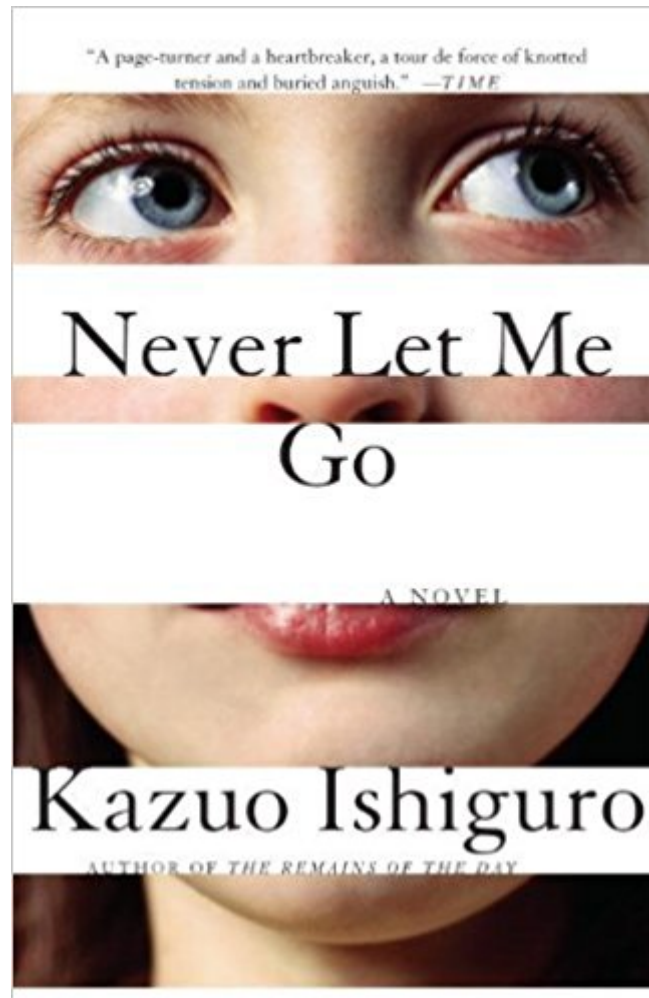


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Never Let Me Go



Synopsis

From the Booker Prize-winning author of *The Remains of the Day* comes a devastating new novel of innocence, knowledge, and loss. As children Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were students at Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school secluded in the English countryside. It was a place of mercurial cliques and mysterious rules where teachers were constantly reminding their charges of how special they were. Now, years later, Kathy is a young woman. Ruth and Tommy have reentered her life. And for the first time she is beginning to look back at their shared past and understand just what it is that makes them special—and how that gift will shape the rest of their time together. Suspenseful, moving, beautifully atmospheric, *Never Let Me Go* is another classic by the author of *The Remains of the Day*.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Vintage (March 14, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400078776

ISBN-13: 978-1400078776

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (1,468 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,293 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #145 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Psychological Thrillers #146 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary #489 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction

Customer Reviews

Set in the 1990's, Kazuo Ishiguro's quietly disturbing novel aims to make us question the ethics of science even though the author never directly raises the topic. The narrator of *Never Let Me Go* is Kathy H., a woman who introduces herself as a "carer" mere months away from becoming a "donor," as though we should know what these terms mean. This nearness to ending one stage of her life to entering another causes her to reminisce about Hailsham, the school in the English countryside where she grew up with her two closest friends, Tommy D. and Ruth. The three form an unlikely trio: Ruth is headstrong and imaginative; Tommy has an uncontrollable temper; and Kathy is steady and observant in the subtleties of human behavior. It is this last quality belonging to Kathy H. that sets the tone of the novel. Everything is precisely told in an even, matter-of-fact voice that

never questions the strange terminology and conversations that alert the reader to something more grave lurking under what seems, on the surface, to be an ordinary story about three childhood friends. As the three grow up, they begin to face moments more important than the minor disagreements of childhood. Ishiguro's richly textured description of the relationship among the three supplies all the details without confronting the larger issues. As Kathy tells us, the guardians at Hailsham both tell and not tell the students the truth about Hailsham and their lives--exactly what Ishiguro does to the reader. The truth is doled out in increments, over the course of the entire novel, requiring the reader to understand what is implied as much as what is told. The frightening side to all this is that the characters never question the course of their lives.

Kazuo Ishiguro's brilliant new book, *NEVER LET ME GO*, returns the author to the themes and approaches he first addressed in *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*. Just as Stevens the butler devoted himself unthinkingly and uncritically to the minutiae of daily life on behalf of his Nazi sympathizing master, Lord Darlington, the main characters in Ishiguro's latest book focus on the irrelevant small details and minor tribulations of their lives without ever once contemplating the bigger picture. In both cases, the author not only conjures the question of the meaning of life, he asks us to contemplate the tragedy of wasted lives. On its surface, *NEVER LET ME GO* tells the story of three special young people - Kathy H., Tommy D., and Ruth - all of whom meet as students at an idyllic private school called Hailsham. Kathy H. is the narrator, now 31 years old, telling her story in hindsight. She recalls her student days at Hailsham fondly, filling her tale with numerous minor anecdotes about the most mundane affairs that slowly reveal the nature of the school and its students' place in the world. (...) Ishiguro creates a convincing vocabulary, milieu, and mythology for this setting: guardians, carers, donors, completing, Exchanges, Sales, the Gallery, Norfolk, and an eerie sense of the students having "been told and not told." *NEVER LET ME GO* accomplishes the remarkable challenge of presenting 288 pages' worth of reading between the lines. Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy are not the real main characters of this story, only the visible ones. The real main characters are invisible, the ones who have not only facilitated the use of cloning as a form of organ farming, but who have created a conditioning environment in which their victims accept their fate without question, as the natural order of things.

WARNING: This review contains "spoilers," information that reveals key plot details. This novel works beautifully on multiple levels, giving it a quality that kept me thinking about its plot, characters and themes long after I finished its final page. On the most obvious level it is a sort of alternate

history that depicts a dystopian society in 1990s England that breeds human clones to become organ donors for "the normals." In that aspect, it brings to mind Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where humans are created in test tubes and have fixed functions that they grow up to perform in society. However, *Never Let Me Go* is more subtle than either Huxley or -- another obvious comparison -- George Orwell's *1984*, in that the oppressor is not specifically depicted and there is no one person or group that is in obvious conflict with Ishiguro's main characters. There is nothing overt that keeps them in their places, whether that place is at school when they are children, or at "recovery centers" while their internal organs are being systematically plucked out. I kept wondering why the two lovers, Kathy and Tommy, didn't just pick up their stuff, get in her car and take off for parts unknown, eventually blending in with the "normal" population. And that brings me to the next, deeper level, of the novel, which is about the nature of humanity. All of this novel's characters seem to meekly accept their fates, even Tommy, who has a temper and often throws fits of rage when frustrated. They are also hyper-sensitive to one another, reading motivations and emotions into each small gesture and remark, as though every utterance and movement each one makes is deliberate, premeditated and loaded with significance.

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