



Never Let Me Go

Kazuo Ishiguro

Author

- Kazuo Ishiguro
- **1954:** Born Nagasaki, Japan
- **1960:** Moved to U.K.
- Took a gap year after high school to travel America and Canada journaling, songwriting, and sending demo tapes to record companies
- **1980:** University of East Anglia
 - M.A. in Creative Writing
- **1985:** Whitbread Award
- **1989:** Booker Prize
- **2017:** Nobel Prize





Book

- **Published:** 2005
- **Genre:** Speculative Fiction (Bildungsroman)
 - Dystopian, Romance, Horror
- **Setting:** Various Locations in England
 - Hailsham, The Cottages, Kingsfield
- **Ancestry:** The Dystopian DNA of this novel can be found in the euphemistic language of *1984*, the social design of *Brave New World*, and the cultural destiny of *The Giver*
- **Seed:** 1996 Cloning of Dolly the Sheep

Story

- ▶ Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were pupils at Hailsham—an idyllic private school situated deep in the English countryside. The children there were tenderly sheltered from the outside world, brought up to believe they were special, and that their personal welfare was crucial. It is only years later that Kathy, now aged thirty-one, finally allows herself to yield to the pull of memory. What unfolds is the haunting story of how Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy slowly come to face the truth about their seemingly happy childhoods—and about their futures.



- **Kathy H:** The novel's narrator and protagonist, Kathy is loyal, empathetic, sometimes sentimental, and reflective.
- **Ruth:** One of Kathy's best friends, Ruth is a complex and often difficult character, given to pride and occasional manipulation.
- **Tommy:** Kathy and Ruth's friend at Hailsham, Tommy is known there for his temper tantrums, his lack of creativity, and his "dullness."

Major Characters



Minor Characters



- **Miss Lucy:** A guardian at Hailsham, Miss Lucy is known for her discomfort with the “abstract” teaching methods at the school.
- **Miss Emily:** The head of school at Hailsham, Miss Emily is mostly feared by the students—she is rather strict but helpful and is known for making long speeches imploring to students to remain healthy.
- **Madame:** A woman who visits Hailsham to pick up the children's artwork, she is something of a mystery to the students, who find her air of professional authority distant and forbidding.
- **Chrissie:** Another female student, Chrissie is slightly older than the three main characters and is with them at the Cottages.
- **Rodney:** Chrissie’s boyfriend and the one who spotted Ruth’s “possible.”



Language

- Carers
- Guardians
- Sales
- Exchange
- Gallery
- Possible
- Cottages
- Donors
- Training
- Recovery Centres
- Complete





Symbols

- **Hailsham:** The school itself serves as a sort of Eden for the students, a safe haven from the outside world.
- **The Judy Bridgewater Tape:** Judy Bridgewater is the fictional artist whose song “Never Let Me Go” lends its name to the title of this novel. Kathy has long been enamored with the song and the album on which the song is performed.
- **Norfolk:** The “Lost Corner” of England
- **Tommy’s Animals:** Despite being known for his lack of “creativity,” Tommy eventually finds a creative outlet drawing tiny, intricate animals—a practice he initially keeps secret but continues throughout his life.

Themes

- **Identity and Social Expectations:** What is the role of Hailsham: to allow students to realize their individual goals or to prepare them for their role in society? To protect or to develop?
- **Friendship:** How is friendship fostered? How do friendships change and develop, grow and shatter?
- **Innocence and Experience:** Is ignorance bliss? Is knowledge power? Kathy and her friends are raised in the cocoon of Hailsham, with only limited information of the outside world. Does such simplicity make life more bearable, more difficult, or just more confusing in the end?



Themes

- **Loss and Discovery:** A pattern of loss and discovery—both people and objects—shapes Kathy's story.
- **Sympathy and Empathy:** How do we learn to love, care for, and help one another? How do we learn to accept such love, care, or help from others?
- **Life and Death:** How do we cope with the constraints placed upon us—by family, by society, by biology—and the inevitability of our own demise?



Themes

- **Memory:** Much of the novel is comprised of Kathy's memories as she takes long, solitary drives through the English countryside trying to reconcile her past with her present. How does memory shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us?

