madame’s “Gallery” and how the students seem to feel about it?
10. Ruth has a theory about Madame - what is it?
11. What is a “sale” at Hailsham?
12. How did Kathy and Ruth become friends?
CHAPTERS 5–8

QUESTIONS

1. Get into partners or a small group

2. Work through the provided questions

3. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the class
CHAPTERS 5–8 QUESTIONS

➤ 1. What is the “secret guard”?

➤ 2. Why was Kathy kicked out of the secret guard?

➤ 3. Who does Ruth imply gave her the brand new pencil pouch?

➤ 4. Why is this a big deal?

➤ 5. How does Kathy catch Ruth in her lie?

➤ 6. What do the students believe about the place called Norfolk?

➤ 7. Describe Kathy’s prized possession, the Judy Bridgewater tape.

➤ 8. How do the guardians feel about smoking?

➤ 9. Kathy gives us a few lyrics from the Judy Bridgewater tape - what are they?

➤ 10. What does Kathy imagine the song is about?

➤ 11. Explain what happens when Madame catches Kathy listening to the music.

➤ 12. They’ve been talking a lot about the “donations” in these chapters. What do you think it means to make a donation?
CHAPTERS 9-12
QUESTIONS

1. Get into partners or a small group

2. Work through the provided questions

3. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the class
CHAPTERS 9-12 QUESTIONS

1. Cynthia calls Kathy Ruth’s “natural successor”. What does that mean?
2. With what matter does Ruth need Kathy’s help?
3. Tommy admits to Kathy that thing have been falling apart for him. What does he say that everything is going wrong?
4. Why is it implied that Tommy and Ruth got back together?
5. What seems like a weird coincidence about the people who were all moved to the cottage at the same time as Kathy?
6. Why were Ruth’s public display of affection inappropriate for the cottage?
7. Ruth picks up a strange habit at the cottages, regarding the reading of books. What is it?
8. How does Ruth supremely anger Kathy at the end of chapter 10?
9. What had Ruth done with her “collection”?
10. What is a “possible”? By learning about “possibles”, you also learn that all of the people are ___________
11. What is Ruth’s “Dream Future”? 
CHAPTERS
13 - 16 QUESTIONS

1. Get into partners or a small group

2. Work through the provided questions

3. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the class
CHAPTERS 13–16 QUESTIONS

1. Why does Ruth say that Tommy can’t come visit her when she is working in an office?

2. What myth have Rodney and Chrissie heard about Hailsham students?

3. How does Ruth embarrass Tommy?

4. Why do the students follow the woman they believe to be Ruth’s possible? Why does the group agree that the Possible couldn’t actually be Ruth’s? Why does Ruth say this could never be her Possible?

5. What did Tommy reveal he had been shopping for on the expedition to the Woolworth’s? Why had he been looking for it?
CHAPTERS 17 - END QUESTIONS

1. Get into partners or a small group

2. Work through the provided questions

3. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the class
1. Kathy leads you to believe that Laura isn’t cut out for a job as a carer. Why?
2. How has Ruth been doing, as a donor?
3. What has happened to Hailsham?
4. How does Kathy feel when she and Tommy gang up on Ruth in the car when she is trying to tell a story?
5. Ruth apologizes to Kathy for two things - what are they?
6. What does Ruth give to Kathy?
7. What have Kathy and Tommy brought with them to show Madame?
8. During their conversations, it seems like Madame is speaking to someone else. That person is eventually revealed to be __________.
9. What is the truth about the deferrals?
10. Why did they have a gallery?
11. Why was Hailsham created? What was its purpose?
12. What was the overarching problem that Miss Emily tries to explain?
13. What was the Moringdale Scandal? How is it connected to Hailsham?
14. Miss Emily explains why Miss Lucy had to leave Hailsham. Why was it?
15. Tommy asks Kathy to stop being his carer. Why?
16. How does Kathy’s story conclude?
We will be having a student-led discussion. You will be responsible for prompting the class with one question and encouraging your peers to respond.

You will each be presented with a sample discussion question related to different parts of the novel. You may choose to word the question differently, or may choose to add sub-questions that relate to the question.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in the discussion!
USING TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

➤ TOPIC 1 - LOVE
Describe the relationship triangle that is presented in the book. What do you learn about “love” from these three individuals?

➤ TOPIC 2 - HAILSHAM
How did Hailsham differ from other facilities? What lasting effect was created for those who were Hailsham students?

** Find 2-3 examples from the text to support your response **
CONDUCTING RESEARCH

➤ This is a practice opportunity to collect research and check to see if you understand proper MLA formatting for your citations on written assignments.

➤ Research Topics:
  - Kazuo Ishiguro (author’s life)
  - Cloning
  - Genetic Engineering
  - The Country of England (the geography)
ETHICAL DILEMMA – DEBATE

➢ FOR or AGAINST the concept of genetic engineering

and

➢ FOR or AGAINST the concept of cloning

**Do research on your position for both of these topics and be ready to use those statistics and research examples in your justification**
CHARACTER ANALYSIS

➤ In groups of 2-3, you will be given a major or minor character to analyze

➤ Use textual examples

➤ Consider:
  - what clues does the text give us about the personality of your character?
  - what does the character do?
  - what does the character say?
  - what do other character’s think of your character?
  - how does your character interact with others? (relationships and connections)
In this novel, the value of human life is explored. The argument could be made that for a person to be alive (truly living), their soul must also flourish. Out must be filled with artist ability and creative thoughts. This is not necessarily a truth, but it is something that is examined in this novel. Whether or not you agree with this statement, there is something to be said for producing a work of art. When you share a piece of your soul with others, it is an enlightening experience.

In groups of 3-4, find a creative way to interpret one of the main themes, symbols, or motifs.

Examples: a poem, a song, a drawing, a dramatic skit, tableau, a sculpture, or something of your own choosing.
In groups of 3-4, you will work towards creating a seminar presentation in which you will analyze the text through a particular literary lens (each group will choose a different lens).

**Literary Theories:**
- Feminist/Gender
- Formalist
- Deconstructionist
- Reader’s Response
- Marxist
- Post-Colonialist
- Archetypal
- Psychoanalytical
IN-CLASS ESSAY PREPARATION

➤ Review characters
➤ Review themes
➤ Review themes, symbols and motifs
➤ Review literary theory applications