
Never Let Me Go: Reflections About Past And Future

Ishiguro's novel, *Never Let Me Go* addresses questions about past, present, and future ethics and morals surrounding technological advancements and specifically, cloning humans. Using a thirty-one-year-old named Kathy's recollection, narration is used to display the inevitability of loss in a preparatory school for human clones. Ideas are presented and remembered throughout the novel, exploring the passage of time in a world of advancement. *Never Let Me Go* is an emotional journey about recollection of childhood memories, experiencing unfulfilled dreams, and reconnecting with the past in order to understand the purpose of Hailsham, allowing readers to ponder the ethics of humanity.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro shows passage of time and the importance of memory through Kathy's nostalgia. The story takes place in the dystopian world of late 1990's England. Society is ran by citizens whose lives are prolonged by clones organs. The clones grow up in special institutions, away from citizen's lives. "Donors" receive care from chosen "carers". Carers are clones who have not yet begun the donation process, of which typically starts when they are young adults. The story opens to a thirty-one-year-old carer named Kathy who has almost reached "completion", which is a euphemism for death following the donation of three or four organs. Kathy "attends" Hailsham, a special institution for clones though neither cloning nor donation is explained at the start of the novel.

The story is almost fully told as a memory of hers, with Kathy spending a significant amount of time reminiscing about her time at Hailsham. She says, "I can remember us back in the Juniors, pleading with guardians to hold the next lesson in the pavilion instead of the usual room" (6), recalling fondly of her time spent there. Each of the three main characters: Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth are studied as their emotional journey develops, allowing readers to follow three different personalities to help convey different ideas and perspectives.

The novel is divided into three parts of Kathy's life; her childhood at Hailsham, the Cottages, and her time as a carer. Kathy's narrative is personal and observant, allowing readers to follow her story as though being told to them directly. Keeping suspense alive, Ishiguro uses Kathy as a means of information, foreshadowing a dark and sad future. Kathy's narration is constantly switching, contributing to Kathy's already disorganized perception of time and it's shaping of her recollection of thought. At times stating she does not clearly remember certain events, readers see the connection between past and present blur. Ishiguro uses this technique to convey the intentional weight cloning carries on interpretation of ethics for both clones and humans. It's almost as though he is giving the audience so much information to avoid what he isn't saying: the atrocities and dread of reality for the clones.

Kathy's character is personal and realistic with her narration providing readers a complex thought process to follow as she narrates the story. Kathy's narration shapes not only the plot but the construction of important themes like the passage of time. As the story continues, readers know very little about Kathy's present life. This is because looking back to the past with nostalgia is Kathy's only coping mechanism for comfort. "There have been times over the years when I've tried to leave Hailsham behind; when I've told myself I shouldn't look back so much. But then there came a point where I stopped resisting" (4). Kathy finds it comforting to

remember her past at Hailsham, realizing there is nothing wrong with feeling nostalgic about it, despite its current failure to operate on the basis of human ethics, but again, readers rarely hear of her life in the present. Everyone she cared for has died so she is reminiscing about her time with Tommy and Ruth, keeping them alive in her memory and as relevant characters to the story.

Being a clone, Kathy has a limited amount of time. Arguably because of this, there is little time for Kathy to think of her future and make plans because her future is more a dream than a reality. Kathy uses the past as a safe haven to fondly remember those she loves and what she experienced, keeping it in her memory so as to never be taken from her like that of her physical body. By the time Kathy is in her thirties, she has lost everyone and everything of any importance to her. Her solitude has become the only companion she has left, saying, "Sometimes I get so immersed in my own company, if I unexpectedly run into someone I know, it's a bit of a shock and takes me awhile to adjust" (190). Nostalgia is all Kathy has left; everything that now exists to her is a precious memory linked to her past.

Kathy withholds some information, creating a buildup towards her unfulfilled dream of a "deferral", a possible program believed to buy couples in love more time together if souls could be determined through creative tasks at Hailsham. This creates a lingering stress and tension for readers, manipulating Kathy's desires with dreams. Taking refuge in daydreaming she says, "I didn't like being bumped out of my daydreams" (190). Kathy's daydreams and failing to see presently attribute to her time spent as a carer and further, her failure to confront her own fate. The concept of death is referred to only as "completion", failing to face her own fate or that of death itself.

In "The Deliverance of Others" by David Palumbo-Liu, he discusses the nature of human organization as it serves operational to everyday human beings. "The will to operationalize human being and its various actions in the world are meant to accomplish something, to bring something into existence, to change the world and human being in it". Here Palumbo Liu is stating of humanity that "we are human in the way that we act in the world, transform the world to our purposes, make it be 'us,' and the manifestation of such actions takes place through institutions and discourses". Institutions and discourses of Hailsham, as seen in *Never Let Me Go*, shape characters to "codify and rationalize" (101) thought and process of understanding, so as to form the nature that is human organization.

Kathy cannot resist hoping for a life together with Ruth and Tommy, revealing her human reaction to death as fearful and as an inability to confront her tragic fate. The traces of which can be traced back to part two of the novel, discussing her days spent at the cottages with her friends. "In fact, listening to her, I even started wondering if maybe it was all feasible: if one day we might all of us move into a place like that and carry on our lives together" (132) displays Kathy's realized broken hopes and dreams. Conflicted with a love triangle between her and Tommy, Kathy recalls of him saying, "the fantasy never got beyond that-I didn't let it" (263). Kathy lost her lover and close friend, having developed a psychological barrier to avoid pain and harsh feelings. She does so to try and live more presently, though despite the lack of fantasy, still lives in the past through her memories.

At this time in the novel Kathy appears depressed. Speaking presently she says, "Once I'm able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that'll be something no one can take away" (262). Kathy finds peace

within herself, despite never questioning the ethics of cloning. Ironically, she is always switching tenses but never perspectives, calling upon the past or the future to display her feelings but never directly about the humanity of being a clone. Ishiguro uses this technique to convey feelings about Kathy's life, while indirectly describing the humanity of what it is to be a clone. Hope is found to be generated by the lies of delusion, clouding Kathy's judgment and leaving her more emotional and secluded.

Ishiguro presents characters as daydreamers, always reflecting on the past, memories, and hopes for the future, all so as to ignore the reality of the situation at hand. The misrepresentation of creativity in the novel is used to show the ignorance of characters Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth, despite seeming willfully happy. After Tommy's outburst and as time persists, it is shown that creativity and artwork are used only to display to the outside world that clones do, in fact, have souls. This contributes to the false hope of Ruth and Tommy as they cling to the idea of deferral on the premise of being in love. Ishiguro uses all to depict the message of silence and willful ignorance imposed on characters over matters they may disagree with or hurt them. Perhaps because they are clones and their humanity or absence of is questioned, Ishiguro illustrates characters again who are self-deluded and willfully ignorant of their fate.

Kathy's attitudes toward the past and present are interconnected, affecting impressions of humanity upon clones shown in the novel. Ishiguro subtly expresses his views on the advancement of such technology, questioning ethical repercussions by using Kathy's emotional story of recollection. The novel exploits the meaning of what it is to be a human and to possess a soul worthy of longing and love in such a normal world of genetic engineering. Ishiguro presents a dehumanized glance at technology and the purpose it serves to humans when discussing such ethically implicating situations among human beings.